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BOTTLING THE PAST, PLANTING THE FUTURE: IMMIGRANTS IN ITALIAN WINE PRODUCTION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

ANTHROPOLOGY

by

Rebecca Feinberg

June 2018

The Dissertation of Rebecca Feinberg
is approved:

Professor Melissa L. Caldwell, Chair

Professor Andrew Mathews

Professor Kolleen M. Guy

Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

BOTTLING THE PAST, PLANTING THE FUTURE:
IMMIGRANTS IN ITALIAN WINE PRODUCTION

Rebecca Feinberg

This dissertation examines the critical roles of immigrants in creating some of Italy's most cherished heritage landscapes and wines. During twelve months of fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2016, I lived and worked with small wine producing families in the Southern Astigiano of Italy's Piedmont region. By moving between the perspectives of multiple actors and stakeholders—winegrowers, enologists, exporters, vineyard managers, harvest workers, public officials, and asylum seekers—I bring a complex world of collaborations and dependencies into view. My analysis focuses on the labor of caring for plants and place, demonstrating how this work transforms the social identities of Balkan immigrants in small rural communities. In particular, the image of the peasant farmer, invoked through the skills and responsibilities acquired by Balkan immigrants through close partnerships with Italian employers, folds foreign-born workers into the narratives of tradition. By working the soil, Balkan immigrants side-step the boundaries of blood and ethnicity that otherwise delimit belonging in Italy today.

Attention to the work of winemaking reverses *terroir*'s assumed connections between people, place, and product: rather than topography or culture creating a unique wine, the labor required to create a certain product contours landscapes and

ecologies, while also shaping communities and crafting subjectivities. In this perspective, the pressures and processes transforming agriculture and winemaking in Italy today—including state regulations, volatile export markets, mobile populations, and climate change—can be analyzed as recent manifestations of much longer processes. Finally, I explore potential futures for this community, considering how collaborations forged through cultivating the land—partnerships that extend across the boundaries of ethnicity, citizenship, and race—offer forms of security and sustainability to multiple groups that state institutions or agricultural technologies do not.

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I am eternally grateful to my family, my rock, for supporting me on all the paths that I have followed and coming to visit me in most of them. My mother for teaching me to explore fearlessly, read ferociously, and question for-granteds, and my father for showing me what it is to be a dedicated teacher and scholar. No one should write a dissertation without a cat, and Machi and Sabi never let me down.

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Introduction: *Canelli, Window to the World*

> *I came into Canelli by a long avenue that did not exist in my day, but I caught the smell at once—that faint mixture of wine lees, vermouth, and the breath of the Belbo. The side streets were the same—those flowers in the windows, those faces, photographs, townhouses. There was more action in the piazza than I remembered—a new bar, a filling station, the dusty roar of motorbikes comes and going. But the great sycamore tree was still there, and you could see that money was flowing as always…A small city—who knows how many other villas and farms dot the surrounding hills?*
>
> *As a boy I had made no mistake: being from Canelli counted for something, a wide window onto the world opened out from here. From the bridge over the Belbo I looked down the valley to the low hills toward Nizza. Nothing had changed. Only last year a boy had come on a cart with his father to sell grapes…. I liked it here because everything came to an end, because it was the last place where the seasons followed each other and not the years. The industrial wineries of Canelli could make all the sparkling wine they wanted, set up offices, machinery, freight cars, warehouses—it was work that I had done myself…*
>
> *But I… knew that in the end only the seasons mattered, and the seasons are what have made your bones, what sustained you as a boy. Canelli is the whole world—Canelli and the Belbo valley—and on the hillsides time does not pass.*
>
> Cesare Pavese, *La luna e il falò* ([1950] 2002: 49-50)[1]

Cesare Pavese, the celebrated Italian author who immortalized Piedmont's Langhe and Monferrato territories, was born in 1908 in Santo Stefano, a small town a few miles down the Belbo river from the town of Canelli. When he returned to his childhood home after the second World War he found that much had changed, but he

[1] This, and all excerpts of text from Italian language citations or quotes that appear in this dissertation, are my translations—any errors are mine alone. In the case of Pavese, this and other of his works have been translated into English publications, but I found the translation unsatisfying and chose to provide my own, one that I think better reflects the language of daily life in the world that Pavese grew up in and describes here. When translating spoken Italian, I have used contractions to most closely reproduce the rhythms and patterns of the Italian language.

insisted that Canelli existed beyond the reach of forces that were transforming Italy and Europe. Told through the eyes of his protagonist, a young man come home again but unable to truly return, Pavese's most famous novel is an ode to the peasant world of seasons, labor, and landscapes that seemed, to the author, eternal.

In some ways, Pavese's words ring true even now, more than seventy years later. Today the hills are indeed still there, as is the river, the avenue, the piazza, and the great sycamore tree. During the harvest season, the air is heavy with the smell of freshly crushed grapes and the avenue leading in to town is jammed with trucks hauling jiggling masses of golden moscato grapes or purple clusters of barbera.[2] The weight of the load crushes the fruit at the bottom, which spills out and splatters the asphalt with a sticky trail of juice. Picking crews—bright dots of red and blue in the otherwise green world of vines—move slowly up and down steep grades, their voices just audible across the valley when they holler for the tractor to collect a load. Canelli still lives on sparkling wine, and money still flows here thanks to long days in the vineyards, red crates full of grapes, and the millions of bottles of sweet *spumante,* sparkling wine, that sustain this community.

Nestled in the hill country an hour's drive southeast of Turin, Canelli is a few miles from the edge of the Astigiano (where the Province of Asti meets that of Cuneo), where the rolling hills of the Monferrato meet the steeper inclines of the

---

[2] Throughout the text, I refer to grapes with lowercase names (moscato, barbera) and wines with capitalized names (Moscato, Barbera). Muscat grapes are grown around the world and comprise many different varietals. While moscato growers in Canelli may choose between various clones, the grapes they tend are a single varietal, known as *moscato bianco* or *moscato canelli.*

Langhe-Roero on the banks of the Belbo River. The river valley carves a path through these slopes, stringing small towns together along its banks: Santo Stefano Belbo, Canelli, Calamandrana, and Nizza Monferrato. To the north, the Alps form a wall that rings the horizon, while the gentler Ligurian Appenines lie to the south. Canelli stretches across the Belbo, with houses, small churches, and narrow streets zigzagging into the hills on all sides. Atop it all, the peach-colored *Castello Gancia* sits very much like a monarch on a throne. From the castle gates, the view looking back past church steeples is one of vineyards that carpet the hills in every direction.

Figure 1: The town of Canelli and the surrounding hillsides (photo by author).

On a November morning, Pavese's Canelli seems not too far off. Thick wet fog nestles in the crooks between the hills and among the scraggly vines with their red and brown leaves, everything muted and otherworldly in the *nebbia* (fog) that

gives the local *nebbiolo* grape its name. The bus that chugs the winding roads from Asti, the nearest city, is nearly empty, save for a few older women who sit chatting with the driver and the septuagenarian men who narrate the landscape rushing past—*Si, si, they've got some nice barbera here, and a bit of dolcetto, and at Cortemiglia there are so many hazelnuts now*. Yellow ginko leaves carpet the pathways through the park and retired men in black jackets and wool caps sit with coffees and today's copy of *La Stampa* in the small bar on the piazza. Invisible clouds of bakery air and piles of burning leaves attest to the daily and seasonal tasks still in practice.

On one such morning in 2015, I made my way through town to the ceremonious main doors of one of the oldest wineries in town, where my visit had been tacked on to a guided tour for two American importers. Our host ushered us through dimly lit cellars with thousands of dark glass bottles stacked to the ceiling, extolling the precision of their standards and recipes handed down over a century of winemaking. I did my best to show proper admiration, while also asking questions that were not addressed on the usual cellar tour: What had been the biggest changes for the winery in the last few years? How many of their employees were Italians and how many were immigrants? What kind of place did they see Canelli becoming in ten years' time? Unexpected and somewhat intrusive, my questions did not align with the vision of Canelli that Pavese had penned and that the winery had curated for our visit.

When Pavese was a child just down the road in Santo Stefano Belbo in the early 1900s, Canelli commanded an empire of and emigrants and export, sending both labor and the fruits of it around Europe and across the Atlantic. The wineries whose

family names grace the main avenues and piazzas—Gancia, Bosca, Riccadonna—house faded photographs of steamships bound for Argentina or New York. The hulls of these ships were loaded with sparkling wine that railroad cars carried from a station inside the Gancia factory to Turin, Genoa, Milan, and beyond. Archived bottles display international awards of excellence from London, Paris, and Berlin, and winemaking equipment crafted by the firms in Canelli's industrial district can be found in cantinas from Napa to Mendoza to Adelaide. This was the "window" that Pavese immortalized, a special place from which wines crafted on Canelli's hillsides departed.

Yet despite Canelli's title as the "Moscato Capital of the World" and the conferring of UNESCO World Heritage status on the surrounding Langhe-Roero and Monferrato zones in 2014, the trains that once left town loaded with wine stopped running on the Asti-Canelli line in 2012, and the surviving enological firms are struggling to compete with multinational manufacturers. Canelli's cooperative winery was liquidated in 2014 and the empty buildings are quickly succumbing to decay and weeds. Across the tracks, Gancia, the oldest and biggest of the wineries, is now owned by a Russian banker and used largely as a distribution channel for his other liquor holdings. Riccadonna, one of the historic wineries, sold first to Bols and later to Campari in the mid 1990s, and the company's former headquarters and production facilities lie quietly gathering dust in the center of town. The hills that frame the Belbo River are emptying out as fewer young people remain to work the vineyards

and retired winegrowers sell their family homes to Swiss vacationers. Exports of Moscato are down, and staying stubbornly stagnant.

Figures 2 and 3: Overgrown railroad tracks outside town, and the abandoned facilities of the defunct cooperative winery (photos by author).

Canelli's central streets, once teeming with factory workers and lined with bakeries, grocers, and hardware stores, are quieter, with scattered shops and few children. The hospital closed in 2000, and the historic theater has been boarded up since 2014. It takes half a day to reach Canelli from any major city, requiring at least three different trains or buses. Friday nights are quiet in the piazza—the remaining young people here go elsewhere for a night out. Unemployment is on the rise among the middle-aged as local businesses fold, the industrial winemaking economy is at a crossroads of shifting markets, and wine tourism has yet to fill the gaps created by new competitors and changing consumer habits.

What Pavese took to be eternal—as given as the seasons—has not stood up to the monumental changes that have transformed Canelli, the Belbo Valley, and Italy writ large. In the dog days of August, the empty streets and abandoned train station would suggest that Canelli might one day join the ranks of other Italian rural communities: cut off from the land that had sustained local economies, with darkened windows and crumbling infrastructures. In the autumn of 2017, *The New York Times* featured an article titled "Who Will Save These Dying Italian Towns?" With glossy images of medieval ghost towns clinging precariously to hilltops, it described a phenomenon spreading across Italy and much of Southern Europe:

> *These rural places were once intricately tied to the countryside around them, their inhabitants working as farmers and merchants, craftsmen and shepherds. But when these towns die, it's not just the population that suffers: so too do the unique traditions and skills associated with each place, as well as the landscape that supported them…These towns and their craftsmanship are what we think of when we think of Italy…It isn't far-fetched to say that what's at risk of being lost with their obsolescence is nothing less than Italy's rural soul* (Needleman 2017).

In the towns the piece profiled, communities and economies that thrived on crafting specialty goods from local raw materials had dried up into empty shells. Industrialized agriculture and mass produced goods had extinguished the woolworks or ceramics for which they were famous. Once the connection between people, place, and practices ruptured, homes emptied outs, shops and schools closed, and what were once vibrant communities became ruins for tourists to photograph. The journalist asked a local entrepreneur how these local traditions, from food to domestic handicrafts, might be organically preserved. "We can't compete with China in mass production, and we can't compete in technology," he replied. "But we have what no

one else in the world has," he insisted, going on to describe the beauty of these villages and the cultural history of their people, "what might be called Italy's 'minor patrimony.'"

Italy's "rural soul" or "minor patrimony" in these words describe the relationships between Italy's labor intensive landscapes and the communities of farmers, herders, craftsmen, and merchants who built and maintained them. Lombardy's rice paddies, Piedmont's vineyards, Liguria's terraced cliffs, the lemon groves of the Amalfi Coast—each of these anthropomorphic ecologies is tightly tied to an entire economy of grain, wine, or fruit that historically organized daily life. Much more than physical labor or a source of income, these engagements with the land generated a rich world of what is called heritage today, both material and intangible: recipes, landscapes, foods, folk songs, idioms, rituals, social classes, gender roles, tools, myths, and memories. Cinotto's account of the rice growing communities of Vercelli describes this lifeworld as a *rice society*: "an entire economic, social, political and cultural system developed around the production, transformation and commerce of that single commodity" (2011:532).

These elements of Italy's patrimony cannot be trademarked or recorded, nor stored in archives, cellars, or seed banks. They exist only so long as people continue to carry out the tasks and crafts that created and transmitted them for generations, ways of laboring with animals, plants, and place that yielded unique goods and lifeworlds. When the means of production are no longer viable, nor can the "patrimony," "soul," or "society" survive. When Italians cease working the land,

entire places, traditions, and communities also slowly vanish under creeping forest and overgrown fields.

Heritage and inheritance

Canelli's wine producing families remain vulnerable to the forces that have emptied other towns and uprooted traditional industries. Increasing competition from new wine regions, local overproduction, and unprecedented weather patterns have the winegrowers and makers of the Belbo Valley on edge. Caught between competing pressures, producers can survive by expanding and mechanizing production, or by chasing a niche market for environmentally friendly wine that relies (as it historically has) on inexpensive flexible labor. When I spoke with Canelli's winegrowers about increased competition from industrial New World wines, they admitted that the market is tough, but insisted that three things set their products apart: "We have our history, our territory, and our know-how," they affirmed, things that cannot be recreated elsewhere. A UNESCO endorsed history encourages tourist appeal, and Geographical Indication (GI) labels for their wines protect a territorial brand, but the future of the know-how remains in question.[3]

[3] Canelli became part of a viticultural UNESCO World Heritage site in 2014, which I elaborate upon later. Geographical Indication labels protect the names and historical producer communities of material heritage products. They are based upon the French A.O.C system (Appellation of Controlled Origins) for wine and Italy's comparable D.O.C. system (Denomination of Controlled Origins), which delimit the where (official growing zones), how (maximum yields, agrochemicals, cellar techniques), and what (gustatory and chemical qualities of the resulting product) in the production of particular wines. They involve a serious amount of bureaucracy for producers, at

In this context, the people who perform vineyard and cellar work are much more than labor inputs in an economic system. They know the qualities of each hillside, the tendencies of particular grapes in the cellar, and what to expect from any given row of vines. Their expert hands craft the plants and environments that will determine the success of each harvest. The men and women who dot the vineyards that carpet Canelli's hillsides are rarely, however, Italians. A cohort of aging Canellesi farmers remain, as do a few young people who have decided to carry on the family business. The majority of the people who work in the vines each day here are immigrants: Macedonian vineyard managers who settled in Canelli in the late 1990s and have since brought their families to join them, Romanians who have become indispensable cellar hands and tractor drivers, Bulgarians who have bused over for the harvest season, hoping to earn a few hundred euros in a few weeks, or refugees from Mali and Eritrea who are rehabilitating steep, low yielding hills that no one else could be bothered to tend.

When immigrants take up ways of working from a world quickly receding into the past, they reproduce local heritage in the landscapes they craft, in the economies they make possible, and in their very persons. These forms of labor comprise ways of knowing, doing, and being: from the finely tuned knowledges of particular plants, weather patterns, and hillside vineyards, to the acute senses of taste

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times more trouble or constraints than growers or vinters want to take on. In this text, I refer to these certifications as DOC, as it appears in Italy, or Geographical Indications (GI) more generally.

and smell that guide winemaking, to the relationships that form between coworkers and community members in order to teach and share these tasks, each element of making wine generates much more than a bottle of fermented grape juice.

These winegrowing and making practices are arguably the most valuable parts of this world, and the ones that are impossible to encode in any copyright law or viticulture manual. They are not listed on the back of the bottle labels, and they do not appear in the GI paperwork that growers grapple with.[4] But these ways of knowing and doing are what distinguish this place from mechanized vineyards that sprawl for miles, and what gives these bottles a cachet that allows Italian growers to continue their viticultural traditions here. The cartography and chemical regulations of GI labeling determine the where and what of winegrowing here, but they do not explicitly indicate who will do the work winegrowing requires.

In considering the future of Canelli's landscapes, wines, and "soul," *who* is perhaps the most important question. Who will commit to a life of hard physical labor and settle for modest incomes at the mercy of hailstorms or market gluts? Who will aging growers trust to care for the viticultural empire their families have built? Who can be recognized as one of the skilled farmers that craft bottles of Moscato d'Asti

[4] Geographical Indication certification, once established for a wine, requires producers to apply for inclusion in the first place, and thereafter to maintain records of each step of the production process, beginning with demarcating the land on which grapes are grown, certifying planting practices and chemical treatments, harvest dates and total yields, vinification equipment and techniques, the resulting chemical and gustatory qualities of the wine, and bottling locations and practices. Everything must be inspected, certified, and stamped, at a great cost of time and resources for producers. Exporting wine creates another set of bureaucratic hurdles, as each country has their own set of requirements and procedures to follow.

and Barbera? Who can be a welcome part of the community of Canelli? As I examine in this dissertation, the answers to these questions remain unsettled, but they are far more complex and worth investigating than Canelli's somewhat marginal position in the larger worlds of Italian politics and wine would suggest.

Although Canelli is a small rural community, what is happening there is no less important than proceedings in Rome or deals in Milan. As Italy flounders in an economic crisis that has become the new normal and struggles to manage the arrival of people fleeing catastrophic circumstances, immigration is most often cast as a crisis, burden, or threat.[5] Italian communities are struggling to house, employ, and generate relations of trust with immigrants and refugees who have nowhere else to go. Meanwhile, all manner of traditional economies and their associated heritage are on the verge of dying with the generation who was willing to perform the labor these worlds entailed. All of these pressures and phenomena collide in the vineyards on the hills surrounding Canelli. Here, in encounters and collaborations between immigrants and Italians, labor, tradition, and integration all make one another possible.

This is a dissertation about production: the production of grapes and wine on hillsides and in cellars, but also the production of personhood, place, and relations

[5] Italy was particularly hard hit by the global financial crisis of 2008, which struck the country after two decades of economic decline and political instability, sending the economic and social life of millions of Italians into a spiral of precarity from which the nation has yet to emerge. At the time of writing, Italy is considered a particularly "weak link" of the European Union's financial consolidation and is deeply divided by electoral candidates with wildly different views—from populist independence movements to Fascist xenophobic rhetoric to conspiracy theories that ripple through social media—about who is to blame and what is to be done.

through the labor that vines and barrels of wine require. In these pages, I invert the assumptions of wine marketing and mythology, in which place and people make products. Instead, I show how the particular forms of skilled and physically demanding work that a wine producing ecology and economy demand allow for the incorporation of elsewhere and Others into local traditions. Rather than Canelli as an immortal place from which wine and people go out into the world (à la Pavese) or a struggling economy that will soon yield another ghost town (per *The New York Times*), I show how Canelli is an always changing place made up of many others and Others. Peeling back the layers of these hills and this community, I highlight the transformative powers of human labor as it makes wines, landscapes, and people.

Agriculture and gastronomy

Italy's rural economies historically churned out a variety of goods made from agricultural products: sheep and silkworms became textiles, cattle were fashioned into leather, and earth fired into ceramics (Blim 1990, Sereni 1961, Yanagisako 2002). In the aftermath of World War II, American investment and a new government focused on industrialization, turning a nation of farmers into a country of urban factory workers in a single generation (Locke 1995). At the beginning of the second World War, Italy remained a rural populace, with nearly half of the population employed in agriculture (Krause 2005). In the years that followed, factory work, urban public housing, and a sustained exodus of youth to other European countries and the Americas shriveled these communities of the labor—physical, skilled, and

reproductive—that sustained them. By 1990, the total number of Italians employed in agricultural sectors had dropped to just 5 percent of the population (McCarthy 2000:10), a percentage that continues to shrink under new pressures that make farming a difficult enterprise today (Grasseni 2013). Between post-war construction and the 1980s, urbanization, mass manufacturing, and a global economy had reduced most of these industries to a handful of high end luxury brands or souvenirs for tourists that dot the thoroughfares of major cities.

Italian gastronomy, on the other hand, has managed to survive in better shape. Thanks to the diaspora of Italian emigrants who sailed to new worlds (an estimated four million people between 1880 and 1920)—the entrepreneurs who made pizza, pasta, and wine part of a global culinary lexicon—Italian flours, preserves, pasta, cheeses, oils, truffles, cured meats, and wines remain in high demand internationally (Bonetti et al 2007, Diner 2001, Gabaccia 2000). In response to this circulation of goods, a complex system of GI labeling evolved to document the origins of specific foods, ensuring a market share for the communities who claimed historical ownership of these ingredients and techniques (Barham and Sylvander 2011). While the vast majority of exported Italian foods are manufactured in large mechanized facilities, efforts like those of the Slow Food movement and a myriad of other Italian alternative food initiatives have allowed a subset of Italian producers to retain older, smaller production practices supported by tourists, locals, and a global clientele of discerning consumers.

While Italy has lost contracts for silk, wool, shoes, and pottery to foreign competitors, agriculture and gastronomy remain at the forefront of *Made in Italy*, both financially and symbolically.[6] Beyond household income and daily sustenance, food and wine are part of material heritage in Italy. Recipes, products, meals, and tastes are at the core of family and community rituals, local traditions, and individual constructions of selfhood (Counihan 1984, 2004, Montanari 2007, Parasecoli 2014), and food is arguably *the* social fabric of Italian daily life.

Agriculture is omnipresent in histories and ethnographies of Italy, whether the accounts are peppered with references to farm work, landscapes, and foods or directly focused on the centrality of farming as the basis of everyday life. Longue durée perspectives and recent analyses of Italian landscapes emphasize the continual transformation of place as humans found new ways to make a living from the land (Sereni 1961, Braudel 1995, Cevasco and Moreno 2012). In the accounts of the daily lives of oppressed peasants that constituted Italian anthropology's first Other, theorists described how the conditions in which these farmers labored shaped their consciousness, mythologies, and gender roles (Banfield 1958, De Martino 1941,

[6] Made in Italy was launched as a brand in the 1980s to distinguish four of Italy's main exports on the world market: fashion, furniture, machinery, and food. Assuring the buyer that the product had been designed, created, and packaged in Italy, the label was meant to denote top quality, cutting edge design, and a unique style and elegance attributed to the Italian sensibility of the producers. In the decades since, the brand has become diluted by the millions of products that are finalized in Italy, but mostly manufactured in countries with cheaper labor costs, as well as imposter brands that use "Italian sounding" names to give the impression of Italian manufacture. While fashion, furniture, and machines all face growing competition from elsewhere, most often China, food exports have done relatively well in recent years.

Tillon 1966). As Italy became a more urban nation, scholars analyzed Italian culinary traditions, agricultural landscapes, and the production and consumption of specialty foods as key elements of transmitting memory, constructing identity, and scaffolding communities (Cavanaugh 2007, Counihan 2004, Leitch 2003). Most recently, studies of taste and alternative foods continue to explore the ways in which Italians derive their sense of self and participate in sociopolitical projects through agriculture and gastronomy, more often than not through direct engagements with the land (Grasseni 2013, Heatherington 2010).

In the logics and representations that surround Italy's gastro/agro economies, the unique qualities of a place and the cultural history of local inhabitants combine to forge singular products, an exclusivity protected by international trade law and by belief in *terroir*, the taste of place. But by laying these studies atop one another, a different triad of relations comes into view: Italians bring place into being—materially and symbolically—through their engagements with the land to create unique products. These forms of labor are co-constitutive: through acquiring the skills, knowledges, and roles that these crafts and places require, people also form their own identities and social worlds. Rather than farmers and craftsmen distilling the essence of a place into a product, I argue that the productive labor that makes these foods is what gives a place its distinguishing characteristics and forges a particular set of economic, ecological, and social relations between people and place. Agricultural labor in Italy is both productive and transformative. It brings new goods

and communities into the world while simultaneously reproducing the places and groups that serve as the means and modes of production.

The work that labor does

As Italians of all walks of life navigate the socioeconomic shifts that have been rocking Italy in waves since the mid twentieth century, they have been remaking themselves and their relationships to one another through various forms of labor.[7] Antonio Gramsci, Italy's Marxist heavyweight, identified the organization of labor as the deciding factor in the consciousness of Italy's social classes under Fascism, a vision that Italian workers realized, to some extent, in the sustained resistance of unions in the 1970s that won landmark labor regulations (Gramsci 2005). In the years that followed, women's entry to the workplace and the substitution of immigrant labor for affective care made possible a "quiet revolution" among Italian couples, one

[7] Italian national history begins with unification, a disjointed process carried out by various political elites by consolidating multiple states and pieces of empires that took most of the first half of the nineteenth century to complete, culminating in the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and the establishment of Rome as its capital in 1871.While unification may not have had an immediate impact on the daily lives of many Italians, the reforms of tax laws, land tenure, inheritance, and international trade circuits carried out over the decades that followed did. Other periods of systemic change included Italy's Fascist years, geared towards autarchy, imperialism, and military dominance, the chaos and violence of both World Wars, and the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the country in the postwar period. These overhauls of Italian life and labor continued into the 1970s, or the "Years of Lead," so called for the political terrorism carried out by both ends of the political spectrum and brutal struggles between labor and industry. After a period of relative prosperity in the 1980s and early 1990s, the consolidation of the European Union and the financial crisis of 2008 plunged Italy into an economic and political downward spiral from which it has yet to emerge.

that keeps Italian birthrates at a record low, restructuring both demographics and family life (Krause 2004). Since the early 2000s, the neoliberal workplace's differential contracts and a climate of precarity have produced new gendered and social classed worker subjectivities (Mole 2011), driving a new generation of young people to seek their fortunes outside of Italy. For Italians of all ages today, volunteer labor serves as an alternate form of citizenship in a nation that perceives the state as an antagonistic and corrupt presence (Muehlebach 2012), especially for the generation born to immigrants who have taken up entrepreneurship as a path to social recognition as participants in Italianness (Hawthorne 2018). Over the past century, labor in Italy has remained organized by ethnicity, gender, age, and class, but also allowed or forced the workers themselves to transcend or redefine those categories through the work they do and the relationships they forge through it.

Social science on labor and immigration to Italy has focused on the fact that immigrant labor is the input that makes Italian industries possible (and has since the 1990s, if not earlier), as well as the various forms of exploitation and marginalization that immigrants endure at the hands of their employers and the state (Ambrosini 1999, Colatrella 2001, Staid 2011). Some scholars highlight the ingenuity and expertise that immigrants display in their jobs, whether preparing meals in restaurant kitchens, tending tomatoes in the greenhouses of Sicily, or caring for Italy's growing population of elderly (Ananasso et al 2015, Catanzaro and Colombo 2009, Cole 1997). What remains largely relegated to anecdotal accounts, however, are the ways in which these forms of labor create new relationships between immigrants and

Italians, leaving both parties something other than what they had been before. I am not the first author to have noted that close working relationships between immigrants and Italians forge bonds of respect and trust, working the against the growing tide of racism and xenophobia in Europe (Cole and Booth 2007, Herzfeld 2011, Meyer 2015). But the transformative potential of particular forms of labor remains unexplored, as these cases are taken as examples of underlying human goodness and not as evidence of another relationship to immigration that permeates Italian life. In a moment when Italy is erupting in Fascist cries for ethnic purity and devolving into yet another political crisis with immigration as an inflammatory issue, these processes are more important than ever to document, publicize, and project as an alternate vision of the future.[8]

Other scholars have thought very carefully about the distinctions between work and labor, as well as the myriad of activities that constitute forms of labor—affective, reproductive, discursive—that often go unrecognized (Arendt 1958, Hardt 1999; Hardt and Negri 2000, Weeks 2011). I use the terms work, labor, tasks, and activities interchangeably in these pages to accurately cite my interlocutors and the authors to whose work I refer. But I do want to expand upon the various ways that people experience wine producing *labor*, and the variety of things they generate through their *work*, as both terms have deep ties to Fordist / capitalist / alienated /

[8] As I completed my revisions of this manuscript, politicians running for office in Italy's national elections of March 4, 2018 highlighted immigration as *the* issue that would decide the nation's future and capture the votes of their supporters. Despite the dedicated efforts of progressive groups, populist and center-right candidate with unapologetically anti-immigrant platforms commanded the most votes.

waged jobs. Three main ways of thinking about what labor *is* structure my analysis of what agricultural labor *does* in Canelli. Labor here is:

1.) *Physically demanding and embodied.* Whether working in humid heat surrounded by mosquitos or trudging for hours through snowy hills, vineyards are often uncomfortable environments. The slope of hillsides, shape of vines, and weight of packs of spray or crates of grapes requires considerable strength and stamina to navigate, no less so in the cellars than in the vines. Beyond muscles, calluses, or injuries, years of vineyard works also instills workers with embodied knowledges—recognizing and deciding by smell, texture, sight, or taste—that cannot be transmitted outside of accumulated experience.

2.) *Creative, skilled, and meaningful.* No two years are the same in agriculture, and grapevines in particular require patient and expert care. Unlike repetitive factory tasks or office busy work, working with living things requires constant innovation and finely honed abilities, qualities and experiences that endow daily tasks with a significance that goes beyond their utility both for the people who do this work and for the audience who assigns value to it.

3.) *Underpaid, flexible, and marked.* Viticultural labor, like most agricultural work, is generally underpaid. Despite remaining a top cost for growers, labor is one of the few expenses that they can try to cut back on, unlike rent, equipment, legally mandated agrochemicals, or certification expenses. Agricultural labor is also highly flexible, waxing or waning as the plants move through different seasons of the year and cycles of their productive lives, which makes maintaining a year-round, full-time workforce impractical for growers. Lastly, rather than a job that "anyone" can do, viticultural labor is marked: once performed by a certain class of person and organized among kin, today it is stratified into ethnic categories, each of which is understood to be suitable for different tasks and roles.

Each of these qualities gives winemaking labor a transformative potential that I explore as it organizes the lives of Italians, immigrants, and refugees in Canelli's hillsides today.

Immigration to Italy in the European Union

Immigration to Italy has commanded newspaper headlines, political debates, and scholarly pursuits since the late 1980s, when the arrival of Albanians, Moroccans, Tunisians and others to every region of the peninsula captured public attention (Ambrosini 1999, Cole 1997, Zinn 1996). Since 2000 and the opening of borders between European Union member states, Italy has taken the spotlight as the gateway to Europe, the landing ground for rubber boats, overcrowded buses, and exhausted journeyers from around the world. When the Dublin II Regulation (adopted in 2003) prohibited refugees from seeking asylum outside of the first country to process them, Italy and Southern Europe became a border zone for Northern Europe, burdened with the logistical and financial tasks of accommodating the increasing numbers of people fleeing chaos and violence across the Middle East and Africa.[9] Italy stretches out into the Mediterranean geographically, and Italian sovereignty exceeds its land borders,

[9] The Dublin II Accords are a revision and extension of the original Dublin Convention (1990), named for the city which hosted the negotiation of the EU laws regulating refugee and asylum seeker processing across member states. Under these laws, asylum seekers are limited by EURODAC (European Dactyloscopy), a fingerprint database, that records the first member state in which an asylum seeker was processed, the only state to which they can appeal for refugee status. In order to circumvent these laws, some refugees opt to remove their fingerprints entirely by heat or chemical ablation.

through *Mare Nostrum* and later *Triton,* operations that intercept small boats heading north from Libya.[10] Italy is not necessarily where immigrants and refugees want to try and start new lives, but it is often their only legal choice in doing so. In this context, *immigrati* has become a highly racialized term, one that invokes a faceless migrant—usually male, undocumented, and of color—to stand in for the millions of people of many of origins who live and work in Italy today (Silverstein 2005).

At the time of writing, Italy's economy—both formal and gray—is heavily reliant on immigrant labor of all kinds: agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work, elder care, service and hospitality all depend on immigrant employees (Cole and Booth 2007, Meyer 2015, Staid 2011). Each industry favors particular nationalities: it goes without saying in Italian parlance that a *badante*, a live-in caregiver, is a South American or Eastern European woman, and Italians may refer to *il pakistano* instead of the corner store or *la nostra filipina* rather than "our housekeeper." Ethnically marked and often undocumented, immigrants provide Italian businesses with the cheap, flexible labor that keeps these enterprises profitable. In the narratives that dominate political discourse and casual conversation, these dependencies are obscured by nationalist and racist sentiments: immigrants may

[10] Operation Mare Nostrum (from the Roman name for the Mediterranean, *our sea*) was a naval and air operation initiated in 2013 to locate and rescue boats of migrants sailing from Libya for the Italian coast. It was highly unpopular politically for the expenses borne primarily by Italian taxpayers (nine million euros a month for a year), but much more effective at saving lives than its replacement: Frontex's Operation Triton. Triton relies on donations from fifteen European nations but runs a much smaller set of activities to locate and rescue migrant boats, and has been blamed for the thousands of migrant drownings estimated for 2014-2016.

be useful or pitiable, but they are mainly described as net recipients of state funds and care, a threat to national security, or a stain on local customs (Ambrosini 1999, Giordano 2012, Nowak 2012b).

Studies that demonstrate the importance of immigrants as producers and reproducers of the nation—not only is Italy's economy staggering, but the birthrate for Italian nationals is at an all-time low (Krause and Milena 2007)—generally fall upon deaf ears in public discourse. Ambrosini's term "useful invaders" (1999) captures the hypocritical attitude that pervades media representations and common utterances about immigrants in Italy. At best acknowledged as necessary, the men and women it describes are not accorded worth beyond their use value as laboring bodies or fertile families, a narrow view of human life that young activists within the immigrant community have begun to contest (Hawthorne 2018). Often immigrant labor is erased entirely, hidden in factories, kitchens, or rural shantytowns (Herzfeld 2011, Staid 2011).

Consequently, there is not public recognition of the ways in which immigrant labor—highly skilled or toiling in de facto slavery—makes Italian products and customs possible. Rome's tourism board does not advertise the cohort of Egyptian *pizzaioli* who turn out most of the city's *pizza margherita* these days, nor does journalism decrying the conditions in which African tomato workers live taint favorite brands of *pomodori* or change attitudes towards the passengers of flimsy boats heading to Lampedusa. Some communities have banned "ethnic" food from their historic centers entirely in an effort to maintain a vision of untainted Italianness

(Donadio 2009, Il Fatto Quotidiano 2015). Immigrants pick the crops, wash the dishes, staff the markets, and deliver the pizzas, but they are not accorded a place in the values that Italians assign to their culinary heritage.

On the ground, however, encounters and relationships between Italians and immigrants take on more diverse forms. Chefs praise their skilled line cooks from Morocco, families weave Filipina women into their daily routines and homes, and elderly Italians spend their days in the company of Peruvian caregivers, who chat fluidly in obscure Italian dialects learned on the job. These men and women become a different category of person to those who know them, the named and vividly human exception to the figure of the *extracommunitario* or *migrante*. Though these intimacies do not foreclose exploitative or coercive conditions, many Italians are keenly aware of what immigrant care, skill, and knowledge contribute to their lives and communities. These instances remain largely in the realm of personal experience, however, and are not part of the national conversation about who immigrants are and what place they might have in Italy.

Gastronomy, wine, and terroir

Italy's agricultural and gastronomy sectors claim one of the highest concentration of immigrant workers in comparison to other industries. The presence of foreigners in Italian agriculture increased by 90 percent between 2001 and 2010 (Corado 2015). Farm fields, dairies, processing plants, factory floors, truck cabs, and restaurant kitchens are bustling with *stranieri,* many of whom have lived in Italy for

over a decade (ISTAT 2013). Parmesean cheese, prosciutto, olive oil and other iconic products rely on immigrants (Cinotto 2009, Contu 2011, Sias 2011), men and women who have assumed ways of life—shepherding, animal husbandry, twelve hour workdays—that Europeans want to consume, but not to inhabit.

These industries are more than ways to make a living: the landscapes, traditions, and tastes they reproduce are at the core of Italian and regional forms of identity (Counihan 2004). Negotiating ownership of the means of production—whether material resources or intangible knowledge—lies at the center of many contemporary struggles over the future of community traditions, in Italy and beyond (Aragon 2012, Cavanaugh 2007). In the Italian context, conflicts have been especially fierce when it comes to establishing standards, labels, and boundaries for food production (Cavanaugh 2007, Leitch 2003). Whether "stolen" by more powerful actors, frozen as private property, or vanishing from one generation to the next, protecting the ownership and transmission of the "know-how" is crucial to the integrity of material heritage products. Handing off responsibility for keeping these knowledges and crafts alive to foreigners is not an obvious boon for rural patrimony, but it is a phenomenon on the rise in Europe, particularly in the agrifood sector.

While I could have investigated the roles of immigrants in animal husbandry or orchards, I chose wine production for the prominent position it occupies in Italian consciousness. Wine carries a set of meanings and values that no other Italian food can claim. Described as *the blood of the earth* and celebrated as an art form that dates back to the Etruscan civilization, wine and vineyards represent the literal and

figurative roots of Italian agriculture and culinary excellence (Antonaros 2006). Wine was historically an essential element of the Italian table, both aesthetically and calorically (Holmes 1989, Soldati 1969), and it remains a central component of rituals large and small: happy hours, dinner parties, Sunday lunch with family, baptisms, Catholic mass, and holidays of all kinds. Though most of Italy's wine production is highly modernized, categorically it retains an aura of ancient roots and enduring legacies. As I elaborate in Chapters One and Two, this is much of what makes winegrowing and making profitable in Italy: celebrations of local history and dominant themes in marketing campaigns emphasize intact traditions and dynastic firms. Winemakers sell a world exempt from the passage of years and a life tied to seasons rather than decades.

The labeling schemes that organize wine production and the prices that Italian wines command in shops and restaurants are built upon a particular region's claim to autochthonous grapes and its unique terroir*:* the inimitable and indissoluble taste of place. Terroir as it operates in the wine world is much more than the geologic or climactic conditions that influence plant biology: it is a relationship between a place, its products, and the people who craft them. Guy's history of the concept from its origins in French wine production defines it as "the holistic combination in a vineyard environment of soil, climate, topography, and 'the soul' of the wine producer" (2003: 2). These relationships between place, people, and products lie at the core of the story that Italy tells about itself. They assume an enduring stability between a homogenous

population, a unique and bounded place, and the gustatory qualities of the resulting product.

The what, where, and how of terroir products like wine receive attention from scholars and certification schemes alike as these elements of production continue to transform (Black and Ulin 2013). But the *who* remains overlooked by both institutions and scholars. Ulin (2013) has examined relatively marginalized growers whose names are erased by cooperative vinification, and Lem (2013) attends to the gendering of wine labor in France, but there has been scant attention to the flexible labor force employed in viticulture around the world. Mirroring the erasure of ethnically marked workers by the wine industry, studies of contemporary wine production often overlook the bulk of the workers employed in winegrowing and making. Food studies researchers tend to focus on the crafting and consumption of wine, exploring multispecies collaborations as they unfold in the cellar or analyzing the concept of terroir as a French word becomes a global term (Black 2013, Demossier 2010, 2013, Sternsdorff Cisterna 2013). The hired help is invisible, or deplored as exploited labor but little else. *Who* is glossed, assumed, or narrowly perceived in the literature and media surrounding wine production.

Who is also implied or assumed in a world of heritage products legally bound to a single town or region. Scholars have attended to power struggles around roles and regulations in GI producer communities (Leitch 2003, Lem 2013, Cavanaugh 2007), but not to the crucial infusion of immigrants to stand in for absent kin. Institutions like Slow Food reinforce the exclusivity of ties between a place, people,

and product, but they do not ensure that anyone born and raised within the confines of a historic winegrowing zone will be interested in a life of agricultural labor. GI labeling protects a market by delimiting growing zones and standardizing the chemical qualities of the resulting wine. It does not protect the ecosystem from chemical degradation, contain the cost of production, or mend the social fabric of the communities woven around particular economies (Bowen and Zapata 2009). In many cases, trying to encode a complex craft world into the language of international trade agreements compromises one or all of these elements (Parry 2008, Parasecoli and Tasaki 2011).

Immigrant workers, on the other hand, effectively sustain environments, methods, and relationships. It is the fact of cheap immigrant labor that permits a modern wine sector to enact local traditions today, to commit to organic methods, and to transmit knowledge through in-place experience. Through their roles as apprentices and then masters of the craft, Balkan immigrants make these landscapes and places possible. They are the alternative to mechanized mega-holdings and the labor intensive replacement for herbicides. Their hard work and strategic adoption of Italian cultural forms protects a set of traditions otherwise precluded by industrialized lifestyles and global capitalism.

This story is not, however, the one that appears on wine list descriptions or in the region's tourism pamphlets. In celebrating Italy's cultural heritage and protecting the authenticity of its products, there is a blind spot around the fact that rural patrimony's most viable future is in the hands of people who are categorically not

Italian. Passing off the care and keeping of these knowledges and roles across ethnic or national boundaries is usually conceptualized as a threat to or dilution of value, somehow compromising the authenticity of the resulting product (Cinotto 2009, Colloredo-Mansfeld 2011). But in Europe today, transferring the stewardship of a landscape and an economy to categorical outsiders is a lifeline for all—the locals, the newcomers, and the plants themselves.

Popular discourse around agricultural and gastronomic traditions in Italy emphasizes what is lost or threatened, but upon closer examination, these are sites of generative and creative processes, not so much of loss as of becoming. While some aspects of Piedmont's winemaking heritage are rotting and rusting away, it remains a robust industry that generates over 300 million euros annually thanks to creative and hardworking immigrants. Old vintages can be safely stored in cellars, but in thinking seriously about the future of winemaking and viticulture in Italy, the relationships and environments these crafts and practices depend upon are what is most at stake. In this context, immigrants may well be Italy's best hope for keeping its traditions alive.

Canelli: Strangers in the vineyards and fields

The New York Times article on Italy's "dying towns" focused on communities in the southernmost regions, but it documents a legacy of transitions that have impacted the entire peninsula. Piedmont is no exception: dozens of the picture perfect villages of the Langhe and Monferrato are home to little more than a post office, a cafe, and crumbling terraces that no one has farmed for decades. Emigrants

originating from Piedmont numbered more than 154,000 between 1876 and 1915, many of whom left to seek work in France or Argentina (Cinotto 2009). In the first half of the twentieth century, more Piedmontese set their eyes on the Americas, going across the Atlantic for a season of work in the grain harvest or setting their sights on California, the so-called "Piedmont on the Pacific," where entrepreneurs from the Langhe were establishing some of the first wineries in Napa and Sonoma, importing both grape varieties and labor from their hometowns (Cinotto 2009, Pavese 1950).

Figure 4: The hills of the Alta Langa, with the Alps beyond (photo by author).

After the ravages of World War II, the *boom economico* of the 1950s and 1960s drew young people away from their family farms to find work in the new manufacturing industries popping up in Asti and Turin. The hills of the Langhe and Monferrato became a de facto dormitory, where only the elderly or invalid remained,

while hundreds of young people left for day jobs in the cities. "Only when darkness fell did the Langhe become young again, when the buses from the factories brought the young men and women back to the hills they had been raked from at dawn" (Revelli 1977: XXVII).

Despite the exodus of youth from the region, the vineyards of the Langhe and Monferrato continued to thrive. Unlike the southern Italian towns profiled by *The New York Times*, Canelli's privileged status in unified Italy's North made it a destination as well as a departure point. The population of the Astigiano actually grew after World War II, thanks to the arrival of immigrants from southern Italy (Aliberti 2005). From Sicily, Sardinia, Puglia, Calabria, and Basilicata, young men and families came north to look for a better life. Like their Piedmontese contemporaries, these emigrants left behind stagnant economies and rural villages to find a new life elsewhere. What young Canellesi saw as a life of thankless agricultural work, southern Italians seized as a chance to provide for their families, and they lost no time taking up the roles that Canellesi left behind. Testimonies from the period describe a diffident reception for the newcomers:

> *That was when the first immigrants from the South began to arrive, welcomed with scarcely concealed distrust, which gave way, slowly but surely, to small acts of solidarity and hospitality on everyone's part: help fixing up a house, the gift of an old heater, an unused dresser, and that sort of thing. They were men who wanted only to work, it did not matter if it was in the fields or in the small garages making enological machinery that young Canellesi, ambitious and full of talent, were building up…they were almost all from Piazza Armenia or Aidone, from the heart of Sicily, enough to create a small colony here. Almost the entire town had emigrated. And the third generation is Canellese, one hundred percent. By now those young pioneers are retired old men sitting on the benches near the main avenue and the kiosk…*
> (Aliberti 2005:139).

Canellesi were at initially wary of the *merdionali* (southern Italians) in the piazza. “The southerners who came north were like foreign people to the locals,” claimed a professor at Pollenzo’s University of Gastronomic Sciences.[11] “My grandmother was part of that generation,” he explained. “Even in the big cities, they would do everything in the street in front of their homes—shell peas, sort lentils, peel vegetables, wash linens—and certain apartments or entire blocks in Turin became southern enclaves, each village had their colony in the north.” But as these men and women proved themselves to be hard workers and little trouble, the local community gradually warmed. As the southerners learned local ways of working the land, they rooted their own families to the hillsides. “They were also farmers,” a winegrower in his eighties reminded me. “Which is why they made themselves at home here.” He patted the bench we were sitting on, indicating both Canelli and the bench itself as the territory of old men and women. Over three generations, their reception expanded from small gestures of assistance or offers of work to open socialization and eventually new ties of kinship between these groups. By the 1990s, grandchildren of

[11] Southern blood and cultural practices have become part and parcel of life in Canelli, blended smoothly into local families and flavors after generations in which southern Italians were considered a racially different people. This is a field of thought deeply rooted in Italian identity and consciousness, and one developed institutionally in nearby Turin, where the early methodologies of scientific racism are housed in a museum of Cesare Lombroso’s work, euphemistically titled the Museum of Criminal Anthropology, that documents northern studies of southern Italians to detect the biological condition of criminality. Death masks of executed prisoners and phrenology instruments for measuring skulls line the shelves, the apparatuses of colonialism’s structural racism that inspired a science to justify the violence it rested upon.

southern descent were taken up as *Canellesi DOC*—a title borrowed from the wine world, meaning authentic, genuine, and true. Their family names might still mark them as imports, but for all practical purposes, these families and their children are included in local social and economic life.

In their aspirations for the future, young people from southern families followed the example of their Piedmontese peers: they abandoned agricultural work as quickly as possible. Thus, in the 1980s, another wave of youth left the wine country, choosing to pursue a university education or white collar jobs in the cities. They returned home for holidays, or when the seasonal nature of winegrowing demanded as many hands as possible to harvest the grapes grown by their parents and grandparents, but their lives were not to be those of winegrowers.

Southerners and foreigners

In the postwar years, immigrants from the South kept Canelli from joining the ranks of hundreds of Italian communities whose ties to the land and local economy disintegrated thanks to mechanization, migration, and cheap imports. While smaller communities farther up the foothills did atrophy as part of Italy's mass exodus from rural communities to urban centers, Canelli's burgeoning wine industry attracted enough people to maintain a thriving town. *Asti Spumante* and *Moscato d'Asti* became popular around Northern Europe and the Americas, with prices for grapes encouraging farmers to expand production and maximize their yields. The hard work

of "other" Italians maintained the vineyards spreading rapidly across the hillsides, and their families kept businesses and schools open, a process that continues today.

On a summer evening in 2015, the benches that line the main avenue leading into the great sycamore tree at the heart of town were full, but not with southern Italians. The grizzled men enjoying a cigarette spoke amongst themselves in Macedonian or Romanian. Many of them arrived in the 1990s or early 2000s and have since bought homes on the edge of town. They and their families may not be Canellesi DOC, but the men and women who arrived to Canelli from the Balkans in the last two decades are in many ways the beating heart of this winemaking town. By 2013, foreigners made up 20 percent of Canelli's population, a significantly higher proportion than the national statistics, the immigrant portion of which hovers around 10 percent. Media coverage of immigration to Italy highlights the boats of refugees arriving from across the Mediterranean, but the largest group of international immigrants by far comes from the East. Romanians in Italy are more than twice as populous as the second largest group, Moroccans, followed closely by Albanians. In Canelli, the proportions are even more concentrated: Macedonians account for nearly 10 percent of the total population (which was approximately 10,000 in 2015), along with roughly 300 resident Romanians and 150 Bulgarians.[12]

In town these numbers are not immediately apparent. Shopkeepers are for the most part Italian, eateries boast little "ethnic" food, and posters for the *Lega Nord*,

[12] Statistics from ISTAT, at http://demo.istat.it/str2014/index.html and http://www.comuni-italiani.it/005/017/statistiche/stranieri.html

Northern Italy's right-wing secessionist and rabidly xenophobic political party, adorn signposts in the piazza. But between the rows of vines that rake the hills outside town, Italians become a minority. The men who work up to their knees in snow pruning vines, the women who carefully select which leaves and shoots to cull, and the harvest workers who haul crates of grapes up to the road are Macedonian, Romanian, or perhaps Bulgarian. Some settled in Canelli a decade ago, others arrived a month before by bus and will be gone in a few weeks. Pushed or pulled here by economic need, ripening grapes, and kin networks, they are the people who keep the traditions of the Belbo Valley vibrant and profitable.

Working closely with aging Italian farmers, these immigrants—like their *meridionale* predecessors—now embody the set of place-based sensory knowledges that comprise local heritage and keep small businesses viable. Vineyard work entails ways of *doing*—tolerating heat and snow, breathing dust and chemical sprays, and heaving wheelbarrows of grapes up steep inclines—and ways of *knowing*—the habits of different grape varietals, where to cut a cane or how to tie off shoots—that are transmitted via one-on-one mentorships and years of experience with the land itself. The crucial role they play in this community has fostered strong relationships between Balkan workers and Italian winegrowers, who use their social capital to help employees secure housing, obtain papers, and bring family to join them. Caring for grapevines here negotiates new forms of value and community in the peninsula that serves as a gateway to Europe. Citizenship in Italy is determined by blood, not soil,

but working the land forges a different kind of belonging in these hills.[13]

The heritage of the world

In 2014, the latticed hillsides and close-knit communities of the Belbo Valley were declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. *We are UNESCO!* newspaper headlines declared, and local shop displays remind everyone that they are on internationally famous ground. The result of a decade-long campaign to valorize and publicize the region and its industries, the UNESCO site includes viticultural landscapes, historic cellars still in use today, and traditions that keep place, people, and products bound up in a symbolic and marketable whole.

It is hard to imagine Canelli without vines and wine: the past and the future of this place and the people who call it home are tethered to grapevines and corked up in glass bottles. Wine has deep roots here, and local festivals, museums, and lore celebrate a wine-drenched past, albeit with a heavy dose of nostalgia. Farmers have been able to withstand the total mechanization and vertical integration that have

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[13] Italian law recognizes the transmission of citizenship primarily through blood, from parent to child or via marriage, in one of the most extensive *jus sanguinis* policies in the world, in no small part thanks to the substantial diaspora of Italian nationals around the world. Blood remains the guiding principle of citizenship, with birth and/or residence on Italian soil, *jus soli*, as an ancillary path to citizenship only accessible via a maze of bureaucratic hurdles and performances. For immigrants to Italy and the children they bear or raise there, this becomes a serious impediment to building permanent lives in Italy, exercising basic rights, or cultivating a sense of belonging among Italian nationals. The most recent (and failed) attempt to reform these laws put forward a new basis of citizenship: *jus culturae*, linking citizenship to the cultural formation that children acquire attending Italian elementary and middle schools.

decoupled people from the land around the world. Parcels remain small and scattered, techniques are still labor intensive, and more than half of Canelli's winegrowers vinify their own grapes in addition to provisioning the industrial wineries that put the town on the map.

Figure 5: Shops in Canelli proudly advertise their UNESCO status (photo by author).

In outward appearances, the community seems to live up to the claims made by UNESCO: "The vineyards of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato constitute an outstanding example of man's interaction with his natural environment…The use of the soils, the built structures and the social organization of all the stages of the winemaking process, from tending and harvesting the grapes to vinification, are an expression of continuity of ancient practices and expertise to form authentic ensembles in each component of the [heritage site]."[14]

[14] UNESCO's website for the Langhe and Monferrato heritage site, http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1390

If the wording of the title—World Heritage Site—suggests a communal ownership in these hillsides and cellars, the explication thereof binds the past and future of these traditional landscapes to a small community of Italian winegrowers, the *we* in *we are UNESCO*. Outsiders might come to photograph the hillsides or savor a glass, but the hillsides and wines do not, in this vision of place, belong to them. In this dissertation, I propose a very different way of understanding the roots of Canelli's wine industry and considering to whom it might belong in the future. Attending to pieces of the past that heritage narratives and wine marketing elide, I find coherence, rather than the disjunctures they might otherwise represent, in scenes from daily life in Canelli today.

Canelli remains a window onto the world, although perhaps not in the way Pavese intended. On an afternoon in late August, clusters of young men sat on the low wall near the roundabout chatting in a mixture of English, French, Wolof, and broken Italian. Mud spackled sedans parked along Via Roma have Macedonian flags hanging from the rear view mirror or Bulgarian plates. Market vendors who assemble their stalls on Friday mornings hawk their cardigans and kitchen gadgets in Italian, but they chat amongst themselves in Chinese, Arabic, and Albanian. A hotel that closed its doors in 2009 reopened in 2016 as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers. The family making their way across the piazza—the smallest children shrieking and running after their older siblings on bicycles—are Sri Lankan, and the two women sitting beneath the huge sycamore tree who watch them pass by have only recently arrived from Ethiopia to join their husbands here.

Meanwhile, the Italian men and women who make wine spend weeks of the winter and spring—the periods when a winemaker can leave the cellar—at international wine competitions hosted in Verona, Milan, New York, Tokyo, London, or Oslo. Instead of embarking on ships for the New World, they board airplanes toting luggage crammed with bottles, pouring tastings for distributors and sommeliers from around the world in hopes of finding new export contracts. The roadside signs directing motorists to "WINE TASTING" are written in German, English, Russian, and Japanese.

Pavese's Canelli describes a place from which wine and emigrants went out into the world, a node of international commerce in an otherwise rural hinterland. As I explore in these chapters, however, that traffic has never been one way: Canelli has been part of a network of people, plants, insects, capital, and practices in continual exchange and evolution for centuries. The wine country of the Belbo Valley does belong to the world: the infusions of knowledge, biota, and labor from beyond Italian borders have been central in making and remaking place here. Local heritage is shaped by elsewhere and made possible by Others just as much as it is tied to chalky soil in the hills or the fog that rolls in to blanket them in winter. Each of these imports and exchanges have contributed to the landscape and traditions of which Canellesi are fiercely proud. In the last century, the arrival of young people and families from elsewhere has been the lifeblood of this community, the able hands and bodies that have kept economies, practices, and knowledges alive. Today, Canelli remains a very

international place—a window to the world—and a place to think with when imagining the future of Italian and European traditions, economies, and landscapes.

Rethinking tradition and recentering immigrants

I have been living and working across Italy on and off between 2008 and 2016, which gave me a strong command of the Italian language and an exposure to the vast diversity of lifeworlds spread over the country's twenty regions. The research for this project was carried out in twelve months of fieldwork between 2013 and 2016. Conducting interviews, observations, and participating in the daily lives of my informants in Turin, Asti, and Canelli for two to four months at a time, the project evolved as I refocused the key sites and driving questions of my research.

The project was not originally about wine at all. Instead, I was exploring how a global community of immigrant vendors who work in Turin's massive outdoor market established relationships with their Italian clients—interactions that are historically built on reciprocal trust and friendship in Italian provisioning. From my interviews and observations, however, I found that people were not as preoccupied with who sold their food as they were with who had *made* it. Accordingly, I shifted my focus to sites of production, looking to Italy's agricultural sectors with immigrant employees just as the article that forever changed Canelli's reputation—*The Harvest of Shame*—made national headlines. I had worked a wine grape harvest the year before in California's Santa Cruz Mountains, and was keenly aware of the brutal conditions and invisibility in which harvest workers often labor. The next summer I

set out as a WWOOFer, offering my labor in exchange for room and board, and most importantly, an invitation to participate in the daily workings of the vineyards that immigrants had become so essential to maintaining.[15]

In seasonal periods over the next three years, I lived and worked on three family-owned vineyards and wineries. Rather than the traditional year in the field, my periodic returns allowed me to track variations in rhythms of work throughout the year. Like most agricultural endeavors, winegrowing and making are intensely seasonal activities—winter is spent pruning vines and tending barrels, spring tying off shoots and rotating soil, summer weeding and leaf thinning, and autumn is a whirlwind of harvesting and processing grapes. Likewise, this dissertation was researched and written through various seasons and vintages. Returning at different times of the year allowed me to make the most of periods when hardworking wine producers had time to talk and could allow me access to their world, or threw me into the hectic rhythms and tasks of busier seasons. It allowed me to recognize and think carefully with the changes that winegrowers lived through from one season and year to the next. As the winegrowers of Canelli insist, one cannot understand what it is to make wine until you do it, and my data are infused with the experiences of frigid foggy mornings, late nights in the cellars, and broiling afternoons spent working

[15] WWOOF stands for Willing Workers on Organic Farms, an international organization that coordinates exchanges of agricultural labor in return for room and board among small certified farms and those looking for experience in the sector, often abroad.

alongside Italians and immigrants, pushing my own physical limits and coming to know the smells, tastes, and textures of particular places and plants.

The smallest vineyard I worked at was a retirement farm for an elderly couple, the midsized an organic vineyard and social hub for young winemakers, and the largest a winery that had just acquired a new facility to expand into a bed and breakfast. Together, these contexts illustrated the diverse histories and realities that comprise the wine producing community, but also highlighted the stories and challenges they shared. Interviewing multiple generations of a dozen family-operated and three industrial wineries allowed me to recognize the overall patterns structuring this economy and social world, as well as the difficulties of operating an independent winery today. Long days working in vineyards and cellars alongside both Italians and Balkan employees, followed by evenings volunteering at the charity dormitory for harvest workers, brought the relationships, processes, and contradictions that I describe in these chapters into sharp relief. Interviews with public officials, journalists, and cooperative directors identified the figures and processes that the community collectively credited or blamed for the current state of affairs, as well as those they did not recognize as important actors.

When I was not weeding overgrown vineyards or frantically preparing boxes at the end of a bottling line, long walks with elderly residents of Canelli through its twisting streets, as well as afternoons in their musty living rooms full of regional magazines and fading photo albums, brought a world that has since vanished back to life. Mealtimes in an apartment I shared with students at the University of Turin's

extension program in Asti introduced me to the aspirations and perspectives of the next generation of farmers, enologists, and entrepreneurs. Ethnography is a full-time job, and daily conversations with neighbors, baristas, bus drivers, librarians, shop owners, and market vendors fleshed out a socioeconomic world that revolves entirely around the cultivation, production, and marketing of wine. With the exceptions of public officials, well-known industrial wineries, and those who requested that they be named in my text, I have given pseudonyms to the people quoted in these pages and the small wineries they operate.

I came to Canelli from California's San Francisco Bay Area, where agriculture, wine, gastronomy, and immigration are intimately tied up in one another. I arrived expecting to find exploited immigrant labor coexisting with poetic descriptions of winemaking traditions, much as it does in California's Sonoma and Napa Valleys. While there are certainly parallels to be drawn, I was intrigued by the other ways in which the Belbo Valley was similar to my home state: richly layered landscapes and hybridized cultural worlds created by deeper histories of human mobility, technological transformations, and connections to elsewhere.[16] I was familiar with Italy's long history as a Mediterranean crossroads between Europe, Africa, and the Levant, but I did not expect to find more recent patterns of change in

[16] California's iconic wine country exists in a circular relationship with my field site. As Simone Cinotto's history lays out, Piedmontese entrepreneurs and immigrant workers transformed the Napa and Sonoma Valleys from scrubby pasture land to vineyards and orchards purposely designed to evoke European landscapes (2012). Today, businesses and events in Piedmont invoke Napa Valley—both hoping to cash in on its aura and criticizing its perceived corporatism—with titles like "Food Valley."

Piedmont's foothills, where daily activities are presented as virtually unchanged and deeply rooted.

Doing this kind of research as a young American woman fluent in Italian and eager to volunteer her labor opened many doors, and I am forever indebted to the families and individuals who shared their worlds so generously with me. Accustomed to taking on Italian university students or wine obsessed foreigners as interns, I was not a complete anomaly in the cellars, though my interest in the hired help was perplexing to some of my interlocutors. In the piazzas, fields, and cafes, I was an unthreatening presence to whom people were kind and forthcoming—as an outsider to the community I was unlikely to report illegal activity or gossip about what I had been told. My gender and age made other spaces and encounters more fraught, limiting my access to bars or vineyards dominated by men far from home. Without Macedonian or Romanian language skills, my interactions were limited to immigrants who had significant experience in Italy, but they were also the figures in whom I was most interested. My data are primarily qualitative, but whenever possible I checked my informants' claims against official records and historical sources before highlighting an individual testimony as relevant for an entire community. Often the divergence between the authorized history and popular memory was an important form of data in and of itself.

By moving between the perspectives of multiple actors and stakeholders—winegrowers, enologists, exporters, vineyard managers, harvest workers, public officials, and asylum seekers—I bring a complex world of collaborations and

dependencies into focus. Canelli is a small place, but it remains a window to the world: the stories of old winemakers are also the dominant narratives about Italy or Europe writ large, and the endeavors of immigrants, seasonal workers, and refugees are enacted in countless communities across the Italian peninsula and the European Union. In these chapters, immigrants are not passive recipients, pitiable martyrs, or relegated to the last chapter; rather, they are the creative and dynamic actors at the heart of keeping local customs in practice and vulnerable economies viable.

These chapters mirror the dynamics of daily life in the Belbo Valley. The past is omnipresent, especially in providing a frame of reference for analyzing the present. Vineyards and hillsides are never out of sight, and they evoke the activities once carried out there, the demands of the current season, and hopes for the fruits they might bear. The narrative circles through different temporalities—seasons, plants, generations, nostalgia, and potential futures. It moves back and forth between various speakers, and complicates assumptions about Otherness and rootedness in a contemporary winemaking sector. Each brings another piece of the story into play, another layer of the past with which to consider the present, and a contribution towards answering the questions that guide my analysis:

How does the labor that making and selling wine requires transform environments, ecologies, and communities, turning terroir inside out?

How do the particular qualities of wine-producing labor craft the identities of Italians, immigrants, and refugees?

What are the potentialities and limits of labor's generative powers in Italy's agricultural communities, and what kind of place or people are imaginable for the future?

Chapter One uproots wine, digging into the histories of traveling plants and lifting the lids of imported technologies to trace the processes of movement and exchange that have shaped Canelli's ecological, economic, and cultural contours. In order to make sense of the predicament in which moscato growers find themselves today, pressured on all sides by a fickle export market and a vulnerable monoculture, I highlight the longstanding role of foreigners—imported species, traveling blights, stolen techniques, and export economies—in shaping local landscapes and wine production practices.[17] Rather than something untouched by time or the product of a single place, I argue that taste of place in Canelli comes into being through encounters with other places, a process that has only intensified in the era of overnight airfreight, single currency economies, and global climate change. Instead of insulated or "natural" expressions of place, the wines that leave Canelli today are the products of human mobility and hybrid landscapes.

Chapter Two peels back the layers of work and ecologies that have textured Canelli's hillsides and social fabric as the inhabitants transformed from peasant farmers to industrial winegrowers to winemakers for a global market. This layered past—both material and imagined—is at the center of how winegrowers navigate and

[17] Monoculture describes the cultivation of a single plant species in a given area, whereas polyculture refers to diversified agriculture that incorporates multiple species of plants, and often animals, into an overall production scheme, with the potential to draw on the complimentary aspects of different species that provide pest control, fertilization, or nutrients for one another. Monocultures, the standard of plantation and industrial agriculture, are notoriously vulnerable to pathogens or climactic events, whereas polycultures are a more resilient form of cultivation, if less profitable in the short-term.

assign meaning to the work they share with immigrants today. Writing against the continuity emphasized by wine world rhetoric, here I focus on the instability of place as it brings other relations into focus: as Canellesi remake their hillsides from one generation to the next, they also remake their own identities and community. In everyday exchanges and storytelling, winemaking families claim profound connections to the land, the vines, and the wines they produce, highlighting their roots in a particular place. At the same time, they emphasize how quickly things have changed within living memory, evoking a profound uncertainty about the future of their traditions and home. Drawing on individual recollections and documented transformations, I emphasize the transformative work that the labor of farming families has carried out here, and the role of that past in how growers make hard decisions in the present.

Chapter Three focuses on the past and present of the much celebrated *contadini* (peasant farmers) of Canelli's hillsides, a role and a way of being in the world that has been handed off from aging Italians to able-bodied Macedonians and Romanians. I show how the invocation of the *contadino* in bodily forms and daily performances renders identities malleable here. The contadino does not extend the mantle of Italianness, but it does resignify foreigners with values that make them ideal employees and community members. When the residents of Canelli refer to a Macedonian immigrant as a contadino, it binds that person to the shared patrimony of poverty from which local identities are hewn. Through the habitus and responsibilities acquired by Balkan workers and the discursive labor performed by Italian employers,

these partnerships blur time and space to fit the needs of both parties, folding outsiders into the narrative of tradition. When it comes to the next generation of contadini, however, entrenched prejudices or blind spots preclude inheritance of the means of production to non-Italian community members.

The winemaking year comes to a frantic climax in August and September, when the grape harvest, *la vendemmia*, transforms Canelli from a sleepy town to a bustling black market for labor, dubbed "The Harvest of Shame" by Italian media. Chapter Four examines how the landscape, the state, and the substitution of foreign workers for Italian labor have broken the relationships and rhythms that once characterized the vendemmia. From a family ritual that strengthened community ties, it has become a season marked by paranoia, police raids, and uncomfortable dependencies. Canelli's residents enact a simultaneous celebration of the vendemmia *and* the transferal of harvesting labor to people who do not need to be fed, housed, or protected by labor laws. By outsourcing the flexible and underpaid labor that has long characterized winegrowing in this region, I argue that the Italian residents of Canelli have been able to fetishize the roles they no longer occupy, both by turning them into a romanticized source of value and by abstracting the people who carry them out into a nameless, faceless whole. The restructuring of who does harvest work comes at a cost: in a community where identities are constructed through the labor of growing and making wine, dehumanizing those who perform harvest work frays the ties that bind people to the land and the products they create from it.

My final chapter explores potential futures for this community, considering how collaborations forged through working the land—partnerships that extend across the boundaries of ethnicity, citizenship, and race—offer forms of security and sustainability to multiple groups that state institutions or agricultural technologies do not. I focus on the experiences of Canelli's newest residents: asylum seekers from across the African continent who operate an agricultural cooperative that reclaims abandoned farmland. Though these young men revive forms of cultivation that bear a close resemblance to past landscapes and lifeworlds here (much more so than intensive winegrowing), local prejudices deny them recognition as a valuable asset to the community. Like the harvests of past seasons, the work of rooting people to the land through labor requires participation by the entire community to succeed. In the context of aging communities, an unpredictable climate, and an increasingly competitive market, however, the roles and labor these young men offer allow for a more diverse vision of what kind of place and community Canelli could become in the future.

Chapter One: Uprooting Wine

A story of Piedmontese moscato that sold for 1,300 euros per quintale when that appellation indicated the 'perfumed' grape. A perfume that seems to be losing its fragrance today. As the years go by it has almost become a stench, at least on the market. What will happen to one of Italy's most prized native grapes? Most of all, what will happen to the many producers? And still, what will become of these beautiful hillsides that are the pride of Italy?

Enolò, 2017

The rise and fall of moscato

On a hot night in August, the Regional Consortium of Moscato d'Asti invited the *moscatisti*—the moscato growers—to meet with the consortium leaders and major regional buyers to discuss the 2016 harvest regulations.[18] The *vendemmia*—the wine grape harvest—was due to start any day, and tensions ran high among the producers whose annual income would be determined in the coming weeks. Just down the road from Santo Stefano's central piazza, with its requisite church and smattering of small shops and bars, the town hall spilled light and people out into the night air. By 9:00 p.m., the 200 folding chairs were more than full, and latecomers began lining the walls. Clustered in small groups or peering in the open windows, the moscatisti

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[18] Consortia serve as governing bodies for winegrowers and makers within a demarcated geographical zone producing specific denominations of wine. Composed by a committee of growers, buyers, and bottlers, consortia operate as the bureaucratic and organizational middleman between the EU or the state and the industry itself: they set production standards and enforce regulations, decide price minimums, organize regional events, and direct marketing campaigns or brand protection initiatives. Consortia turn practices into codes, delimiting what winegrowers within their jurisdiction can or cannot do in order to sell wine with a Geographical Indication, retaining regional autonomy in standardizing agricultural regulations (Gori and Sottini 2014).

assembled with drawn faces, cigarette smoke wafting in clouds near the doors. The hall was buzzing with low voices and tightly clenched jaws—everyone there had a strong opinion on the matter, and thousands of euros on the line.

Each year, the Regional Consortium of Moscato d'Asti decides the maximum yields and minimum price points for each grade of wine grape. By spring of 2015, the consortium decided that the sector had prioritized production at the expense of promotion: making plenty of wine, but not enough of a market to sell it. Consortium directors decided to reduce the maximum yields per hectare and announced that a percentage of all top-tier grape sales would contribute to a marketing fund, operated by the Moscato d'Asti Consortium. This fund would pay for new marketing campaigns and strategies to boost sales in Italy and internationally, though there was no discussion of proposed projects or budgets.

Opposition was immediate and widespread, and tonight the moscatisti had come to voice their opinions. They were mostly men, aged forty to eighty, with the average age in the room near sixty. Clothes were clean and pressed, but the men and women with weathered hands and creased faces were recognizably farmers. They drove here in well-oiled sedans and live in comfortable homes, but their lives remain tied to the land, the weather, and the market—all of which had been behaving in unprecedented ways. This evening, before a long table filled with the wealthiest men in town, they felt betrayed.

Figure 6: Moscatisti crowded in for the meeting with the consortium leaders and industrial buyers (photos by author).

There is an enduring class difference between the crisp oxfords and shiny shoes seated at the long table up front and the mass of hard set faces in the crowd. Until the twentieth century, land in the Belbo Valley was owned by a few powerful families, who rented parcels for cash or shares to peasant families (Archimeade 1970). Even after the land reforms of the 1880s, when households began purchasing small farms after years of scrupulous saving, families that grew grapes for the big wineries of Canelli and Santo Stefano continued to be systematically sold short: with few large buyers setting prices, growers had little bargaining power when selling their grapes, an upper hand that brokers and buyers further exploited through false promises and manipulative grading standards (Cirio 1990). When a prominent consortium member had been found guilty of doctoring growing zone maps to his own advantage in recent years, he remained an active member of the industry community all the same. No one in this room had forgotten that past. The consortium

is supposed to advocate for the interests of winegrowers, but few of the men seated at the head table spent much time in vineyards. Chins in hand, sunburned bald spots reflecting the overhead lights, the farmers formed an unmoving block of palpable distrust.

"No one here tonight is poor," the journalist accompanying me quipped under his breath, scanning the crowded hall while more growers filed in. "If a *contadino* is good at one thing, it's saving. He'll die of hunger with a million in the bank.[19] A lot of people have taken out big loans though, to buy more land, build a winery, plant new vines, and they're worried about paying those loans off, because their income is not what it was when they took them out."[20]

Once the room was packed beyond capacity, the president of Bosca Wines opened the evening by going straight to the heart of the matter. "We find ourselves in an unprecedented situation. The prices will not raise themselves—the market does that. Do you know how many hectares are planted in moscato today? The fund will

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[19] *Contadino* (singular) or *contadini* (plural) is the Italian term for peasant or small farmer, but it carries many different valences depending upon the context in which it is used. From a term for poor subsistence farmers that invoked an uneducated, backwards, and brutish class, it became a positive identification of strong ties to the land and simple, austere lifestyles that urban Italians found lacking in their lives after the mass exodus to the cities in the postwar years (Krause 2005). For a populace that remained largely rural until the 1950s, the *contadino* represents a common past that is quickly slipping out of living memory. I elaborate further on this title and the work it does in Italy today in Chapter Three.

[20] As Kolleen Guy pointed out, the myth of the avarice of the farmer is a common one and an old story that extends far beyond Italy, a stereotype that describes a stingy, greedy peasant who is not to be taken at face value. Whether or not farmers have savings accounts, the figure of the stingy farmer assumes that agriculturalists' protests and struggles have little merit unless they are truly impoverished, a perspective that obscures many of the practicalities of agricultural and rural life.

raise four million euro, and if we do not use it to improve the market, our prices are going to keep going down." Here he paused to let the gravity of his decree sink in, before presenting his solution to the problem. "Barolo and Prosecco are the examples to follow. If we do not intervene, everyone will try to undercut his neighbor and the prices will go through the floor. Exports have been falling for years and Moscato is not a wine for every day. Who here actually has a bottle of Asti in their fridge right now?" Almost everyone put a hand up. Eyebrows raised in disbelief, he demanded, "Yes, but who really has one?"

The conversation began in Italian, but spiraled quickly into dialect as tempers flared. "I'm a *contadino*," yelled one smartly dressed woman, standing up from her chair and raising a fist into the air, "and I'll tell you how things are for us! Our job is to grow grapes! That's what makes life work around here! Not to pay for or run marketing campaigns. Did prosecco growers have to pay to market their grapes? We cannot even pay our rents at seventy-eight *quintali* per hectare! At ninety-five, sure, but those who have worked hard all year, who haven't used herbicides or chemicals, now they'll be earning less." [21] The room erupted into applause and hollering, with a dozen people who all wanted to command the microphone at once.

Prosecco was taken up as an example by both sides of the debate. Sparkling and slightly sweeter than Champagne or Cava, Prosecco is among Italy's most exported wines. It has exploded in popularity in the past decade thanks to a dedicated

[21] A *quintale* is measurement equal to 100 kilograms, while a hectare is 1,000 square meters.

marketing campaign, a global taste for sparkling wine, and a dramatic expansion of the official territory in which it can be grown that keeps prices low.[22] The owners of Canelli's industrial wineries spun Prosecco as an example of global success to follow. They had plenty of vineyards growing moscato, and had previously enjoyed a vibrant export market for sweet and floral sparkling wine. All they needed now, they argued, was a marketing campaign to generate consumer interest. Growers were keen for more market share, but saw what they call *prosecchizazione*—expanding vineyards far beyond the region (let alone the province) in which they had been historically grown—as a complete gutting of the ties between product and place.[23]

Cheap industrial Moscato was the other scapegoat in the room. Like olive oil cut with cheaper substitutes, low cost wine producers often mix grapes from multiple sources and use chemical additives to standardize flavors from one year to the next. The results? Supermarket Moscato for five euros that eats into the market share of the moscatisti of the Belbo, whose self-produced bottles retail for closer to twenty euros. "If we pull product from the market, industry will just find a tank of grapes from

[22] Prosecco can be made from a mixture of many grapes, mainly glera but also including verdiso, bianchetta trevigiana, perera, chardonnay, pinot bianco, pinot grigio and pinot noir. The historic growing zone of prosecco grapes remains the area designated for Prosecco D.O.C.G. (Denomination of Origins, Controlled and *Guaranteed*) producers near Treviso, approximately 7,500 hectares total. Prosecco D.O.C. is grown across a much larger area, approximately 23,000 hectares, that churns out nearly 500 million bottles each year.

[23] In Veneto, the mass expansion of prosecco vines, or *prosecchizzazione*, and the deforestation it fueled was blamed for a landslide that killed four in 2014. Hip wine bars or cafes in the Langhe and Monferrato may display signs that read *non prosecchizzazato* or include a note on their menu explaining why they are boycotting Prosecco in favor of other sparkling wines.

Spain, bottle it, and call it Italian," shouted another grower, to massive applause from his peers. "This three euro Moscato crap is killing us!" Despite their exclusive hold on producing Moscato d'Asti, growers could not keep other places from growing moscato grapes or industrial wineries from purchasing them.

The frustrations voiced that night were not unfounded: a glut of cheap sparkling wine, the overproduction of moscato grapes, and a shift among the industrial wine giants to investing in liquor all threatened to undermine the foundations of an entire community. Canelli has spent over a century branding itself as the capital of *Asti Spumante* and *Moscato d'Asti*: sweet, golden, sparkling wines that were falling out of style. Despite cultivating hillsides that became UNESCO World Heritage in 2014 for their viticultural vistas and producing wine under a Denomination of Origin label, these forms of prestige and regulation do not guarantee a market for their wines. Nor do these titles ensure a future for the carefully sculpted vines that reproduce these landscapes each year. This leaves winegrowers in a precarious position: if moscato prices remain low, growers will have to replant their vineyards with different grapes, convert their land to other commercial crops, or rent their land to Swiss vacationers or corporate wineries. Alternatively, they can continue to grow moscato grapes, but they will have to re-invent the taste of Moscato d'Asti to please a new generation of consumers. In Canelli, the "Moscato Capital of the World," the sustainability of local landscapes, the financial solubility of traditions, and the particular taste of this place hinge upon the whims of a global market and the industrial monoculture that developed to sate its thirst.

The taste of many places

Moscato d'Asti received its Geographical Indication status, known in Italy as *Denominazione di Origine Controllata* or DOC in 1967, though demarcations of the area in which it could be officially grown were established as early as 1931.[24] Appellations for wine as they operate today began in France, with the delimitation of Champagne's production zones, but have spread across Europe and the rest of the world as the circulation of foods, animals, and plants made place-based products both profitable and vulnerable to imitation. The idea that certain foods come from certain places is much older, but international trade law designed to enforce exclusive access to place as a brand are products of the mobile, global, twentieth century. As Guy has noted, terroir was originally meant to be ascriptive or aspirational rather than eternal or absolute, built on an understanding of place that allowed for evolution, a concept that postmodern nostalgia and trademark law have turned into something else. Food and wine labeled as "typical" (*tipico* in Italian) or marked by geographical indications in Italy today are legally—and theoretically inextricably—tied to a single territory and its particular botanical and cultural characteristics.

These products are not just traditional or autochthonous, but understood to be "bearers of the historical know-how that would flourish in that particular locality" (Grasseni 2016: 55). Geographical Indications meld the qualities of a wine to the character of its producers, both environmental and human, a fusion that has been

[24] See the Consortium of Asti D.O.C.G website for more details: http://www.astidocg.it/en/storia/

replicated in marketing, literary tropes, political campaigns, and daily speech for centuries, and one that is understood to be both "natural" and eternal (Guy 2003). The dominant narratives selling wine in Italy (and elsewhere in Europe) present a timeless and indigenous landscape, one "rich in history" or "steeped in tradition," where human activities and natural phenomena blur into one another. One example from a Canelli winery reads:

> *The Langhe are a very ancient territory and a fascinating one. Their formation, distinguished by deep and narrow valleys, was sculpted by the waters that once covered the territory. On this primeval formation, composed of limestone, clay, and marl rocks, a natural union was born between the wine and the land: the roots of the vines dig deep in search of minerals that enrich the wine and stabilize the soil, while the bunches of grapes, thanks to particularly favorable conditions, reach a perfect maturation. Even more splendid is the perfect marriage that man has created with his environment, giving life to a unique viticultural landscape that in 2014 earned the prestigious recognition of a UNESCO site*.

The images of vineyards and the languages that portray them in these publications describe places as destined for particular grapes and the owners of unique flavors: these hills have always produced wine, this valley is perfectly suited to grow pinot noir, we have been making wine here for generations. The canonization of Piedmont's wine country as UNESCO World Heritage confers institutional authority on the ancient roots of these geometric jungles.

Wine marketing and the bureaucratic regulations that organize winemaking here insist that the sensorial qualities of wines are made by one specific place. Wine tasting classes held in Asti describe the precise location and soil composition of a bottle before anyone takes a sip. The Bank of Wine at Pollenzo's University of Gastronomica Sciences displays glass jars of earth collected from each of the

vineyards represented in the bottles within its vaults. Maps delimiting growing zones and wine bottle labels describe mineral rich earth or the orientation of hillsides towards the sun's path, assigning productive agency to the chemical or geographic properties of a place.

While any winegrower will readily affirm that certain places are best suited to certain grapes, the discursive construction of those places isolates them from anywhere and anyone else. *Place*, in this ordering of the world, precedes human activity (or at most acts in harmony with it), with *taste* as the distilled essence coaxed from it. The qualities that distinguish grapes grown on one side of a river valley from the opposite bank are understood to owe their pedigree to biological processes rather than human histories.

Figures 7 and 8: A bottle of wine displayed with a jar of soil at the Banca del Vino in Pollenzo. Typical marketing images nestle wine in the vineyards, omitting human labor and intervention (photos by author).

This way of thinking about wine—as the "natural" product of singular landscapes—has been challenged on multiple fronts that emphasize human intervention over geographic variables. In terms of production, Nowak's critique points out the myriad of alterations—new breeds of animals and plants, piped in water supplies, technological overhauls of production practices—that he argues invalidate any residual continuity with past flavors or local specificity (2012a). If human labor is acknowledged at all, he points out, it is as nurturing the growth of the plants and transforming grapes into wine once they are in the cellar, though with minimal details on just how this is done. When it comes to the hierarchy of value that organizes wine growing regions—in theory derived from their superior soils or salty breezes—Ulin's study of French winegrowers traces how Bordeaux's modern prestige is not due to unique geography or climate but to British export strategies and invented aristocracies (1996), while Jung's work demonstrates how struggles over Geographic Indications are more about cultural politics or political economy than the quality of the land or wine itself (2013). The contents of a bottle and the price it commands are tied to a physical space, but one made distinct or valuable through human activities and projects.

Terroir, wine's central organizing concept, does include human activity, but in a quasi-mythical relationship to the product itself. Terroir is most commonly translated from its French roots to the *taste of place*. Guy defines it as "the holistic combination in a vineyard environment of soil, climate, topography, and 'the soul' of the wine producer" (2003: 2). She traces the use of the word to the eighteenth century

in France, where it also described the people originating in certain *pays* and evolved into a discourse on health, character, and national pride. Winegrower knowledge and the character of the winegrower himself (and it was always a him officially, though not always in practice) were understood to craft the qualities of the wine, transmitted through his care for the plants and his sensibilities in the cellar. This romantic relationship permeates the wording of winery websites and tasting room talk.

Today, the concept of terroir is a way of sensing place, consuming place, making matter out of place, and making place matter (Trubek 2008). It describes the unique product that emerges from a specific place/environment and form of practice/tradition, what Meneley calls "a kind of Latourian hybrid of nature, culture, land, *techne*, technology and climate" (2007: 683). Terroir holds together human values, knowledge, skill, and taste, working in tandem with place and climate to produce something edible that represents it all. It offers a taste that cannot be reproduced elsewhere or by anyone else (an exclusivity enforced, for some products, by international trade law). Studies of how this concept operates in marketing campaigns and the expansion of vineyards in the New World highlight how winegrowers and brokers weave new stories in order to link wine production to concepts that appeal to various consumers: rootedness, exclusivity, exotica, or heritage (Black and Ulin 2013). Both proponents of terroir and critiques of it, however, stop short of acknowledging the extent to which these landscapes and tastes emerged through human labor *and* human mobility.

The leafy corridors that rake the hills of the Astigiano and the unique flavors of the wines that are made from them are not as stable or as insulated a place as the narratives of terroir suggest. Instead, the global interconnectedness of commercial viticulture and evolving wine markets keep changing which plants will thrive and which bottles will sell. Italy's historic wine country is not outside of the "global hierarchy of value" that Herzfeld describes, in which the global lies in the heart of the local, which asserts itself as an imposed aesthetic authority to decide what is desirable and valuable (2004). Winegrowers today continually rip out old vineyards and replant the land to adapt it for a grape varietal that is selling well in Hong Kong or Munich. Meanwhile, moscato growers raise their hackles at the mention of the bottles of cheap sparkling wine that Spanish firms are churning out by the million, looking for new ways to find drinkers for their spumante, even if that means changing its signature taste.

This is not the first time that international dynamics have remade the taste of place in Canelli through new viticultural and enological practices. Rather, the current predicament of moscato growers has roots in a much longer history of motion, exchange, and hybridity. From the importation of new plants and techniques that transformed these hillsides to the flows of capital, populations, and desires that drove the development of Canelli's current landscapes and economy, multiple continents have participated in the assemblage of lifeforms and techniques that produce the flavors of Moscato made in Canelli today. From this vantage, the crises overhauling the Astigiano's wine industry are not a breach of tradition so much as a new page in a

longer story of global capitalism, man-made environments, and populations on the move.

Analyses of New World terroir are often more critical than those focused on European uses of terroir, where a deeper history of crafting a particular food is assumed to deploy less innovative uses of the concept. Paxson's exploration of how artisanal cheesemakers in the United States "reverse engineer" terroir flips what she calls the European model, in which products emerge from the pre-existing qualities of a place and a community with a long history of crafting that food. Instead, Paxson shows how the taskscape (Ingold 1993) of cheesemaking impacts the development—both social and natural—of a landscape, imbuing it with an ethos that is more about a vision than a vista (2010). I argue that the for-grantedness of European enactments of terroir obscures a more dynamic relationship between networks of actors on both sides of the Atlantic. In Italy's moscato capital, producers are not reverse engineering a place around an ethos so much as they are continually remaking an interlinked set of identities: those of a place, those of a product, and those they claim as part of their personhood.

In this chapter, I take up the terroir of Canelli's wines as composed of many places, a taste created by centuries of international exchange of materials and ideas rather than one place or community, and a process that continues to shift the ground beneath producers' feet today. Uprooting wine reveals how the hillsides of the Astigiano are indeed the heritage of the world. The ingredients, species, tools, and know-how that make wine here did not emerge fully formed from a neatly mapped

locale: they came into being through a series of encounters and exchanges across borders and oceans. The trajectory of grapevines that I explore in this chapter unpacks local traditions in the Belbo Valley, recognizing the myriad of other places that manifest in material lifeforms and producer practices. My purpose is not to debunk terroir so much as to contest the narrow claims of ownership it suggests, ideas that structure winemaking's official past here and limit access to participating in it. Attending to the mobility and hybridity built into wine in the Astigiano, I aim to open up a wider set of possibilities for whom it might belong to in the future.

Uprooting wine

Grapevines push us to think about the globalization of European places and tastes as a process that has been in motion for thousands rather than dozens of years. Whether considering the Mediterranean as a community characterized by flows and exchanges (Braudel 1949) or tracing the ubiquity of sugar Western diets as it was made possible by slave labor and commodity crop plantations (Mintz 1985), scholarship that takes a longue durée perspective or a political economy approach paints the construction of European culinary landscapes and worlds in broad strokes of movement. Histories of Italian landscapes and the ways of life associated with them depict places that are the result of human mobility and encounters rather than insulated autochthonous developments (Sereni 1961), a deeply layered strata of engagements with the land and with other communities. In these perspectives, the consortia zones and claims on tradition so contested and important today vanish in a

messier history of plants, people, technologies, and markets. The connections to other continents that vines have catalyzed and the transformations resulting from those ties—phenomena that characterize life in Europe today—have much older precedent.

Geographical Indications, on the other hand, isolate grapevines, freezing them in a particular moment and separating them from elsewhere so as to make their products profitable in a global market. They capitalize on a pastoral ideal of place with a single essential identity, constructed by an inward-looking history. Likewise, wine media describes the qualities of soil, the slope of hills, and tightly knit communities working in harmony with the land. Materially speaking, the hills of the Belbo Valley do have a particular set of geologic and climactic conditions that, combined with human labor, make winegrowing profitable. But the concept of place as isolated and insulated, as Massey points out, quickly falls apart when considering the fuller history of any actual place. "What gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus… Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations" (Massey 1991: 27, 28). Place is material, sensorial, and labor intensive, as scholars have thoroughly documented and as I discuss further in Chapter Two, but also composite, something that comes into being through human networks and movement far beyond its physical edges.

The constellations that I map out here are both material and ideational. In addition to the circulation of biota and techniques that make wine possible here, global networks also make wine valuable. Value and codification for GI products develop in response to connections with other places: the commodification of edible heritage usually takes place in order to court a national or international clientele rather than to profit from local habits or tastes. In the process, these culinary traditions are not "invented" (Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983) so much as re-invented: remodeled or rearticulated within a particular frame of broader patrimony and profitability (Di Giovine 2016, Grasseni 2011). In the wine world, the development of the French AOC system upon which Italy's DOC and DOCG labels are modeled was a response to the circulation of French wines beyond regional and national borders and the encroachment of foreign imposters in the early twentieth century (Guy 2013).[25] As wine becomes an increasingly global commodity, scholars have documented the ways in which transnationalism generates new meanings and forms of value for wine, representations that disconnect it from those it carries in sites of production (Demossier 2013), a process that I argue has been in motion for much

[25] Italian wine is organized into a hierarchy of GI labels. At the top, DOCG—*Denominazione di origine controllata e garantita*—indicates the most stringent regulations for historic growing zones and production standards. DOC—*Denominazione di origine controllata*—is one step below but attests to historical roots and regulated practices. IGT—*Indicazione geografica tipica*—implies some historical continuity, or typicality of the wine, in the zone of production, while VdT—*Vino da Tavola*—is not regulated by growing zone or production standards. While overall quality and price often correspond to this schematic, some of Italy's most prestigious bottles are produced as table wine so as to allow producers total creative agency.

longer than these studies suggest. GI labels and the marketability of terroir are predicated on rooting wine to one place, drawing the boundaries of who can cultivate what, and glossing over the ways in which the taste of any one place is indebted to others.

A closer look at how GI products like wine evolved and circulated beyond their locality of origin suggests that what makes any given product possible or desirable in the first place is produced just as much by *elsewhere* as by here. Examining the activities and choices of wine producers in the Belbo Valley as composed of a constellation of places intersecting in particular relations does far more justice to the world in which they work. Materially, the ecosystem in which winegrowers cultivate moscato is composed of multiple continents, an agricultural assemblage made possible by human connections between very different places. The resulting wines—their color, flavors, aromas—represent a global portfolio of desires, techniques, and investments just as much as the traditions of Piedmontese farmers. The vineyards and cellars that put Canelli on the map were always an economy and environment made of motion and exchange. The historic wineries responsible are well aware of their global presence, proclaiming that their wines bring the best of the region and of Italy to the world. What does not appear in festival banners or advertising campaigns are the ways in which spumante has also brought the world to Canelli.

Westernizing vines

Italy boasts hundreds of autochthonous grape varietals today, but grapevines are not native to Italy. *Vitis viniferis*, the species from which all modern grapevines are descended, traces its oldest specimens to the Caucasus and gradually made its way across the Middle East and Turkey to the Mediterranean, helped by animals and people who carried a taste for wine with them (Lanati 2014). Textual records trace winemaking to Egypt and Mesopotamia long before any sites in the Western Mediterranean, where grapevines arrived via Greek colonists and Phoenician trading routes (ibid). Popular histories of wine production and wine marketing published in Italy usually gloss over this history, erasing the eastern and southern roots of grapevines and picking up the thread only once vineyards were firmly established on the Italian peninsula. If Egyptian winemaking is mentioned at all, the references are to biblical sources, corralling wine's past back into the domain of Christianity and Western history. Focusing on the trajectory of the vines themselves allows a different story to emerge, one in which wine is just at home in North Africa or the Balkans (where it can indeed be found today) as on any European hilltop.[26]

Roman "Italy," the iconic image of a unified and powerful peninsula, serves as the dawn of wine history in Italian discourses. Vines followed in the footsteps of empire, rooting deeply into new soils and unfurling across Italy's hills and plains (Craco Ruggini 1994). Sufficiently ancient to support claims of "forever," the mass

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[26] See Guy 2010 on Algerian wine production and Jung 2013 on Bulgarian winemakers.

production of wine grapes on Roman *latifundia* for a market that stretched across the continent is prominent in marketing claims of vines with old roots, even if the horticultural and enological practices were wildly different than those practiced today. This version of history glosses over the tumult of the past 1,500 years, however, and the agricultural, economic, and social regimes that have come and gone in the meantime. By suggesting that the commercial monoculture that dominates this environment has endured for a millennium, these stories also insist that the grapes grown here and the wines they produce have also changed little in the centuries between then and now.

The origins of Piedmontese winemaking are tied to collaborations between migrating populations: the Etruscan civilization, which competed with the Gauls for land in present day Piedmont, left behind traces of viticulture from the second century B.C. (Gaddo 2013). The Etruscans cultivated domesticated vines on the foothills of the Alps, with sweeter and larger clusters than wild varieties. Italy boasts more than 350 autochthonous varietals today, descendants of the grapevines that made themselves "at home" across the Italian peninsula and that each region is fiercely proud to cultivate. Meanwhile, the Celtic Gauls contributed wooden barrels that transformed how wine could be aged and transported (Molli Boffa 1994). From Georgian origins and through multiple empire and kingdoms, the flavors and traditions that make Piedmont's wines famous today were first realized by the combined technologies and flora of distant lands and civilizations on the move.

Export economies and evolving tastes

The wine trade rose and fell through the centuries as different political regimes rendered production and distribution more or less difficult to realize. From its earliest archeological traces, wine growing in the Langhe and Monferrato was an export industry. Wine tours of southeastern Piedmont today make stops in Asti, Acqui, Alba, Pollenzo—all of them Roman settlements dating to the eleventh century B.C. Along with fortified cities, the Romans built roads through the foothills that transformed the structure of agriculture to the *latifondia* model, with the goal of producing wine not only for the local market, but for circulation abroad (Gaddo 2013, Loubere 1978). New production practices and a growing taste for wine throughout the empire generated a hybridized wine culture in the Belbo Valley, a mixture of local practices and cosmopolitan rituals such as shared vessels at banquets and flavoring wines with spices and herbs (Gaddo 2013). Wooden barrels eased storage and overland transport somewhat, but abandoning tightly sealed amphorae made it difficult to age wines safely much beyond a year.

In the Medieval Period, moscato grapes were planted in a wider expanse of Piedmont, a geography made possible by a relatively hot period before the Little Ice Age set in between 1650 and 1850, constricting the areas that could effectively ripen the grapes (Bera 2015). During the two centuries of chiller temperatures, production shrank considerably, to the Belbo Valley near Canelli, but also to the Alto Monferrato, some of Saluzzo, and parts of Valle d'Aosta (ibid.). By the 1600s, the province of Asti had over 30,000 hectares planted with vineyards (some vines

wrapped around poles, others strung between the branches of trees like telephone wires) yielding 265,000 hectoliters of wine annually, two thirds of which was sold commercially to wineries or consumers across Piedmont and in neighboring regions and states (Picco 1989). In the eighteenth century, wines from nearby Barolo in Cuneo had begun making a name for the region in the homes of wealthy British families and German nobles (Loubere 1978).

There is ample evidence of the ways in which wine and viticulture became tightly woven to Piedmontese landscapes, communities, and economies over the centuries. Grapevines stretch to the horizon today and the local economy still depends entirely on the cultivation and transformation of grapes. Local dialect is peppered with references to vineyard work and wine drinking—describing *qualcuno del ultimo filare* (someone in the last row of vines) intends someone who is slow to catch on—and traditional dishes feature meats braised in wine or jams made from grapes and other fall fruit. As the celebrated author Mario Soldati described in 1969, “in Piedmont, everything revolves around wine.”

But wine as it is grown and crafted in Piedmont today bears little resemblance to the beverage made in open containers before the advent of sterilization or steel tanks. Accounts of producer practices document a variety of techniques, some more refined than others. The attitude toward winemaking was a haphazard one, a world away from the tightly controlled temperatures and sterilized steel tanks of todays' wineries:

> *In the Monferrato the manufacture of wines can be much improved: attention is lacking in the harvest, crushing, and fermentation of grapes, not to mention that no one takes care to select them. The grapes are crushed with bare feet before the must is transferred to another vat for fermenting. Covered containers are of recent arrival, and used by few. The fermentation method and time are at the whim of the producer, there is not a stabilized practice, it depends if they want a sweet wine to sell sooner, or a wine to age…The vines of the province of Acqui are difficult to age more than two years, no doubt due to the poor methods of production* (Zuccargni-Orlandini 1838: 138).

Terracotta amphorae and grapes grown along the ground produced wines that may have been sweet, sour, or almost vinegar. In different eras and in different barrels, wine was volatile, acidic, watery, spiced, or seasoned. Most of the population consumed "wines" made after the products of the initial fermentation and pressing had been set aside for wealthier drinkers, using the remaining skins and sludge mixed with more water and sugars to make second and third runs (Gaddo 2013). Whether crafted to survive journeys over the Alps, aged to serve at prestigious tables, or sloshed back by peasants while they worked in their fields, wine in Piedmont bore the traces of hybrid pasts and continued to change according to the tastes of the present.

As Loubere argues in his history of Italian winemaking, a robust market and trading opportunities, particularly foreign ones, are preconditions for the making of great wines (1978: 49). In places without well-established transport, communication, and merchant connections, wine remained a mediocre operation at best, carried out by peasants mainly for the drink's caloric value and alcohol content. Where instead there was the possibility of building an export empire, winegrowing and making flourished. Piedmont enjoyed a reputation for respectable wines during the Roman empire and the late Renaissance, but the periods between these peaks were characterized by a

predominately local market, hindered by poor infrastructures and ongoing conflict between kingdoms and city states in pre-unification Italy (ibid.). Access to an export market determined the development of "local" traditions, an inversion of here and there that continues today: growers replace autochthonous varietals to replant with grapes that sell well in Northern European markets, or switch from making sweet to dry sparkling wine as consumers' shed their sweet tooth.

French techniques and American pests

Wine has a very long history in the hills of the Astigiano, but sparkling wine is a relative newcomer to Italy, stolen from across the Alps. Records from the fifteenth century detail the vinification of *moscato bianco*, describing a sweet and aromatic white wine distinct from the drier whites made from vernaccia or malvasia grapes (di Ricaldone 1972). This Moscato was a still wine with a short shelf life, as residual sugars left it volatile to further fermentation. The art of making sparkling wine was developed in France, and only arrived to Canelli as the Italian nation state was slowly coming together in the 1850s. Piedmont was still part of the Duchy of Savoy in the first half of the nineteenth century, a political entity that stretched across the Alps into what is now France and Switzerland. In the bourgeoisie households of Savoy and most of Western Europe, Champagne had become the drink of choice, already commanding an export empire of millions of bottles abroad by midcentury (Guy 2003).

Credit for Italy's first spumante goes to Carlo Ganica, the son of a Piedmontese winemaking family who worked in a Reims Champagne cellar from 1848 to 1850. Gancia was a sharp student, mastering the techniques of French Champagne production with the intention of one day making Champagne from moscato grapes in his home province (Cirio 1990). Upon his return to Italy, Gancia established a winery outside Turin before moving the business to Canelli in 1866 to be as close as possible to the primary materials (Gancia, n.d.). Champagne is traditionally made from pinot noir grapes, blended to varying degrees with meunier, chardonnay, or other approved grape varietals in different champagne houses. These grapes each bring different aromas, flavors, and chemistry to the resulting wine, but none are as naturally sweet as the moscato grape, whose high sugar levels—crucial for a second fermentation in the bottle that makes Champagne's signature bubbles—held much potential for the production of sparkling wine. While producing vermouth, Gancia tinkered with his dreams of a moscato-based "Italian Champagne" for fifteen years before realizing a sellable product. In 1865, he went public with the first *spumante italiano*, exporting bottles beyond Italian borders just a year later (Cirio 1990). By the 1910s, the company was producing a million bottles a year of *Moscato Champagne, Champagne Italiano, and Moscato Spumante*, with smaller production of vermouths, Barbera, Freisa, and other local varieties of wine.[27]

[27] For more details and statistics from Gancia's history, see http://www.gancia.it/

Making spumante

Making sparkling wine is no simple task: those delicate bubbles are the results of a carefully managed chemistry between grapes and yeasts, with winemakers coaxing a second fermentation process out of their microscopic collaborators. When yeasts consume the sugars in grape juice, they produce alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. In an open tank, the yeast eventually perish in their own alcohol or from the heat created by the fermentation process, while carbon dioxide rises into the surrounding air. Tanks and barrels must have vents or valves in order to release these gases, and anyone who has ever balanced over an open container of fermenting grapes is familiar with the cloud of pungent, sweet fumes that nearly knocks you off your feet.

Some of the most deadly accidents in wine production take place in tanks that have been drained of liquid, from which a mushy slop of skins and seeds must be shoveled out. These left over "lees" still produce a thick layer of carbon dioxide that settles low in the tank. Thigh-high in grape skins and shoveling them towards the small opening one side of the tank, it only takes a few minutes before you find yourself dizzy and short of breath. Workers tasked with digging out the lees are careful to haul themselves over the tank's edge to breathe every so often, knocking on the steel siding or singing while they work to let their coworkers know they are still conscious inside.

The initial period of fermentation for crushed grapes, about two weeks, is completed in open or vented tanks, after which the young wine is filtered, "inoculated" with new yeast if needed, and then transferred to closed containers. The technique developed in France in the seventeenth century—*le méthode champenoise* or *il metodo classico* in Italian—transfers the still wine directly to the bottles in which it will be sold. In sealed bottles or pressure resistant tanks, the yeasts continue to eat sugars, expelling alcohol and carbon dioxide, before dying and settling on the bottom of the tank. With no place to go, these tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide remain trapped in the liquid, carbonating the wine and turning it into spumante or Champagne.

Before the wine is sold, it is racked and filtered to remove remaining residues and dead yeasts (most wine is somewhat opaque and clouded with solids before bottling). "Racked" bottles are inverted at an angle to send all sediment to the top of the bottlenecks, and the wines are rotated regularly to ensure an even sedimentation that leaves the sides of the glass clean. Today this is done by machines that slowly spin cages of wine, but until the 1970s it was carried out by skilled cellar hands who would spend all day rotating each bottle in the cellar by 90 degrees, only to start over the next morning (Contratto, interview). Wineries seal bottles with crown caps that can be easily removed to discard the accumulated sediment. Finally, bottles are

topped off with a liqueur—each winery has its own closely guarded recipe—and sealed with corks, wire cages, and foil.

Most sparkling wine made today is carbonated in industrial size tanks, the *charmat* method, known as the *metodo martinotti* in Italy. The technique is named for Federico Martinotti, who developed it in 1895 while serving as the director of the Experimental Institute of Enology in Asti, the provincial capital a thirty-minute drive from Canelli today. While the resulting wines tend to have larger, more aggressive bubbles, Martinotti's method is a much faster and cheaper way to make large quantities of sparkling wine. After the grapes finish the initial period of fermentation, the young wine is transferred to massive pressure resistant steel tanks, along with yeasts and sugar in order to kick-start a second phase of fermentation and, in a closed container, carbonation. With simpler flavors and larger bubbles, these wines are less sought after, but much more affordable and widely consumed. In an economy of scale, it is more profitable to produce hundreds of thousands of bottles with the *metodo martinotti*—those on supermarket shelves for less than ten euros—than it is to produce a few thousand bottles using the *metodo classico*, even if those wines command much higher price points. Today, the vast majority of sparkling wine is produced using pressurized tanks.

Moscato d'Asti's long running inferiority complex in the face of Champagne is no accident: these two wines share a common lineage. Sparkling Moscato has been trying to compete with its French forebear for 150 years, but has yet to gain much territory beyond the holiday table or dessert course. When Gancia advertises itself as "the original Italian sparkling wine," the company does not make any mention of the myriad of non-Italian places, people, and plants who made it possible—they have been subsumed into local tradition and national symbols. The French techniques adapted to Piedmontese grapes and renamed as Italian were not the only foreigners involved in the creation of Italy's wine giant and iconic product. Across the Atlantic, microscopic mites on an American grapevine were soon to change the course of European winemaking forever.

Phylloxera aphids and American roots

The events of the late nineteenth century presaged the crises facing winegrowers in the Belbo Valley today. In the 1870s, the European interest in New World flora almost wiped out wine production across the Old World. Among the plants imported to Europe were American grapevines, *vitis aestivalis, vitis rupestris,* and *vitis riparia*. Tucked away in the leaves of one or more of those vines were miniscule stowaways: phylloxera nymphs. Vine cuttings, rootstock, and seeds had been traded across the Atlantic well before the 1860s, but the slow sea voyage had been long enough to kill any stowaway aphids. By the mid nineteenth century, however, steamships and railroads sped the ocean crossing sufficiently to support increased traffic of wines and plants between the continents, as well as transporting the insects that would destroy the vineyards of Europe (Guy 2003:89).

Figures 11 and 12: One of the telltale signs of infestation, phylloxera often leaves galls on grape leaves. Copper sulfate mixes, common referred to as verdarame, mean that vineyard chores leave worker hands and bodies coated in chemicals (photos by author).

Phylloxera is a tiny winged insect, almost invisible to the naked eye, which feeds on the roots and leaves of grapevines. American grapevines coevolved with the insect, developing a genetic resistance to their root-leeching habits, such as sticky sap that emerges from the insects' attempt to feed on the roots, clogging the aphids' mouths and protecting the plant. European grapevines, however, have no such protections, and when a phylloxera colony settles in *vitis vinifera*, the infestation soon results in deformations and/or fungal infections that gradually strangle the roots, cutting off the flow of water and nutrients to the rest of the vine (Granett et al 2001). Phylloxera kills slowly, sucking the life out of a plant over the course of months or years before it succumbs entirely. European vines planted in America had long suffered from phylloxera, having no evolutionary defenses against the aphids. But farmers blamed the poor harvest on New World soils and climates, never suspecting that the root of the problem was quite literally infesting the roots (Hannickel 2013).

While it is difficult to know exactly when and where phylloxera arrived to Europe, it was likely an accidental import, the consequence of French viticulturalists' efforts to combat another New World disease (oidium, a fungus that grows on vine leaves and fruit, which arrived to Europe in 1845) by producing hybrid varietals of New and Old World vines (Hannickel 2013).[28] But the cuttings they imported from America were host to phylloxera aphids that slowly took hold in France, devastating

[28] The solution of copper sulfate and slaked lime that wine growers around the globe spray on their vines today is colloquially referred to as "bordeaux mix", an etymological testament to the global circulation of pathogens and the methods that agronomists develop to fight them.

vineyards across the country in the 1870s before spreading abroad. Agronomists and farmers watched helplessly as one vineyard after another slowly succumbed to the strange, invisible malady that no pesticide or pruning practice seemed to cure. While drier, sandier soils seemed to fare better, there was little to be done once a vineyard was infected. At the peak of the crisis, some feared that the days of French winemaking were numbered (Guy 2003).

Through trial and error, however, agronomists and farmers realized that some American vines were mysteriously immune to the blight, and after a decade of panic, American rootstock appeared as a tangible solution (Guy 2003: 90). It was not, however, met with much enthusiasm on the part of French viticulturalists. Not only was replanting an entire vineyard a costly and long-term investment, but the purity of French wine would be contaminated by what were held to be inferior American roots. In a moment when economic pressures and nation-building projects were codifying old ideas about place and taste into the concept of terroir as we know it today, the intrusion of foreign roots into French soil was an unacceptable insult to winegrowers and makers (Guy 2003). Forty percent of French vineyards were devastated between 1863 and 1890, and replanting efforts were slow and scattered, leaving large regions of French wine production at a fraction of their former outputs (Loubere 1978, Banerjee et al 2010).

The decimation of French vineyards was crucial to the rise of Italian wineries. Tiny insects from across the Atlantic helped boost Italian wine to an international status it had not enjoyed since the Roman Empire. With French vineyards crippled,

merchants in Europe and the Americas turned to Italian wines, particularly those that filled the niches created by French products (Cirio 1990). Rather than Burgundian bottles, merchants bought Nebbiolos or Barolos, and with Champagne stocks stalled or potentially fraudulent (Guy 2003:106), Moscato d'Asti found its way into the homes and restaurants of the bourgeoisie (Loubere 1978). For over a decade, the catastrophe to the north of the Alps gave companies like Gancia, Bosca, and Contratto a crucial opening in the wine market, ensuring the future of the young firms. The wineries of Canelli are doubly indebted to France: for the enological techniques that make sparkling wine possible, and for the crises of the 1880s and 1890s that made it profitable.

Figures 11 and 12: Grape scions for sale in Canelli, both local and imported varietals, to be grafted onto established rootstock, and moscato grapes on the vine (photos by author).

By 1879, phylloxera had crossed the Alps to Italy, first appearing in the regions closest to the foothills: Lombardy, Piedmont, Trentino, and Fruili (Gaddo 2013). Agricultural concourses in Fruili sought the American rootstock best suited to hosting local varietals as growers scrambled to save what they could of their harvests (Loubere 1978). Italian growers were not caught unawares like their neighbors to the north. By the time phylloxera became a real threat to Piedmontese vines, French chemical applications and the American rootstock solution had been circulating among Italian scientists and farmers, who were much better equipped to replant vineyards than the French had been. Winemakers may claim longstanding ties to a piece of land and the art of viticulture, but the roots of any vineyard here are no more than a century old. Nearly every vineyard in the region was uprooted and replaced with American rootstock upon which European grapes could be grafted.

Replanting a vineyard was and remains a serious investment of capital and labor. Once planted, young vines require at least three years of careful tending before they will bear suitable fruit. Even after the roots were well established, grafting on the scions generated no end of expense and worry for small farmers well into the twentieth century. The autobiography of a young man coming of age in the Langhe during the 1930s recounts:

> *Now my father does not know where to find the money to buy the barbera scions. They cost 4,000 lire and to buy them already grafted costs an inheritance: we will make do with the American roots that my father will graft in August. For him these things, however, are not that simple…he goes disparaging left and right, making sure that they will have two diseases before they have even begun to live* (Monticone 1965: 89).

Faced with outstanding expenses and delayed returns, wine growers chose varietals that would command the best prices at harvest time. In this way, insects from the New World instituted a dramatic change in the landscape and ecosystem of the Astigiano: in a single generation, winegrowers replanted virtually all the Astigiano's vineyards. They introduced new planting patterns: neat rows of vines lifted up off the ground that favored agrochemical application rather than sprawling bushes looped along fences and trees (Loubere 1978). They also abandoned dozens of local varietals—*lugliena, passeretta, bonarda*—in favor of more profitable grapes like moscato, dolcetto, or barbera (Gaddo 2013).

While wine connoisseurs mourned the loss of the original European plants and the wines they produced, American roots made the continuation of European winemaking possible. Blurring the lines between plants and people, opposition to the imported stock took up the language of soil, roots, and blood to decry the contamination of national stock (Guy 2003). In reality, American roots were a particularly inconvenient addition to a much longer and richer history of winegrowing and making with pieces of other places, a history that stretches back further than the nation states of Europe. In the Belbo Valley, farmers grudgingly nursed New World vines before grafting on scions descended from a wild vine in the Caucasus. After harvesting, the fruit of this hybrid vine was processed using French techniques before aging in barrels originally introduced by the Celts, and more recently imported from France or Hungary. Finally, corked and caged bottles were labeled for sale across borders, mountains, and oceans.

Emigrants and the Italian Diaspora

The movement of plants, fungi, and insects back and forth across the Atlantic—some intentional imports, others stowaways—and the resulting devastation to French vineyards created the initial opening in the market that transformed Piedmont's regional wineries into world famous firms. But it was the mobility of people that sustained Canelli's *case di spumante* (sparkling wine houses), the Italian diaspora that remained faithful to Italian brands long after French wineries recovered and before Italy generated a domestic consumer class. Between 1860 and the outbreak of the first World War, some nine million Italians boarded ships for new worlds: Argentina, America, Australia, and beyond (Hatton and Williamson 1994). They carried little in their trunks and satchels, but maintained their culinary habits and traditions wherever they arrived, albeit with local influences and modifications. With newfound purchasing power, these families set up facilities to import or produce the pastas, cheeses, preserved meats, and wines of their homelands, transforming humble grain dishes into the hearty meals associated with Italian cuisine today (Diner 2003, Gabaccia 2000).

The host nations of the Italian diaspora now have flourishing wine industries of their own, thanks to the immigrant entrepreneurs who often planted the initial vineyards (Cinotto 2009, Mount 2012, O'Connor 1996). Before these ventures matured, some urban families managed to purchase grapes and make their own wine in basement tubs and bottles. For most Italian households, however, the only wine to be had in their new homes was imported from across the ocean (Diner 2003). The

same families that could not have dreamed of buying industrially produced wines in their rural Italian villages could now acquire them in their urban lives abroad, a growing market upon which Canelli's wineries were quick to capitalize (Cirio 1990, Diner 2000, Virioli and Segre 2000). Cellar tours at Gancia, Bosca, and Contratto today feature photographs of suited business men brokering Atlantic trade deals and steamships bound for New York and Buenos Aires. Books of archived labels drawn up for exported bottles are on display in the dimly lit cellars of Gancia, and Contratto still sells a line of wines known simply as *For England*. Italians may have consumed a higher volume of wine per capita than their British, German, or American counterparts in the past, but the dozens of liters consumed annually per person were mostly locally produced or homemade alternatives to industrial bottles (Cirio 1990, interviews). Then and now, the domestic market was a saturated scene. Foreign desires for Italian wine and the export market presented more possibilities for growth.

The *Boom Economico* and consumerism

The years between the World Wars were difficult ones for the farmers of Canelli. With international trade interrupted, able hands taken to the front, and internal distribution systems collapsing, the families who survived these decades emerged with stories of foraging for nuts and wild greens and renting their children's labor to other households to make ends meet (Cirio 1990, *Le Colline di Pavese* 2012). But less than a decade after the close of World War II, life in Canelli had begun to

transform as Italy's economic boom entered full swing.[29] Manufacturing jobs in northern cities, tractors and mechanized processing equipment, and a growing middle class that was thirsty for the taste of luxury all brought prosperity to winegrowing households that had been unimaginable for previous generations (Virioli and Segre 2000). Companies like Gancia, Bosca, and Riccadonna courted new consumers aggressively. Advertisements from the period feature carefree Italians picnicking on holiday, traveling the world, and enthusiastically enjoying their Gancia products.[30]

Across the Atlantic, Italian wines and aperitifs became part of middle class entertaining, less expensive than French products and sweet enough to attract new drinkers (Ford 2015). A consumerist Italy made possible by the American Marshall plan shaped the patterns of plants in these hills: rather than growing grapes for the red wines that were part of daily meals—barbera, dolcetto, grignolino—whose numbers had already been reduced at the beginning of the century by replanting with American roots, farmers began planting more and more of what other places wanted to drink. The ecology and economy of the Astigiano were built by the biota and the tastes of elsewhere.

[29] Italy's *boom economico* lasted from the early 1950s through the end of the 60s, during which the country transformed from a war ravaged landscape of agricultural communities to an industrial powerhouse with a largely urbanized population. Made possible by the US Marshall plan, new demand for minerals and machinery exports, and the creation of the European Common Market, the boom fueled mass migration from the rural South to northern factory jobs, expansion of infrastructures and services, the creation of a consumerist middle class, and the mechanization of Italian homes and daily life.

[30] See Gancia's online archives at http://www.gancia.it/gancia/public/storytelling

Figure 13: Sharp slopes make these hillsides ideal for winegrowing, but difficult for tractors (photo by author).

"The years of the boom were when the moscato really took off." Alberto paused, catching his breath as we climbed the winding road to his *paese*, a dozen houses clustered at the crossroads. Balding and well past retirement age, he continues to oversee the vineyards of Stellato Cellars and spends much of the day up here rather than at the winery. The hills fall away steeply—I can only make out the first dozen rows of vines before the wooden stakes and wires disappear beneath the slope. Alberto was born in a stone farmhouse half a mile away, and he points out the cemetery where, he said with a grin, "you can find me in the future." "When people could afford to spend a bit," he continued, "and the Americans started drinking spumante and vermouth, that was when the last of the local grapes started to vanish.

Even the hills that were already in vines," Alberto added, "maybe dolcetto, gringolino, the things people drank at home—it all turned into moscato."

Claudia, raised in Canelli by a family employed by Contratto, confirmed Alberto's timeline. When I asked her if there had always been so much moscato, she replied, "Moscato wasn't always made of gold. Moscato used to be just another grape. I remember when I was married [in 1961] at home we had some moscato, a little freisa, some grignolino, a little of everything. There were small vineyards: three rows of moscato, four of barbera, it used to be that you had a little of everything." Abandoning the grapes that had been part of a peasant diet or elements of traditional cuisine, farmers pursued the varietal that was in demand elsewhere. Cocktail parties in New York or *aperitivo* in Milanese cafes fueled the replacement of locally consumed wines with those intended largely for export.[31]

When winegrowers claim that their bottles capture the taste of their traditions, they are not making false claims: the incorporation and influence of elsewhere *is* local tradition here. The chalky soils, foggy winters, and rolling slopes all influence what a farmer grows, but ultimately the tastes and desires of other places have been just as important in shaping what ends up in a bottle of *Asti Spumante* as anything intrinsic

[31]*Aperitivo,* a uniquely Italian combination of happy hour and appetizers, lasts from approximately 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at cafes and bars serving alcohol. A precursor to late dinners and a chance to socialize, aperitivo revolves around the purchase of a drink, usually wine or a cocktail, that is accompanied by light finger foods. Moscato producers have spent millions of euros advertising their beverage as an ideal aperitivo choice, trying to move it out of the dessert course and into everyday consumption practices.

to *this* place. Without the movement of plants, insects, and people around the world that enabled Moscato's success, the celebrated landscapes and practices of the Belbo Valley would likely have developed quite differently. Local traditions and the taste of this place are indeed world heritage: it took multiple continents, species, and empires to turn Canelli into the moscato capital of the world. But canonization as a UNESCO site has not insulated the historic cellars or viticultural landscapes it celebrates from a process in motion for over 2,000 years. Tradition, taste, and daily life are as global and dynamic as ever in Canelli today, and not always to the benefit of those who grow wine grapes.

Global brands and international investors

At the Italian wine pavilion at Milan's Expo 2015, the words covering the walls of the gift shop were scrawled with English and Mandarin text. "Why?" I asked the clerk behind the register. "Because in wine, Italian is the past, English is the present, and Chinese is the future," he replied. His words crystalize the instability of place through time: the way in which the wine world shifts loci and how that evolution remakes the places caught up in it. Italian became the official language of Canelli in the same period in which the town became an international exporter of sparkling moscato (previously each Italian community operated exclusively in regional dialect; "Italian" as a language did not exist before Italy as a nation). In the decades since, the links between the Americas and Northern Europe have made English the de facto language of selling wine in Canelli. Websites are available in

English, producers describe their “know-how,” and *enotecas* style themselves as a “wine bar.” I found echoes of the prophesized future in Canelli’s cellars: pamphlets for expositions in Hong Kong on winemakers’ desks and nervous gossip that vineyards in China’s countryside would churn out oceans of cheap wine. In 2017 *Vinitaly*, the world’s largest wine exposition, promoted the “Shanghai Wine & Dine Festival: Vinitaly paves the way for Veronafiere's strategic plan for promoting Made in Italy in China.” China is one of many places whose trajectory looms large in the minds of winemakers in Canelli: whether as vital consumers or burgeoning producers, people on six different continents will determine the future of wine production here.

In 2015 and 2016, Italy produced more wine than any other nation on earth. The *sorpasso* of France’s annual quota was celebrated widely in newspaper headlines, but not as heartily in cellars. As my winemakers consistently reminded me: it is not hard to make wine, it is hard to sell it. And by selling, they mean exporting. While wine remains one of Italy’s top agrifood sectors, the domestic consumer may as well not exist for many of the wineries I visited. Winemakers referred to it as *dead*, *saturated*, or *hopeless*. “It used to be that people drank more in Italy, that it wasn’t unusual to put away a bottle a day or order a lot of wine when you went out to dinner, but that’s changed,” explained Tommaso, a winemaker in his forties. “Even before *la crisi* there were new laws about drinking and driving, new ideas about what’s healthy or not, it’s a different lifestyle. But there are still thousands of people making wine, a lot of small producers. And all the restaurants and shops have a hundred small producers trying to get their bottles in—the personal connections that used to

organize how you sold wine don't anymore—it's a lost cause trying to carve out more market here."

Not all of Canelli's wineries survived the European "wine lakes" of the 1980s, the corporate consolidation of the 1990s, and the financial crisis that withered spending and loans after 2008.[32] The total number of hectares planted with vines in Piedmont dropped from 75,000 in 1982 to 46,000 by 2010 (Montaldo 2014:33). Empty buildings with grand facades bearing local surnames are scattered along Canelli's streets—Amerio, Nastrice, Riccadonna—and the apartment building in which I lived had been remodeled from one such winery: the garage where I kept my bicycle was once a cellar full of aging bottles.

The wineries that remain in operation today managed by transferring ownership or establishing contracts outside of Italy. Export holds possibility, growing around the world with peaks in countries with a burgeoning class of consumers with disposable incomes (Cecioni et al 2015). The Consortium of the Wines of Asti and the Monferrato lists Germany, America, Britain, Denmark, Canada and Switzerland as their top importers. Though their marketing emphasizes a family dynasty,

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[32] Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was designed to regenerate European food supplies after post-World War II shortages and facilitate trade within the European community. Initiated in 1962, it heavily subsidized agriculture to encourage production increases and efficiency, guaranteeing farmers price minimums for their total production independent of market fluctuations. This resulted in widespread overproduction by the 1980s, creating surpluses of beef, dairy, and wine, the so-called wine lakes and butter mountains, at immense costs to taxpayers, farmers around the world, and European environments. CAP has since been significantly amended to reduce costs and negative impacts, but remains a highly contested and conflict ridden set of policies in agricultural and political circles.

Contratto has changed hands several times, becoming part of an investment portfolio that includes vineyards across Piedmont and Tuscany in 2015. Gancia, whose name is inscribed on streets, piazzas, and the castle that sits atop the town, sold in 2011 to Roustan Tairko, a Russian oligarch who uses it primarily as a distribution channel for his other alcohol brands. The company tasting room features wines produced in Canelli, alongside Russian Standard vodka and Glenfidditch scotch. Family wineries thriving today have contracts with Norwegian state-run liquor stores, framed photographs with Japanese royalty, or good friends in New York import firms. Winemakers spend the winter and spring traveling to wine expositions of every type: *Vinitaly, Vinatur*, and the *Salone del Gusto* in Italy, and events in London, Oslo, Sydney, and Shanghai if they can afford the airfare.

An economy that depends almost entirely on export quotas remains vulnerable to the choices of investors, governments, and farmers around the world. Moscato's export rates have been declining in recent years, which made for grim numbers in the Belbo Valley. As growers negotiated with the regional consortium to set the prices and yields for the harvest, local news described impending ruin: "The total Moscato in inventory is over 13,000,000 gallons, the sales in 2015 were the lowest in twenty years, and the predictions for the 2016 harvest describe restricted yields per hectare…this September growers may make only 7,000 euros per hectare, as opposed to the 11,000 they earned in 2015" (Coletti 2016).

With harvest season just weeks away, rumors flew through the vineyards and piazzas: *Would the consortium really lower the maximum yields per hectare even*

further? What good would it do for growers to lose profits at this point? Why shouldn't the industrial wineries be held responsible for lapsing prices and sales? Growers found themselves in a difficult position: a few decades before, moscato prices were high, and miles of vineyards planted with barbera or dolcetto were converted to moscato grapes, which accounted for 10,000 hectares in the Langhe and Monferrato by 2017 (Consorzio 2017). Growers had taken out loans to finance new land, replanting, or improved cellars. But like any monocultural economy, the boom was eventually followed by a bust.

The root of the problem was simple: Moscato d'Asti was and remains a dessert wine. A staple for Italian holiday dinners, it accompanies the dessert course at the end of a long meal. Golden, gently sparkling, and laden with aromas of tropical fruit, Moscato is sweet and easy to quaff. During the economic growth and increasing consumerism of 1980s and 1990s, Moscato graced the tables and wine lists of fine dining establishments around the Western world. Meanwhile, Bosca's *Canei*, the cheap sparkling moscato "for people who don't drink wine," was manufactured in multiple plants on three different continents (Virioli and Segre 2000). The vast majority of the product leaving Italy was not small batch or artisanal—the bottles were corked by the hundreds of thousands on factory floors. As long as global consumption kept up with production, both the big wineries and the growers profited. Investing in increased moscato yields seemed like a good strategy for growers: the 2016 prices for moscato grapes (up to 107 euros/100 kg) were considerably higher those of barbera (60-85 euros/100 kg) or dolcetto (60-67 euros/100kg), the more

traditional reds for daily meals in Piedmont (Coldiretti 2016). But unlike Chardonnay or Pinot Noir, Moscato d'Asti is not a wine to enjoy with dinner or drink on a daily basis, despite decades of advertising that sought to convince consumers otherwise. Moscato d'Asti's success rode on an aspiring middle class, unlimited corporate accounts, and the global expansion of wine drinkers.

The bubble eventually burst. By the 2000s, Moscato was no longer the avant-garde beverage that toasted the decadence of the late 1980s and 1990s; conspicuous consumers had moved on to other sparkling wines: Spanish Cava or French Cremant d'Alsace for example (though Moscato did see a small spike in sales after it was spotlighted by the hip-hop community in 2013).[33] Instead, Moscato had become part of a middle-class lexicon. The number of Moscato branded beverages had multiplied accordingly, doubling between 2010 and 2013 (Virioli and Segre 2000). Few of the millions of bottles of Moscato for sale today originated near Canelli's hills: moscato is cultivated in California, Australia, Spain, Greece, Germany, Austria, France, Chile, South Africa—more or less everywhere grapes are grown. While a bottle of Moscato d'Asti DOC/G fetches fifteen to thirteen euros, sweet sparkling wine made from muscat grapes can be found for a few euros at the supermarket. Canelli had made a name for itself as the "Moscato Capital of the World," but this did not stop the rest of the world from growing similar grapes.

The problem was also one of hierarchy. Moscato growers I interviewed pointed out a fatal flaw in the classification system that organizes the sale of moscato

[33] See Sanders 2013

grapes in Piedmont. Grapes from the same vineyard can be sold at three different grades, for three different prices: *Moscato d'Asti DOC/G* commands the highest price and strictest set of regulations on production, *Asti Spumante* is less expensive and made into sparkling wine but with shorter aging periods and looser regulations, and *aromatico* grapes will be mixed with countless others to become generic sparkling wine. In order to sell grapes as DOC/G grade, producers can only sell so much per hectare, a provision meant to keep the market from flooding and encourage growers to focus on quality over quantity. In practice, many growers continue to plant and cultivate as much moscato as they can, selling the permitted quantity as DOC and then putting the remainder on the market as generic moscato for a lower price. The grapes are often nearly identical, but are vinified differently and sold at very different price points. To the experienced drinker, there is a clear difference between these products, but to the undiscerning buyer, one is simply more expensive. "We made a big mistake," admitted one grower, "we sold more than we should have. And often we brought *aromatico* (the lowest grade) to the industrial wineries for too low a price, and those grapes that became *i gran dessert* (cheap sparkling wines) that compete with our sparkling wines of quality."

Exports constitute 85 percent of the sales of *Asti Spumante* and *Moscato d'Asti* (Atzeni 2017). From 2012 to 2015, those exports dropped by 33 percent (Coletti 2016). Two major markets, Russia and Germany, had particularly steep declines in exports (Atzeni 2017). By 2015, a market flooded with cheap or imitation products and two consecutive years of record harvests made for a looming surplus.

“We’re in crisis,” declared Giovanni Bosco, president of the Tosti winery, “Moscato closed 2015 with terrible numbers.” Not all wine is meant to age in cellars for years: Moscato must be drunk shortly after bottling, ideally within six months. Distributors try to avoid a surplus stock, and so wineries keep their unsold Moscato in temperature controlled tanks, waiting to bottle until they can be sure of selling it. Unlike Barolos that accumulate value while in storage, Moscato is expensive to keep in tanks and declines in value over time.

Falling sales and a growing surplus are serious problems for small wineries and spell low prices for the owners of some 10,000 hectares spread over fifty-two communities of southeastern Piedmont. The overall sales potential of Moscato, however, remains largely in the hands of industrial wineries that over the years have become multinationals. “Take Martini for example,” said Bosco, “20 years ago Asti Spumante accounted for 20 percent of their sales, today it is less than 1.2 percent” (Coletti 2016). In these conditions, the consortium decided to take drastic measures to curb production and invest in marketing to boost sales. Whether the fault lay with irresponsible industrial practices, imposter products, or insufficient promotion, it had become clear that Moscato’s future was an uncertain one. Advertising campaigns in Italy promoting “Asti Hour” and the attempt to entice Chinese drinkers with “Lady Asti” in 2013 had flopped (Atzeni 2017). Newspaper headlines and terse conversations over cups of espresso portrayed the impending crisis as a catastrophe: unpredictable and unprecedented. Considering Canelli’s past, however, the pressures threatening moscato growers were largely built in to the economy: the monoculture

and export market that had buoyed Canelli to international fame now threatened to implode the way of life the community was built upon.

The future is dry

If Moscato's numbers continue to plummet, these hills will likely be home to another grape in the future, or perhaps groves of hazelnut trees will replace vineyards. As I show in Chapter Two, the farmers of Canelli have a long history of reworking their relationship to the land as new opportunities or pressures arrived from elsewhere. In the meantime, wine producers have already begun tweaking the taste of place that Canelli is known for in order to court the changing tastes of other places. Barbera, the everyday red wine and the other local Denomination of Origin grape, is the protagonist of a new marketing campaign that is focusing on rebranding the area as a source of easy drinking weeknight wine usually overshadowed by Nebbiolos and Barolos from nearby Cuneo. Moscato, on the other hand, is being redesigned for a new market.

The future is dry. The idea was already in circulation by the winter of 2016, and *Asti Secco* (literally: Asti Dry) became a new Denomination of Origin wine the following February. With a shrinking market for sweet sparkling wines, the winemakers of the Astigiano elected to make a dry moscato, continuing to ferment the wine past the usual point in order to convert more sugars to alcohol. Turning over 150 years of advertising and winemaking that linked delicate sweetness to the sunny side of a hill or the careful nose of local vinters, the Consortium of Asti DOCG

unveiled a new brand and a new taste. "Let's give the market the sparkling wine that it's never seen," proclaimed Romano Dogliotti, President of the Asti DOCG consortium. Abandoning the language of tradition and antiquity, the consortium described a new wine for a new generation, one that shed the connotations of a peasant past or the natural expression of place:

> *Asti Secco is a new product that, though deriving from the same grapes (moscato bianco), is different from both Asti [Spumante] and Moscato d'Asti. It is made with the Martinotti method and research from the consortium's research labs that, from an enological standpoint, allow for the removal of the bitter aftertaste characteristic of moscato grapes that have been fully fermented. With this resolved, and many tests in the cellars, Asti Secco is ready to catch the eyes of the young generation…the strategic project turns around the philosophy of "rural glam," a slogan that conveys both the uniqueness of this territory and the allure of elegance and sensuality* (Atzeni 2017).

The new campaign breaks entirely with precedent, and not all of the Langhe and Monferrato's producers were enthusiastic. A few rejected abandoning the flavors they had spent decades learning to coax into a bottle. Many others balked at the name itself: originally discussed as "Asti Brut" or "Asti Dry," the official name of *Asti Secco* edged uncomfortably close to the better known Italian spumante: Prosecco. Italy's gastronomic sector is fighting a constant and difficult battle to eliminate "Italian sounding" brands, companies with no ties to Italy that sell products under the guise of Italian-esque packaging, most often cheeses, canned tomatoes, and olive oil (Severgnini 2014). When the consortium approved Asti Secco, the wine community responded with accusations of reproducing the techniques of "Italian sounding" brands within the confines of Made in Italy (Gariglio 2017). Moscato enthusiasts insisted that Asti, a product cultivated on steep hills with a particular set of aromas,

has no business trying to steal market shares from a well-established brand that grows grapes on much flatter and more mechanized farms.

Meanwhile, just an hour down the road in the province of Cuneo, nebbiolo growers within the Barolo DOC zone scoff at the idea of chasing fickle trends. “So the Americans like sparkling wine,” laughed a woman who inherited an established estate from her parents, “what, should I make a sparkling Barolo?”[34] Unlike her neighbors to the east, the taste of place and traditions associated with vineyards in Barolo continue to enjoy international prestige, with bottles retailing for well over forty euros a piece. The stark difference in the realities of winemakers just twenty miles distant highlights the hierarchies embedded in the economy of taste and tradition, assumptions about the relative value of particular places and traditions that shift with weather patterns and consumer habits. Whether rooted in centuries of trade (Ulin 1996), political regimes (Jung 2013), national unification projects (Guy 2003), or contested borderlands (Monterescu 2017), selling wine as the “natural” expression of a territory and the fruits of local traditions are not rights so much as privileges, a status that is easily revoked by a fast-paced global marketplace. Barolo and Champagne remain unquestionably good today, while Moscato d’Asti has become something that wineries can no longer afford to keep making.

[34] See the interview with Maria Teresa Mascarello in the documentary *Langhe DOC: storie di eretici nell’italia dei capannoni.*

Toasting the future

In a moment when much of Made in Italy has departed for factories in China or sweatshops in Turkey, agricultural products remain an industry literally rooted in Italian soil. Unlike the bags, shoes, clothing, and machinery that Italian manufacturing has lost to cheaper labor abroad, food and wine are held to be inalienable from the dirt itself—a more profound tie to a place and a safer bet for the future (Di Giovine 2016). The historic wineries of Canelli claim deep roots in community, tradition, and the unique conditions of production where the hills of the Monferrato meet those of the Langhe. Their UNESCO heritage cellars, dubbed "underground cathedrals," stretch for kilometers beneath the town. Above ground, these families' wealth and power are inscribed in the infrastructure of the town they built: Via Riccadona, Piazza Gancia, Via Bosca. Brass busts of the winery founding fathers line the corridors of city hall, each one honored as a "Knight of Labor" for the thousands of employees and families their business sustained. The piazzas are decorated with local grape varietals: wooden planters with vines of barbera, grignolino, freisa, or brachetto are scattered around town, with moscato vines lining the walkway leading up to City Hall. A placard in the piazza frames two glasses of Moscato under the script, "Toasting the future, it's a family tradition."

These traditions and futures, however, are anything but local or static: the trajectories of these firms were carved by imported techniques, global markets, and mobile populations. The truckloads of grapes that arrive to their factories are grown

on American rootstock and sprayed with sulfur and copper to ward off the pests imported from the New World. The orders that balance winemakers' books come from New York, Hong Kong, and London, tastes and desires made possible by the diaspora of families who fled crushing poverty in these very hillsides, as well as the growing cache of European luxury products in East Asia. Gancia's Russian owner is said to be friendly with Campari, and there are rumors of consolidation or relocating the facility outside the narrow city streets, with or without the current employees. Meanwhile, thousands of gallons of unsold Moscato d'Asti sitting in expensive chilled tanks have pushed winemakers to abandon "tradition," unveiling the new Asti Secco label to chase the fickle tastes of wine drinkers around the world.

Figures 14 and 15: Toasting the future, it's a family tradition. / A four million fund to relaunch Asti worldwide (photos by author).

The gastronomy sector is vulnerable to different threats than those uprooting manufacturing firms: while Italian fashion houses can remake their designs from one season to the next, the legal structure of DOC food and wine freezes and bureaucratizes production methods, leaving producer communities exposed to unforeseen pressures from the whims of a global market. Nor are the vineyards safe from a rapidly changing planet. Each of the three summers I spent in the Belbo Valley was hotter than the last, with unprecedented winds ripping through the vineyards and hailstones the size of tennis balls tearing entire branches from trees. Rising temperatures have pushed the grape harvest from October to August, with farmers picking their moscato by August 15 in 2017. The steep and stony hillsides of the Alta Langa that farmers abandoned in the 1950s are desirable properties again: their elevation protects them from the worst of summer heat waves.

Meanwhile, the legal systems of appellation that are supposed to protect Italian wine regions and history—DOC/G labeling schemes—have proved troublesome for family firms. Ostensibly meant to protect a community's historical claim to a product from market forces, the provisions of Geographic Indications do not have sufficient flexibility to accommodate the realities of vineyards, cellars, and markets, in which no two years are alike. Instead, DOC/G requirements insist on gradation and standardization, ultimately working to the advantage of corporate producers who have the capital to manipulate their products or sit out a bad season.

Caught between this set of pressures, Canelli's vignaioli and vinters are creative with place, blurring the lines of tradition and innovation in order to claim

new tastes—dry, not sweet—for their grapes, and new aesthetics for their territory—"rural glam" instead of traditional. Terroir here is indeed generated through relationships between people and place, but not by just one community or the physical spaces within a DOC map. A much wider community of growers, vinters, and drinkers participates in bringing these places into being and crafting the tastes associated with them. Relying on "foreigners" in these vineyards extends beyond human labor: the plants, techniques, and equipment are also domesticated imports. In this perspective, the introduction of immigrant workers to tend the vines is not a break with tradition so much as a continuation of it.

As I explore in the next chapter, Canelli's wine producers are also creative with tradition when place refuses to stay put. As growers are forced to adapt their practices in order to cope with new environmental challenges, they invoke specific versions of the past to naturalize the conditions of the present. When the geography of profitability shifts, they rework the stories they tell about their territory and past accordingly.

Chapter Two: From Contadini to Vignaioli

From old to new generations, from old to new vines. The work, arduous as ever, where the quality of the moscato is the best, continues as ever, each day, with the same struggle as times past.

Patrizia Cirio (1990: 215)

Non sono solo gli abitanti della zona che monopilizzano un loro prodotto. È il prodotto che monopolizza i suoi abitanti. / It is not only the inhabitants of the area who monopolize their product. It is the product that monopolizes its inhabitants.

Mario Soldati describing the Langhe and Monferrato, *Vino al vino* (1969: 185)

Cresting the top of a particularly steep rise on my bicycle, I pause at the summit to catch my breath as sweat soaks into my shirt. At sundown the air is still warm and heavy with the smell of cut grass and dusty roads. Leaning my wheels against the side of the yellow chapel that crowns the hill, I squint into the last rays as the earth and sky take on shifting tones of orange, violet, and green. From this point I can see for miles in every direction, and in every direction there are vines. Those close enough to touch are heavy with ripe fruit. They have been well tended—there is not an errant shoot in sight, and the growth below is closely cropped. As the vines fall away down the sides of the hill, this vineyard becomes indistinguishable from the hundreds that surround it, quilting the land in tidy squares that run horizontally or vertically across the slopes before fading into a green blur in the distance. Silhouetted hilltop churches send spires shooting upward and the hollow sound of bell tones resounds across the landscape, while terracotta roofs huddle closely around them. On the horizon, the Alps rise up over the foothills, a jagged purple wall quickly fading to black. At this hour everything is still and quiet, and imagining a bucolic bubble that

has evaded the all-consuming appetite of global mechanized capitalism is easy enough.

It is a spectacular view, and the one that appears on postcards, pamphlets, and the UNESCO website for the region. It is the panoramic combination of topography, history, and viticulture that winemakers insist is captured in each bottle they produce. The director of ENOSIS, Italy's most prestigious enological research institute, is quite adamant about this: "When you sell a wine, you are not selling only a color, taste, or aroma, but also a piece of the territory, its story, its traditions, and the high quality of a wine and the emotions that it contains…our added value is the territory, in addition to the grape varietal" (Lanati 2015). This synthesis of place, history, and people was invoked by winemakers, tasting room staff, and local officials when they referenced *il territorio*, the land, or more accurately, our land. More complex than territory or landscape, *territorio* includes the entire experience of a place—the sensations, memories, and meanings that the people who live and work the land draw from their engagements with climate, soil, plants, and animals.

Il territorio is both present and past. Wine marketing mythology describe places in which the past seeps into the present, making viticultural regions into landscapes that preserve history and escape the march of time: the consortium of Chianti Classico's website features an aged man framed by vines, the words, "This land is one of ancient traditions, civilized in olden times, first by the Estruscans and then by the Romans," stamped above his bent frame. Without further explanation, the reader is expected to intuit that the vines and the farmer too are direct descendants of

these civilizations. Winery brochures in Canelli promise the taste of dynastic traditions, stitching together an unbroken continuity with tasks carried out here 50, 100, or even 500 years ago, and cutting this particular corner of Piedmont out of the processes that seem to threaten all things good and authentic elsewhere. One typical example reads:

> *We are in Canelli, the historical area for Moscato d'Asti production, a land rich in passion and history. This is the ideal place in which to grow moscato grapes, with benefits from a microclimate that is perfect for vine cultivation. The relationship between the soil, the environment, the vine variety and the meticulous work of our family is crucially important in the production of complex and elegant wines. The winery is currently run by Anna, the last descendant of the dynasty. The whole manufacturing cycle is directly managed by our family, with the same traditional criteria and techniques: extreme care for vineyard growing, careful selection of grapes to producing authentic wines of the region.*

The brochure makes no mention of the other forms of agriculture that the family "dynasty" once likely included, in which grapes were one of many activities a household relied upon to scrape by. Canelli may be an ideal place to grow moscato today, but it was not always the primary use of these hillsides. Like the Italian state-funded "outdoor museums" that eternalize "traditional" agro/silvo/pastoral practices that are in fact entirely historical and contingent (Cevasco 2007), the images and language that communicate Old World winemaking landscapes imply stasis and inevitability rather than evolution. Winery webpages emphasize how many generations have worked a plot of land and how this accumulated experience informs their approach, glossing over the technical overhauls that machines and agrochemicals have made possible. Wooden grape presses and bottle racks adorn the

corners of tasting rooms, while sepia tone photographs of dour-faced families decorate the walls of winery offices. Tasting rooms downplay the stainless steel tanks, chemical additives, and forklifts with which they work to make wine, presenting instead barrels with a patina decades thick or tours of the historic cellars no longer in use.

Figure 16: Some of the hills outside Canelli contain nothing but grapevines, an empire that seems to stretch to the horizon (photo by author).

The brief histories provided on the back of wine trail maps and the stories recounted at tasting rooms trade in what Herzfeld calls monumental time (1991), an official narrative that smooths out the messiness and multiplicities bound up in any real place. In this story, the continual transformation of livelihoods and landscapes, the abandonment or revaluation of techniques, and the economic determinism of these

changes become a coherent and inevitable progression towards the present. Other ways of working the land, other lifeworlds, and other possible trajectories for this place are obscured or silenced. Monumental time folds the evolution of agricultural techniques, ecologies, and economies into a coherent whole, one referenced as tradition. Meanwhile, UNESCO Heritage status helps to curate visitors' visions of a place (Heatherington 2010), practices that tend to bury other pieces of the past.

The material artifacts of past economies persist here, however: entire ecosystems and economies are buried beneath the carpet of vines visible today, or poking through in the form of crumbling terraces and abandoned farmsteads. These ruins are easier to recognize after a morning spent in Canelli's tiny library, flipping through stacks of bound newspapers proclaiming harvest prospects, skimming guides to industrial viticulture from the 1970s, and reading histories of the founding wineries. In these pages a much more dynamic landscape emerges: grainy black and white images of hills covered in wheat and orchards, diagrams of vines draped among tree branches, and testimonies of farm families that scraped out a meager life here raising corn and chickens. The Belbo Valley's viticultural totality and glossy UNESCO brochures offers an oasis of timelessness and stability to a world characterized by upheaval, dislocation, and uncertainty. Far more eye-catching to anyone paying attention, however, is evidence of change.

Scanning the hills before me now, I see layer upon layer of human projects to make a living from the land. There are the terraces that once yielded grain to keep a peasant household fed, now crumbling and overgrown with new forest. Here are the

rows of fruit trees that were formerly draped with grapevines, with legumes and corn planted below to maximize small plots of land. Fifty-year-old vineyards on steep hillsides, the rows too narrow for tractors and yielding fewer grapes each year, turn into veritable jungles when growers abandon them rather than pay for labor when output is minimal. Across the valley, young vines yielding their first harvest curve out over nearly bare soil (the work of herbicides) in identical geometric forms that facilitate mechanized treatments. Next to the road, the ground is dotted with hazelnut seedlings, which have been spreading across the region since Nutella became a global sensation.

Working the land has characterized life in the Belbo Valley for millennia. Like most landscapes in Italy, the vista I surveyed from a sunset hilltop is profoundly human, blurring the boundaries between nature and culture through layers of thousands of years of human activity (Sereni 1961). As Cevasco and Moreno put forth in their treatise on "real cultural patrimony," the difference between natural and agricultural landscapes in Italy is recent and imagined, and both have deeper histories of land use and influence from human activity (2012). The concept of landscape itself, as Mitchell argues, works to obscure the labor practices and struggles embedded within (1996). Viticultural landscapes—featured on postcards, booked as the backdrops for weddings, and highlighted in packaged tours—are perhaps the most fetishized of agricultural spaces and the most deceptive: popular representations of vineyards gloss the fruits of intensive human labor and work done by toxic substances as a geometric garden in harmony with nature (Black and Ulin 2013, Guy 2011).

Over the past century the means and modes of production in these hillsides have changed radically as global flows, tastes, and markets made new options available to farming families. From subsistence farmers and sharecropper households that worked land owned by aristocratic families, local peasants slowly became renters and landowners with the help of new technologies and markets for specialized agriculture. *Contadini*—peasant farmers—became *vignaioli*—winegrowers. More recently, the reorganization of family structures and economic opportunities encouraged winegrowers to become winemakers.

For previous generations, the conversion of land to pasture, grain, vines, or orchards happened over the course of generations. Today it may take only a harvest season to convince growers to rip out old vineyards or convert their vines to a different pruning system. Not only because they consider themselves creative entrepreneurs, but also because the industry demands it. Winegrowers are constantly adapting their relationship to the land and their plants in order to cope with the fragility of monocultures and the precarity of global markets. In doing so, they participate in a different set of traditions than those promoted in flyers and festivals: producing new places and new identities through the labor of making a living from the land.

The stories of *il territorio* and tradition describe how a place and the people who live and work it in produce particular wines, ones that represent this unique combination of geography and culture. By peeling back the layers of human activity

that forged this landscape, I show how the relationship is inversed: wine, through the labor it demands, makes both people and place.

People produce place through the physical labor of contouring land, cultivating vines, as well as the symbolic labor done in storytelling and remembering. The instability of place—its constant evolution driven by connections to other places—is what brings these unexpected forms of production into focus: rather than place shaping the character of the people who dwell within it via a mystical osmosis, people actively construct the territorio through their engagements with it. In doing so, they also generate their senses of self and belonging, identities that emerge in winegrowers' explanations their work, descriptions of the landscape, or references to the past.

Wine producers participate in narratives of tradition and territorio in order to distinguish their products from the millions of gallons of wine that circulate through global markets. But they also enjoy a more complex relationship to the celebrated vistas, what Richardson calls a "kaleidoscopic" vision, in which place "refracts" history, bringing particular elements of the past into view while obscuring others (2008: 21). In a rural landscape made intimate through labor, place becomes a lively and layered "taskscape" rather than a two-dimensional bucolic scene (Ingold 1993). Through living in and working with landscapes, people call these places into being and experience their multiple dimensions of meaning and time (Basso 1984, Caldwell 2010, Heatherington 2010). When I asked Canellesi about the thin stand of corn lining the main road, answers varied from stories about polenta that sustained families

for months to memories of playing in corn fields as children to discussions of how few people grow or eat much corn anymore. For a winegrower in his seventies, scaling the rough tracks that cut through steep vineyards elicited childhood memories of walking beside oxen—beasts that bore loads that tractors carry today. Looking behind us, we could not ignore the sprawling cement and boxy warehouses of the industrial district, developments that attest to the increasing importance of winemaking equipment rather than wine itself in sustaining Canelli's economy.

Just as the romantic images of vines raking the hills tell particular stories about the past here, shuttered farmhouses or yellowing vines offer projections for the future of the hillsides. Within their own narratives, my informants highlighted relationships between people, plants, and place, ties that appear in eminent danger today. The storyline of tradition smooths over the continual reinvention of these relations over time, and wine producers continue to employ tradition in order to lend coherence to the choices or compromises they have to make. Even when pathogens and economies of scale make viticulture a risky venture, the winegrowers of Canelli hold tightly to the land and vines that constitute their own selves and home.

Contadini to vignaioli

Daniele's winery is higher in the hills than most, with a view down the valley back to town. Like all of the winegrowers I visited, he insisted on taking me out to see the vines, walking past several rows before deciding on a spot to highlight. His family has been working this land for four generations, and their story echoes that of

many of the surrounding vineyards: “Our farm grew many things, not like the monoculture we have today with only vines,” he explained. “There was a little of everything: vegetables, fruit trees, rabbits—agriculture the way it should be, not specialized like today, but diversified for multiple reasons. But then, like most places, the farm concentrated its resources and technologies, and began specializing in something. My grandparents made this transformation. Because they couldn’t buy equipment for the vines, and for grain, and for hazelnuts—they had to pick one. The one that earned the most.”

His mother had accompanied us out to the vines, and chimed in to make sure I understood. “One hundred years ago they put vines where you couldn’t plant anything else. On the steepest bits, or poor soil where wheat or corn wouldn’t grow with their small roots. Vines have much deeper roots and they can survive. When we came here there was only a small patch of vines, not even a hectare.”

Nodding, Daniele continued, “they had only a few rows of vines, and they had to reinforce the soil by bringing up buckets of earth from the bottom of the hills each year. But little by little they planted more vines, bought more land, and specialized in grapes. The winery was much smaller then, only a few tanks and barrels. Let’s hope the process continues! That’s our hope—to sell all the grapes and wine we make, and not end up working in a factory.”

The original winery is a rough stone room built into the hillside itself, big enough for a few barrels and not much more, and decorated with the remnants of pre-mechanized agriculture: oxen yokes rest on wall pegs and a hand-operated bottle

corker thick with dust sits in the corner. Today, the winery occupies the lower floor of the renovated farmstead, and the family lives upstairs. In a small crowded room, green glass *damigiane* gather cobwebs in their woven baskets and cement vats lie empty.[35] In the larger space, tanks of polished steel gleam and new barrels fill the air with their distinct smell of toasted oak and dried lees.

On the valley floor at Stellato Cellars, everyone was busy getting ready to move out of the original winery, an extension of the family home in town, and into an industrial size facility that they were refurbishing. The days were split between carefully dismantling equipment caked with two decades of grime at the old winery and throwing out obsolete odds and ends left behind by the industrial facility's former owners (setting aside the more quaint elements—wooden carts and wagon wheels—to decorate the new reception area). Tommaso, the head winemaker, explained that while vineyards had been in the family for generations, the decision to make wine was relatively recent. Alberto, his father, had worked as a wine sales representative for decades, but when he saw the end of that industry coming, he invested in equipping a cellar and reinvigorating the scattered vineyards owned by his parents and in-laws. Alberto sent his son to the enological secondary school, recruited his wife to organize the business, and the family embarked on a new enterprise as

[35] *Damigiane* (plural) are thick glass jugs, squat and round, that contain anywhere from five to fifty liters of liquid, usually wine. They are often wrapped in wicker or plastic baskets for stability and transportation. Less common today, they were once a common unit of sale for wine—a family might buy a *damigiana* of young wine from a winery and bottle the wine themselves for personal consumption.

winemakers in the 1980s. “Here, everyone was a *vignaiolo*, it wasn’t until selling grapes became too difficult that they all became *cantine* (wineries, literally cellars),” Tommaso told me. “It was a big investment—all the machinery and space and equipment—but you can make more selling wine than you can selling grapes,” he explained. After a pause, he smiled ruefully. “If, that is, you manage to sell it.”

In Canelli, even people employed outside of winegrowing itself still claim a piece of the hillsides as their own. When I asked the plumber working on a winery’s tubing if he also had vines, he laughed at the ignorance of my question. “Oh yes, in these parts everyone has some piece of land,” he explained. “The grandparents made wine, but not us, though we still have the vines. We even have the old cellar from the 1800s, with all the old fashioned tools. Did you know they used to filter wine with sacks? We really ought to fix it up, even if I don’t have any idea what we’d do with that space.”

Collectively, these examples reflect the trajectories of many of the vineyards and wineries in Canelli and the surrounding villages. Testimonies from the dozen wineries I visited, the founding dates of eighteen other wineries I researched, and economic histories of the region confirmed an overall pattern to the transitions (Larcher et al 2013). Over the past century, the people of the Belbo valley have transformed their relationship to the land as economic pressures and incentives shifted: from *contadini*, subsistence farmers and sharecroppers, they became *vignaioli* when they specialized in grapes, and finally became winemakers when they decided

to invest in selling finished products rather than raw materials (or became technicians at companies that support the wine industry with machines, supplies, or services).

With each generation, a different way of working the land and making a living created a new landscape and set of identities drawn from that work, what Cinotto might call a *wine society*: "an entire economic, social, political and cultural system developed around the production, transformation and commerce of that single commodity" (2011:352). When I interviewed older Canellesi about the world they grew up in, they insisted that until recently, "in Canelli everything revolved around wine." Claudia, born in 1941 to a family employed by the Contratto winery, described how, "there were the hills with the vines, and there were those who worked for the big companies—making corks, labels, wire cages for the spumante…I had a friend of my mother's who did that job, putting the cages on, the poor thing, she did it all by hand with a little contraption. Everyone worked in wine, and that was how the wheels kept turning." The centrality of wine in everyone's lives and the labor that each performed to create it knit a community together, paid the rent, and gave growers, workers, merchants, and winemakers their sense of self. The version of events I have assembled here is by no means complete or the ultimate authority, but it attends to the ways that the inhabitants of Canelli remember and engage with the developments of the past century. This sense of place and community, the one written onto landscapes and traced in family histories, structures their responses to the challenges they now face.

Part I: Peasants, polycultures, and hard work

When I asked growers just how long their viticultural traditions stretch back, most simply shrugged and insisted that it might as well be forever. “We’ve been growing wine in my family since the 1600s!” claimed one winemaker at a street fair, his threadbare sweater and gnarled hands attesting to his own lifetime of vineyard work, and some wineries can indeed trace their families’ holdings back over five generations or more. Within living memory, however, those vineyards were a small portion of diversified farming practices that have much older roots in these hills.

The very qualities of the land rising up from the Belbo River—the soil, slope, and watershed—that make them such ideal wine country today also made them very difficult places to feed a family as a sharecropper. Grapevines could be planted on the steep hillsides unsuitable for wheat or corn, or hung between fruit trees. The drawings and photographs of the area from the nineteenth century depict *coltivazione promiscua*, promiscuous cultivation, in which widely spaced rows of grapevines are strung between fruit or olive trees, or stretched between poles, and surrounded by cereal crops or legumes, traces of which could still be found in the 1960s (Ratti 1971). This system of vines, orchards, cereals, and legumes both fed the family (and their livestock) and maximized the output of small parcels of land.

Family farms in the Langhe relied on multiple income strategies to feed large families through all seasons and eke out a half-subsistence, half-commercial survival (Cirio 1990: 208). When the agricultural depression of the 1880s forced many aristocratic families to sell off or rent their agricultural holdings, rural families in

Piedmont—most of them sharecroppers—dedicated most of their land to wheat, corn, or grapes, which paid their rents and also fed the family (Bevilacqua 1996), patterns that persisted through the first half of the twentieth century. Bruno, a retired shopkeeper in his eighties who has lived his entire life in village up the road from Canelli, described the typical farmstead as no more than three or four hectares: "There was a little grass, some fields, a few vines, fruit trees. If the grapes had a bad year there were the fields, some corn, some wheat. Life was hard, in the lean years you got by selling chickens and eggs…the vines would be up in the hills, but in the valley it was important to have a bit of grass, for feeding the animals." When I asked Ada, the matriarch of the Casa nel Bosco winery, about their farm before the *boom economico*, her face softened at the memory. "The wheat and the favas grew up to our shoulders when we were little," she recounted, reaching out at shoulder height as if to brush the tops of plants. "All the soil between the vines was planted—mostly with things to feed the livestock."

Tending to a variety of plants and animals meant that contadini worked tirelessly, an ethos of hard work that Ada's generation recounts ruefully or with laughter today. Ada grinned while she described how "my father used to wake us before dawn to collect the favas, and even on the nights when we had been to the village to dance until midnight, he would wake us up at four in the morning, saying 'If you had enough energy to dance all night, you can go make yourself useful.'" Rosanna, in charge of most everything at Stellato Cellars, insisted that her religious devotion to cleanliness—she was supervising my own work polishing bottling

equipment—came from her mother's standards: "Our house was nothing fancy, but she cleaned all of it every day. Even after waking at dawn to milk the cows, working the fields all day, tending the vegetable garden, she always found time to sweep and wash and tidy." The exhaustion of manual agriculture is omnipresent in the autobiography of a well-loved local novelist, who described his own youth in the 1930s: "I am a contadino like so many others, who rises at four and falls asleep standing up by midmorning, who sweats, breathless in the heat of midday, staggers under the summer sun, collapses on a pile of sacks in the evening, dead tired, dreamless, desireless, but for the desperate longing to rest" (Monticone 1965: 67).

Until the mid-twentieth century, most family farms were no more than a few hectares—locals still refer to them as a "handkerchief" of land in one spot, perhaps another rented down the road. Local dialect measures land by the *giornata*—literally a day—describing the amount of land that could be worked in one day with pair of oxen (about 3,800 square meters). With small parcels and extended families in which six to twelve children was typical, there was plenty of work to be done but also plenty of hands to do it. "Everything had to be done by hand," emphasized the men and women born in the 1930s and 1940s. Ada elaborated on this, laying out tasks one by one: "Clearing the land, cutting the grass, planting the wheat and corn, and then all the harvesting…my mother would pull the weeds out from the vineyards on her knees. It was the cleanest vineyard you ever saw, but there wasn't a drop of herbicide in there."

Caught between exploitative sharecropping systems and the limits of small parcels of hilly land, the *contadini* survived on a paltry diet of corn and wheat, seasoned with whatever fruit, vegetables, nuts they could cultivate or forage (Parasecoli 2014). Pellagra—a disease caused by niacin deficiency, often the result of a corn-based diet—was rampant and infant mortality was high (Whitaker 1992). Meat appeared on the family table at best once or twice a year. Today Piedmont is a gastronomic destination, home to distinguished red wines and rich meals of beef, goat cheese, eggs, and butter. But this menu reflects the diet of only the wealthiest Piedmontese less than a century ago, when most scraped by on more spartan fare (Revelli 1977). Households made simple wines in their cellars, a way to turn a seasonal fruit into a source of calories that would last through the winter (Holmes 1989). To this day, the traditional dishes of the area—*bagna cauda, polenta, pepperoni ripieni, bollito misto*—are seasoned with salted anchovies, garlic, hazelnuts, or garden herbs, with cheaper cuts of meat as a condiment or stuffing.

Part II: Industrial winegrowing, or how grapes became king

The economy and ecology of polycultural farms in the area underwent two major stages of transformation between 1850 and 1980. The first began in the 1850s, when Canelli became a part of newly unified Italy, wrested together by decades of regional skirmishes, political concessions, and foreign armies, and breaking Piedmont

away from the Duchy of Savoy.[36] For the inhabitants of Canelli, the biggest change of the era was the establishment of the wineries whose villas and cellars still dominate the town. Whether they grew grapes to sell to the industrial wineries, came down from the hills to work in the cellars, or started a business to partake in the new flows of capital the wineries generated, the rhythms and practices of agricultural life in Canelli changed dramatically in the decades following unification.

Four of Canelli's original wineries remain today: Bosca (founded in 1831), Gancia (1850), Contratto (1867), and Coppo (1892) each took their names from the patriarch of the founding family, and each of these *cantine storiche* tell visitors a similar story of humble beginnings and determined entrepreneurship. Tours of their cellars, the "underground cathedrals" that stretch for kilometers beneath the town, emphasize that the firms' success is grounded in family ties, respect for tradition, and some creative risk taking. What remains unspoken, relegated to grainy sepia photographs and collective memory, is the relentless exploitation of the *contadini* who grew their grapes and worked in their cellars.

Gancia and the other industrial winemakers of Canelli drove the conversion of subsistence farms to vineyards. The wineries obtained their primary materials from the smallholders in the surrounding hillsides: the best grapes that each family produced were brought to town to sell, the unripe or moldy grapes made into weak

[36] The Kingdom of Italy was consolidated in 1861, but Canelli's location in Piedmont, the headquarters of the politicians orchestrating Italy's unification, meant that it was already part of the coalition of kingdoms, duchies, and territories that had been annexed under the cause by the 1850s.

wines for home consumption. As the wineries demanded more and more grapes from local farmers—the bottles produced at Gancia annually jumped from 100,000 in the 1890s to more than a million by the first years of the twentieth century (Gancia 2016)—families slowly enlarged their small plots and abandoned the mixed cultivation practices that allowed them some self-sufficiency. With local prices for corn and wheat dropping through the 1880s due to cheap imports from the New World and the East, cultivating moscato grapes, which sold for two to three times the amount of other varieties, initially promised an escape from generations of precarity and poverty. The vines that crept slowly across the hills increased household incomes, but also ate away at the species and activities that had given farmers some independence from the price of grapes that year. By the turn of the century, the ever-growing acreage and yields of winegrapes soon put the *contadini* at the mercy of the wine houses and the grapes they tended (Cirio 1990).

Growing winegrapes has never been a secure or easy endeavor. Each season brings cause for worry: too rainy a spring, too cool a summer, or too stormy an autumn all spell disaster for growers. When the weather holds, endemic mold, burrowing insects, and hungry animals all threaten a successful harvest. The seasonal labor of pruning old shoots, thinning out leaves, and harvesting grapes keeps *vignaioli* working in the rain, snow, fog, and heat year-round. After a year of hard work and anxiety, winegrowing families harvested and sorted their grapes each September, hauling them into town to sell. They went by ox cart if they were lucky, or in fifty-liter wooden buckets with leather straps, called *brenta* and worn like a backpack,

down the steep hills. “There were no roads to my grandfather’s house,” Rosanna recounted as we drove the route from town to her family farmstead that once took half a day to walk. “He’d have to make three, four, five trips all the way down the nearest path with the brenta and then back up. It must have weighed near fifty kilos full up.”

Sharply sloped hillsides and few beasts of burden made growing and transporting grapes particularly difficult. Brenta made it possible to transport wine where wheels would not go: up narrow city streets or down steep hillsides. Brenta have been a part of winemaking and selling since the thirteenth century in Italy, originally used to sell wine in Italian cities.[37] A brenta was and remains a measurement in local dialect, and the generation of winemakers with graying hair remembers selling wines by the brenta to *negociants*, merchant-manufacturers who traded in grapes and young wine. With the spread of roads and diffusion of tractors in the postwar years, brenta soon became relics. At the entrance to Canelli’s Museum of Wine of the Southern Astigiano, a cardboard cutout of a medieval illustration depicts a lifesize *brentatore*, bent under the weight of his pack. Today, the only remaining containers are slowly rotting in stone farmhouses, discarded for oak barrels, plastic crates, or the large glass jugs called *damigiane*.[38]

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[37] The *brentatori* were a guild of their own, and they earned their wages transporting wine from sellers to clients, navigating narrow streets or stairways with the heavy load of wine on their backs. The job required immense strength, careful balance, and serious stamina, and it was most often performed by migrants to the cities: young men from the foothills of the Alps who grew up accustomed to heavy work, whom Braudel described as “indispensable immigrants” (Little 2014: 75).

Figures 17 and 18: A cardboard brentatore stands at the entryway to Canelli's Museum of Wine of the Southern Astigiano, and damigiane gather dust in contemporary winery cellars (photos by author).

Once in town, the peasants waited their turn to weigh their crop and contract a price. As we made our way through Canelli's main streets, mostly empty today, Claudia explained that when she was a child in the 1940s, "there used to a be a line of carts all the way up the road here, all of the contadini coming down from the hills with their grapes in the ox cart, and between the beasts' droppings and the grapes spilling over, the road had quite the 'carpet' for weeks." Negociants also rode out to more established growers to purchase pressed juice by the barrel. In either case, growers had little clout to wield in demanding a fair price. While winegrowers numbered by the hundreds, the buyers were few and often in agreement on a maximum price to offer.

Testimonies recorded in the 1930s highlight the precarity of depending on a single crop (and a highly perishable one at that) and the powerlessness of selling to limited buyers:

> *Often we would leave for town the with ox cart and the load of grapes agreed upon with the mediator. When we would arrive to Gancia, they would tell us that they could no longer take any grapes. And so we did not know what to do. Turning around and going home was not an option. The grapes would begin to rot soon, at times they had already been picked a day or two ago, and the heat would make them ferment…we would ask around town, and then finally when the line of carts was almost gone, a broker would arrive (who we discovered later had an agreement with the business) who would tell us that he would take our grapes, but only pay us a few lire for the entire cartload. Take it or leave it! And of course we would have no choice but to sell to him.* (Cirio 1990: 218).

Other years, growers were lucky to sell their grapes at all. Another farmer recounted how "for several years, when we would come down from the hills with the buckets of grapes, we would arrive to Gancia and have to go back home again with the entire load. They said the grapes were in a sorry state, that they did not measure up to the quality they needed. This way they would not have to buy them like they had promised us they would" (Cirio 1990: 219). Rather than forming alliances with their fellow growers in order to demand price guarantees from the wineries, most farmers opted to expand their production as much as possible, at times clearing and planting patches poorly suited for growing moscato. The industrialists responded with more rigid contracts for the acquisition of their primary materials, perpetuating a mechanism of dependencies and exploitation with deep roots in the territory (206).

The more than 800 smallholders of the hills surrounding Canelli lived the pre-war years in what local historians have named "the last feudalism" (Archimede 1970,

Bordone et al 2006). Though there were neither lords nor serfs, the conditions of exploitation and powerlessness the contadini bore were not far off: indebted with rents or loans to pay, and rarely making more than enough to keep the family fed, the contadini rarely had a day of rest (Monticone 1965). This remains a source of ire between the winegrowers and their buyers, but also a point of pride for those who lived through it. Bruno became agitated on this point, insisting that it was a world difficult to imagine today, one that entailed a fundamentally different relationship to the land and plants that structured its rhythms. "For you young people it's almost impossible to grasp what it was fifty years ago," he insisted. "You can't understand it, because the world has changed so fast that there's hardly a trace of what happened back then." When I asked him what life had been like in the past, his description focused on agricultural labor and the sense of meaning people derived from it:

> *It was basically all manual labor, or work done with the help of animals. The contadino participated in the work of nature. He grew grain, and went to see it. Maybe on holidays you would say, "come and see my field, my vines, and then the next time we'll go to see yours." There was this pleasure in seeing the fruits of your labors and those of your neighbors, your friends, your relatives, there was a tie between the people and nature, because the contadino was part of the joy that nature gives, and he felt the pain when the hail came down!*

Bruno is not alone in mourning the passing of this world. *The Hills of Pavese: Langhe Memories* publishes archival research, poetry, photo essays, and nostalgia drenched recollections of life in the Langhe in the first half of the twentieth century as the generation who lived it thins out. Recollections of childhoods in the 1930s and 1940s emphasize the positives: simple pleasures, tightly knit communities, and the rewards of hard work. Articles recount accompanying aunts and uncles to their farms

to help plant or weed, picnics in the vineyard during the grape harvest, or local varieties of grapes named for their peculiar habits, like the *luglienga* (named for the month of *luglio*, July, when it ripened) that have vanished from fences and orchards today. The protagonist of these stories, the contadino, knows the territorio intimately. He or she feels the "joy" and "pain" that Bruno described, drawing a sense of accomplishment from a well-tended field, admiring the labor of neighbors and kin, and living at the mercy of the elements. In this lifeworld, the demands of the land—planting, weeding, harvesting—tie families to particular hillsides, children to parents, and neighbors to one another.

The contributors to *The Hills of Pavese* and my informants have not entirely forgotten, however, the precarity, poverty, and filth that tempered those connections and forms of fulfilment: their testimonies also described the gnawing hunger of wartime, the ruthless buying practices of the industrial wineries, and wine that was, frankly, undrinkable. During one of our longer evenings of work in the cellar, Tommaso cut me off mid-question at my mention of *il vino del contadino* (peasant's wine) in order to set the story straight:

> *The myth of the vino del contadino is one to debunk. There was a time, even still today, when they would tell you, "Oh, the vino del contadino is the real genuine stuff." But believe me, the worst wines ever made were made by the contadini. If you are a big winery, any little scandal becomes an enormous problem. So maybe you make wines that aren't particularly good, but those companies will never sell wine that will make you sick. But the contadino would do anything. It used to be, they would press the grapes three times. The first round they would sell as Barbera, that was the best and most expensive one. Then they would take the must, dump lots of water and some sugar on them, and ferment it all again into a wine that was really just water and sugar, and a bit of color from the must. This was the Dolcetto. Then they would do it again, and make a rosé. And then make the rounds with their*

> *damigiane, saying, "Would you like a nice rosé? Taste it! This is the genuine wine, the vino del contadino*."

The contadino's world and the wine that came from it have enjoyed a surge in popularity in recent years, a process I discuss further in Chapters Three and Four. The appeal of wine made by contadini or produce sold by them at the *mercato dei contadini* (farmers' market) is in large part possible due to the selective amnesia that Tommaso rails against above, the sanitiziation of agricultural life, and the technological overhaul of rural products that occurred within living memory. From wooden tubs for fermentation and cloth sacks for filtering, wineries became cement and stainless steel operations, equipped with chemicals and electric pumps to standardize and clarify their wines. The *vino* and the vines of the contadino began to change dramatically in the years following World War II. New economic opportunities and techniques catalyzed unprecedented ways of working the land, a shift that transformed both the territory and the families who made their living from it. As the communities along the Belbo transformed from an impoverished scattering of villages (Cesare Pavese describes the Santo Stefano of 1915 as "four hovels and a great deal of mud") to a regional hub of industrial winemaking (see Chapter One), Canelli's contadini became vignaioli.

Part III: Mechanization and the rise of family wineries

The transformation from subsistence farming to a monoculture of commercial vineyards was driven and made possible by new technologies, streams of capital, and consumer tastes. In the vineyard, tractors, pumps, and chemical agents streamlined

the processes of clearing new land, fighting weeds and pests, and transporting baskets of grapes from the vineyard to the winery (Cirio 1990). Cheap steel wire lifted vines off poles or the ground and refashioned unruly bushes into neatly trellised rows. Meanwhile, markets for Italian wines and vermouths carried by steamship emerged in Northern Europe and settler colonies around the world, fueling the expansion of the cantinas and vineyards (Chapter One). At the same time, mechanization of both vineyard and cellar work in the 1950s began to diminish the number of workers needed in the vineyards and the cellars, allowing farmers to expand their vineyards far beyond what manual labor could accomplish, even as average family sizes shrank.

Tractors in particular revolutionized less delicate tasks in the vineyard. Franco's family has been accumulating land for three generations, which would have been far too much for them to manage without machinery: "We have a patch of land here and there, twenty hectares all together—a big job for just two people!" But now, he explained, with the machines, "we can work with more calm. Some things are still done by hand—pruning, harvesting—but others, like spraying treatments or weeding the vines—you do with machinery by now. Before, my father took a week to do what we can finish in a morning." Tractors hauling tanks have replaced backpacks of hand-pumped spray in flatter holdings (though the heavy plastic packs still reign in steeper plantings). Weed whackers and herbicides put an end to kneeling in the dirt, ripping out imposters by hand. From a crop that required a full day's work year-round, grapevines became plants that could be tended by one or two people for the majority of the year, with periods of increased labor demand in the spring and fall.

Figures 19 and 20: Tractors revolutionized the amount of land that one family could cultivate, as well as changing planting patterns and the landscape. Within a generation, wooden carts had become relics of the past (photos by author).

In the cellars, elements of production once accomplished by human sweat and skill switched to inexhaustible machines. Before the mechanization of Italian industries in the 1950s, men hoisted tanks, mixed lees, and rotated thousands of bottles of sparkling wines each day. Women washed, filled, corked, and labeled bottles, packing them carefully in boxes for shipment, and housewives fashioned wire into cork cages by hand in their kitchens. A single industrial winery employed several hundred people in the early twentieth century, a number winemaking machines—many designed and manufactured in Canelli's own industrial zone—cut down to a few dozen at most today (Cirio 1990, interviews with Claudia, Ada, and Daniele).

Canelli went from a mostly rural populace spread across hundreds of farms to an increasingly urban community, with some families staying on the land and absorbing the hectares left by others. Those that remained saved scrupulously in order to take advantage of accessible mortgages from the state for rural land, finally purchasing their farms during Italy's *boom economico*: twelve of the eighteen small wineries I surveyed were founded between 1950 and 1965, though most families claimed to much deeper roots in the area.[39]

With winery jobs drying up thanks to mechanization that increased through the 1960s and 1970s, as well as grape prices dropping in a glutted market, many of the winegrowers of the Belbo valley decided to become winemakers. Winemaking

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[39] The passage of Italian Law no. 114 of February 1948 encouraged the development of small family farms through government subsidized credit and purchase money mortgages. Prior to this time, access to land depended almost solely on the availability of personal savings or kinship networks.

offered the vignaioli some freedom from the prices set by the industrial wineries: by taking the means of production back into their own hands, growers could sell their wines over months and years instead of trying to sell grapes in a matter of days or weeks. They also kept the value added to the final product, profits that formerly ended up in the pockets of the industrialists. In the past, some vignaioli had vinified their barbera or dolcetto grapes, selling barrels of young wine to negociants who would age and bottle it themselves. But this time, families decided to launch their own labels, making sparkling and still wines and selling them directly to consumers.

Each winery has its own version of this transition, but patterns emerged from the data I collected. Great-grandparents gradually expanded the vineyards, planting more vines here and acquiring a new half hectare there. Grandparents consolidated the monoculture, investing in better tools and beginning to make wine for the family and friends in small cramped cellars with a dozen wooden barrels. Parents frustrated with falling prices for grapes and the financial insecurities of farming invested in building commercial wineries. They sent their children to the *Enologica*, Alba's historic secondary School of Enology and Viticulture, entrusting the cellar to their sons, the marketing and accounting to their daughters, and maintaining the vineyards with the help of a hired hand.

At the beginning of the 1980s, *Asti Spumante* was the undisputed base of the local economy, supporting dozens of family run wineries and hundreds of employees of large scale wineries and manufacturers of corks, bottles, labels, and winemaking equipment. Moscato accounted for more than 10,000 hectares across the Astigiano

(Guagnini 1981:91), with more cleared from stands or forest or roadside parcels each year. Transforming raw materials into a finished product came with significant startup costs, often accrued over a lifetime of scrupulous saving. It also required that farmers learn to make wine, run a business, and build new ties with suppliers and customers. Most importantly, it changed a household's relationship to cultivating the land. Abandoning a subsistence or sharecropping life to grow grapes freed families from endless drudgery, but left them at the mercy of the industrial wineries. Becoming independent winemakers untethered incomes from the control of limited buyers, but also exposed households to new demands and pressures from a volatile global market. At the same time, the rapid changes in living standards and family structures began to disintegrate the basic patterns of life that had once held this community together.

Looking back: Temporalities and *la terra* (the earth)

Well after grapes became king, life in Canelli remained tied tightly to the annual cycles of planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing multiple crops. Bell peppers and *cuore di bue*—ox heart tomatoes—came in July, apples in August, and white grapes began in September, the reds ripening last. Italian cuisine is famous for religious seasonality in no small part because the diet of most of the country was tightly bound to plant lifecycles well into the 1970s. During the autumn months, everyone worked overtime, through holidays and Sundays—the harvest could not wait. Then, as now, the timing of picking, pressing, and fermenting huge amounts of grapes required more labor than one village could furnish (Revelli 1977). Hiring

outsiders from farther up the foothills or neighboring villages was common. Until 1977, Italian schools did not recommence classes until October first, and even after instruction began, it was common for children to head straight to the fields after lessons finished at midday.

These long days are remembered fondly now by the generation who spent their afternoons weeding or harvesting. Incomes from winegrowing were modest, so young people found a job as soon as they could, most often in their neighbors' vines or orchards. When my neighbors, a couple in their sixties, invited to me join them for lunch and explain what I was doing in Canelli, talk quickly turned to their own experiences in the vines. By the time we had finished our plates of pasta, Silvio had launched into an ode to the autumns of his childhood in Canelli: "It was a bit of the poetry and festival that people talk about, an important moment of the year. Once it was something you lived as part of a community, or at least as a family, groups of friends," he recalled.

When I asked about his role in the harvest, he explained that "we kids would help our relatives, and then maybe a neighbor and make a bit of pocket money. The vignaiolo had a notebook and he'd write 'Today Silvio came after school and worked from three till seven.' I was paid maybe four thousand lire an hour. By now we're in another century!" Cristina, a few years younger than Silvio, added that it was not only grapes that required a community effort: "It was the classic first job for young people, going to pick apples, grapes, even olives. I wasn't cut out to be a waitress or a barista, so I went to *vendemmiare*."

My interlocutors' recollections stressed the loss of that world, in which the work was hard but organized by casual labor relations that benefitted the community collectively. Piedmontese *contadini* may be famous for their independence and diffidence, but my informants' testimonies and regional histories emphasized the way that the seasonality of agriculture (and grape growing in particular) bound community members to one another and to the land.[40] Some remnants of this world remain: hand tools corroding in garages, footpaths that wind from one property to the next, and empty farmhouses with shutters dangling by one hinge. But they are relics by now, things by the bend in the road that Japanese sedans shoot past. Vines have taken over the fields of grain, supermarkets have replaced vegetable gardens, and winemakers are more likely to spend Sunday afternoons registering for conventions in New York than visiting their neighbors' farms. The families that make wine today often span these generations. Sunday lunch—the most important meal of the week—joins grandparents who ate polenta for entire winters with teenagers who play with their smartphones beneath the table, only picking at the beef ravioli on their plates.

Whether or not they came from a winegrowing family, children raised in the Belbo Valley before the 1980s grew up intimately familiar with the tempos and rhythms of agricultural life, a collective experience that they see fading from the lives of young people today. But instead of timelessness, there are multiple temporalities at

[40] An oft quoted idiom throughout the region, *piemuntesi falsi e cortese* (Piedmontese, fake and polite) pokes fun at the reserved and at times duplicitous character attributed to inhabitants.

work here. There are relationships with time inscribed in the physical contours of place—ruins, layers, and memories—and experiences of time lived through the tasks of laboring in that place.

Figures 21 and 22: Human strength once operated presses and guided beasts of burden, the relics of which now lie rusting in winery corners or crumbling farmhouses (photos by author).

The cyclical time of plants, seasons, and agricultural tasks lends credibility to the myth of timelessness and gives the days and years a quality that reaches across the decades. Winter is still spent in the cellars tending fermenting tanks, spring remains fraught with worry over the budding vines, and summer continues to culminate in the tensions and festivities of the grape harvest. In contrast, generational time—three decades or so—tracks a community's reinvention of its relationship to the land as households chased new economic opportunities. This lens highlights what has

changed rather than what remains: young people are not willing to work as hard, the vines require ever more chemicals and treatments, and the market is volatile at best.

The increasing velocity of that change—from intergenerational to intervintage—evokes an ambivalent and at times anxious form of nostalgia. The past represents, on the one hand, drudgery and poverty, elements that no one has entirely forgotten or claims to miss. On the other hand, the past also holds something unspoiled and irrecoverable, particularly the rootedness and mutuality of relationships (Herzfeld 1997), in this case human relationships with the land and plants. This conceptualization of the past is not entirely "restorative" (Boym 2001)—no one wishes to return to a world in which they work in snow up to their knees and subsist on polenta—so much as selective: it highlights what has been lost rather than what was happily abandoned. Together, these rhythms and relationships to time comprise local concepts of tradition: it is both part and parcel of mundane tasks and inhabited places, and also something always on the verge of slipping away forever.

Bruno's insistence on the unraveling of ties between people and nature—*For you young people it's almost impossible to grasp what it was fifty years ago. There was a tie between the people and nature, because the contadino was part of the joy that nature gives, and he felt the pain when the hail came down!*—emphasizes the connections between a farmer and his or her land that once organized life in his community. Despite the advent of tractors and refrigerated trucks, however, ties between a farmer and his land remain: working the land continues to demand

attention to seasonal patterns, long days spent in all kinds of weather, and knowing intimately the habits of local plants and animals.

The natural world was omnipresent in my conversations with winegrowers, though rarely invoked as such, and I learned to recognize patterns in the ways that vignaioli described their work. We spoke of hotter summers and hailstorms that destroyed entire vineyards in an afternoon.[41] We discussed molds, insects, and fungi that came out of nowhere and spread like wildfire. We caressed grape leaves and crumbled handfuls of soil, followed the lines of trellis techniques, and bit into immature grapes, more skin than pulp and tart on the tongue. More than anything else, we talked about *il territorio* or simply *la terra*, the land.

As in many agricultural societies, *la terra* is many things at once in Italian parlance: dirt, soil, land, place, home. Winemakers and growers describe their work as a collaboration with the land and expression of it. In doing so, they appeal to commonly accepted notions of terroir that drive wine labeling law and pricing points, but also invoke an older relationship to the land as a means of survival. The land to which a family traces its roots is a core element of Italian identity, a form of belonging that cannot be acquired or learned outside of this mixture of blood and soil

[41] Growers still feel the pain of hailstorms, especially now that climate change renders storms increasingly ferocious. August 2016 brought record winds that ravaged vineyards and orchards in the Monferrato, destroying entire harvests in some spots and gutting the regional cooperative's production. In July 2017 "unprecedented" hail the size of tennis balls blanketed vineyards across the valley. Farmers in the Langhe and Monferrato once carried statues of the Madonna through the hills, praying for protection from the skies. Today they fire hail cannons into the clouds, hoping to disperse brewing storms.

(Castellanos 2010). Not unlike the “ecological nationalism” that Caldwell describes in Russia, Italian identities perform a more localized “packaging of land, kinship, and identity…grounded simultaneously in geography and biology” (2010:13, 14). *Il territorio* is a hybrid of landscape and community, a relationship between people and place written into the land itself and the way that people see it.

Land becomes a *territorio,* a territory-landscape, though human engagement with the contours and qualities of a space. In English *landscape* denotes a reification of nature into a two-dimensional frame—a definition that began with Dutch landscape painting’s panoramic gaze upon a place understood as “natural” rather than “human” (Cronon 1996, Berger 2005)—whereas territory refers exclusively to ownership, domain, or political borders. In Italian, *territorio* retains the older and deeper roots of these terms, those that predate national borders, when landscape represented a more intimate relationship between people and place: a set of rights, obligations, and customs written into the land itself and the way that people see it (Olwig 1996). This persists today in Piedmont’s wine country, where the inhabitants of the Belbo Valley describe themselves and their work in relation to the ruins, projects, and lifeforms that surround them. In places with long histories of human engagement with the terrain, landscapes serve as physical library of the past (Ives 2017): rather than reference books, here the presence or absence of different plants, creatures, or slopes each catalogues the various human activities carried out in that place, activities that root people to the land and that inform their sense of self.

These relationships with the soil, the landscape, and the plants makes these hillsides profoundly personal. Vineyards are not just grape factories; they represent generations of work and care, as well as a grower's values and knowledge. Winegrowers I visited always insisted on going to see their vineyards, no matter the weather. With Antonio I climbed up to particular spots, stopping at each one as he dug into the soil for a handful of gray, ochre, or blackish earth, and explained the qualities that chalk, clay, or silt imparted to the vines rooted in them. Other days I drove across town with Alberto to see the vines he was particularly happy with that year, lingering in a row that gave the best fruit. Even while discussing export trends, Mara cannot help but tuck in a trailing vine or rip out weeds from around the roots, motions executed without breaking step, automatic after years of tending these plants.

Beyond a set of hopes for a particular vintage, the vines and the tasks of wine production are also a place of memories. Daniele's mother walked me out to where their vineyard once ended, pantomiming the buckets of dirt she and her husband carried up each spring to expand it row by row. While hanging bunches of grapes to dry on racks in the old farmstead courtyard, Rosanna began telling me how hard her father worked in the vineyards—some nights he was too tired to speak at the dinner table—and the care with which her mother put up *cugna*, a jam of fall fruit and nuts, for the family each fall. In everyday exchanges and storytelling, vignaioli and winemaking families express profound attachments to the land, the vines, and the wines they produce, highlighting the practices of labor and care that rooted them in a

particular place. In this context, overhauling or uprooting a community's relationship to the land becomes an existential crisis.

Figures 23 and 24: The vignaioli I visited knew their vineyards intimately from a lifetime of daily visits, each row of vines or patch of soil distinct from others (photos by author).

Part IV: "It will be less…human"

Leo is the winemaker in a family with deep roots in the territory—their farm dates back five generations. One of the few young people in Canelli who have decided to take up the family business, he studied at the enological high school before taking over the direction of the cellars from his father, who now occupies himself with overseeing the vineyards. Like most of his peers, Leo remains torn between a strong sense of obligation and connection to his family and their winery, but also longs for a life that is less bound to a single place so far from the rock concerts, creative restaurants, and nightlife he loves to frequent in European cities.

On a still summer evening, while walking past unruly orchards into the village down the road from his family home, we began mapping out the small things that had changed in the area: bars bought up by Chinese families, the creeping spread of the industrial district warehouses across what had been cornfields—"there's much more cement these days"—and the stone farmsteads that dot the hills with jagged cracks running up the walls and blackberry brambles encircling the gates. "It makes you think," he said, "it has already changed so much in so little time, it makes you feel like an old timer by age thirty, and wonder what they'll do in the future." "But the vines will still be here?" I asked. "Certainly, but I think it's going to get much more industrial and less…human," he replied.

When hills are covered with grain that will become bread or trellised with vineyards known by the name of the family who works them, the landscape itself reflects the forms of labor that keep people fed, that organize households, and that

mark the passage of time. Like the chronotopes that Basso describes, these places "stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves" (1984:44-45).[42] They are intensely anthropogenic places, making visible and tangible a day or a life's work, a family legacy, or a new enterprise.

"Among the hills and vines, the houses with their pastel colors confirm to the presence of people who know how to interpret the vocation of the territory," declared a regional industry magazine, but many of those houses lie empty, long abandoned for more comfortable accommodations closer to town (Longo 2014:78). Today the grain and many of the families are gone, and the removal of human labor from the landscape that began in the postwar years is at a crucial juncture. The intensification of production, the total conversion to vines, and the atrophy of the Italian household transformed what was once a collection of subsistence farms into an aging community of smallholders whose collective activities form a monoculture that stretches to the horizon. As Bruno explained, this transition came with costs: "those ways of working have vanished: the exhaustion is gone, and in its place we have machines that solve every problem, more or less, and then create new ones, big problems."

[42] Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope describes the literary practice of mixing time and space, in which "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (1981: 84).

Plant/ation problems

European farmland was largely spared the plantation model's ecological devastation and economic disembedding until after World War II, when industrial agriculture began transforming the lives of Europe's remaining "peasants" (Lains and Pinella 2010). As European states mechanized and modernized agriculture, farmers across the continent began expanding their holdings, converting integrated and diversified systems to monocultures, and relying heavily on foreign markets to sell their crops. If "traditional" agriculture was a collaboration with natural processes, plantations are a reworking of that world, a constant struggle against what plants do on their own (Tsing 2014). Monocultures isolate plants, transforming entire ecosystems into ordered rows of one species designed for efficiency and scale. Within a few growing cycles, pests and blights imported from elsewhere or evolved to feast on the new environment—monocultures are test tubes for producing pathogens—attack with impunity. In order to keep the plants alive, farmers kill with abandon: annihilating all other life with herbicides, coating the stems and leaves of the plant with insecticide, and reanimating fumigated soil with petrochemical fertilizers. Then and now, intensive monocropping creates boom and bust cycles that have only sped up with global connectivity and unpredictable climactic conditions.

Until recently, the anthropology of agriculture was roughly grouped into studies of plantations, peasants, and smallholders (Besky and Brown 2012: 27), but contemporary European agriculture refuses to remain bounded by these categories. The winegrowers of the Langhe and Monferrato embody a blurring of peasants,

smallholders, and plantations. Over the past century, the families who farm these hillsides have transformed from subsistence sharecroppers to participants in a plantation-like economy, but still describe themselves as contadini—peasant farmers. This is in no small part because they do not occupy the more menial, repetitive roles that characterize plantation labor—they have largely shifted that burden to immigrants (see Chapters Three and Four).

In practice, winegrowing here is a fusion of old knowledges and new technologies, with heavy emphasis on the latter. Winegrowing combines industrial chemicals and machinery with techniques honed over generations of working with plants in a specific place. Vignaioli cultivate hillsides designated as UNESCO World Heritage with autochthonous varieties of grapes, but also sell their crop to multinationals who transform it into a bulk commodity for export. Holdings are small and passed down from one generation to the next, but the workings of most farms rely on imported labor for year-round and seasonal tasks. Uekoetter points out that plantations are places that Europeans imagine as elsewhere—in other moments in time and in other parts of the world (2014). From the perspective of any individual winegrower, they operate a small farm that produces high quality products. Seen from above, however, those handkerchiefs of land compose a massive, profit-driven production complex focused on one commodity. The workers are largely imported, and its products cater to distant markets.

Farmers of all kinds are grappling with the ecological upheaval generated by a warming planet where place no longer holds still: regions once hospitable to certain

plant species are becoming too hot, too dry, or too volatile to sustain traditional or indigenous crops (Ives 2014). Irregular weather and unprecedented storms destroyed hundreds of hectares across my field site in the spring of 2017, forcing the cooperative winery in Nizza Monferrato to purchase its grapes from outside the province. Meanwhile, the students at Asti's university extension are collaborating with researchers in South Africa to develop a thick skinned grape that will resist the scorching summers expected in the years to come.

For growers whose product is legally tied to a specific territory, the problem is more complex: how can they adapt practices, introduce new species, or overhaul production entirely when their commodity's value regime rests on the continuity of tradition? In this context, producers are caught in a new form of uncertainty—what if moscato or barbera grapes become impossible to grow in the very places that international law stipulates they must originate? As Ives's ethnography of rooibos tea explores, communities of people, plants, and products are bound economically *and* symbolically: the indigeneity of the plant and the rootedness of the people become intertwined in the logics of geographic labeling and niche marketing (2017). Uprooting vines also rips out the human roots of belonging and selfhood here, and is not a choice taken lightly by winegrowers. Families that have been growing moscato for several generations balk at the idea of making Asti Secco, let alone abandoning the grape altogether. "It's our history, Rebecca, you must understand," said Mara, shaking her head at my provocation ("What if it moscato becomes too hard to

grow?"), "and we're not going to walk away from our home and our traditions just because it becomes a challenge."

Today, the winegrowers of the Belbo Valley occupy a particular bind: they struggle for a share in a competitive global market while navigating the perils of a monocultural production complex and climate change. The plants that form the base of their economy may not be viable in the long term; the Geographical Indications that protect their market share may lose their physical validity; and the practices of working the land from which they derive core facets of personhood are becoming difficult to maintain. At the same time, they must perform the forms of value that won the area UNESCO status and that command higher prices by emphasizing continuity with the past. This plays out in seemingly contradictory practices. The white-haired generation that is thinning out remarks how dramatically life has changed, while middle-aged winemakers emphasize how long a vineyard has been in the family or the tenacity of local grape varietals. Protecting their traditions, however recent they may be, is not just about profits: it is about holding onto a place in the world and a way of being in it.

As new pressures threaten to uproot family ties to land that stretch back for dozens or hundreds of years, winegrowers do not reference a history of dynamism and adaptation. Rather, they connect novel approaches to "timeless" practices—*abbiamo fatto sempre così* / we have always done it this way—so as to lend coherence and structure to an uncertain future. Like Grasseni's Alpine cheesemakers (2011), Canelli's winemakers are "re-inventing" a local heritage product—in both

practical and symbolic terms—in order to navigate a globalized market and ecology. Instead of the "invented traditions" that Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) unpack, these traditions are closer to what Di Giovine calls *re-invented* traditions: "a discontinuous break with the past in favor of earlier values or processes that are considered more authentic, but have been deemed lost or obscured. While the society may believe it is simply returning to an unadulterated state, it really creates a radically new worldview that melds imagined past values with contemporary ones" (2016:79). These traditions assign new values to old practices, naturalize the incorporation of new techniques or elements, and blur the lines between innovation and conformity. From a certain perspective, this makes perfect sense: innovation *is* tradition here.

The price of monoculture

Daniele's winery is not certified organic (*biologico* or simply *bio* in Italian), and he explained that he does not believe in organic protocols for winegrapes:

> *Not because it's not a good thing, but because it's almost a joke. When I say that this grape is organic, you think that no one has ever sprayed anything on it, which is not the case. When it comes to vegetable gardens, that's another story, but here we have an intensive cultivation of grapes, which means that you're going to have blights and pests. And always more of them. Sure, the first person to plant grapes in a place where they've never been before, they could have a truly organic production. But as soon as you have an intensive production, the problems come with it, and you have to fight them.*

Instead, he touted his approach as *eco-sustainable*: "We've taken the middle road, we use organic methods and products as much as we can, but when it is necessary, we can also use conventional treatments." When it came to treatments that the Italian state requires all farmers to apply (as a failing effort to prevent the spread

of blight), Daniele insisted that he used them. “Always in the lowest concentrations and frequencies possible—we prefer agronomic techniques to chemical ones. I’d rather live with small losses than have to eat those chemicals… Mostly I try to farm the way my grandparents did.”

Growers like Daniele grapple with difficult decisions: protect the land from chemical pollution, or protect their vintage from mold and pests? They can try to prevent infections, or they can hedge their bets and fight blights only once they manifest. The latter is a losing battle, and requires higher concentrations of chemical treatment. Especially for growers who subscribe to organic protocols, prevention is the only option. Other treatments are required by law for all growers—organic or not—in an effort to slow the spread of the latest vine wrecker: *flavascenza dorata,* grapevine yellows in English. Signs of trouble first appeared in the Belbo Valley in 1973, and by now the telltale yellow leaves, curled, dry and dying, are everywhere in these hills. While the blight itself is caused by phytoplasmas, it spreads from one plant to another on the insects that feed on the phloem tissues of grapevines, much the way that malaria travels with mosquitoes (Alderighi 2005). The hardest hit plants have stunted or dead shoots, failed blooms, and shriveled grapes. It may infect only a few rows, or it can spread quickly through a vineyard.

At the mention of grapevine yellows, growers blanched, and their tone became serious. “It’s everywhere,” Franco sighed as we walked through his vines, “we know that there’s this little butterfly moving it from one place to another, but it spreads much too quickly…there must be something else we still don’t know. Like

everyone else, we have to spray by law: two different insecticides that cost an arm and a leg. I use the minimal permitted amount—you don't want to kill everything else in the vineyard." He took a few paces down the row and gently lifted a cluster of grapes from the leaves. "See this bunch here? It's sick, you can see these sad grapes, but it's the only one I've found on this row. Sure, there are probably a few more, but it's not worth it to spray an entire block—polluting the soil, the air, your fruit—just to save a few bunches. I have twenty hectares of grapes, what do a few bunches matter to me?"

Figure 25: Grapevine yellows, so named because leaves turn yellow and curl up far before the arrival of autumn (photo by author).

Pests are not new to these hills: insects, fungi, and molds have been the bane of winegrowers for generations (Marinello 2011).[43] But *flavascenza dorata* poses a deeply unsettling threat, and some growers described it as a warning sign. Monocultures are not resilient or sustainable systems, and eventually an insect or bacteria usually outpaces agronomists' tools. Even if spraying vines with sulfur and copper has become normal practice, Daniele insisted that this most recent bug is different. "The vineyards in Piedmont were totally unscathed until fifteen years ago, it was a self-regulating ecosystem, one thing ate another and kept it in balance. But now, what with this intensive cultivation and pests arriving from elsewhere, there are all sorts of things in circulation." While skeptical of his claim that the area went "unscathed" until recently, I did not doubt that each year he has had to do things quite differently than the year before.

The labor cooperatives that furnish vineyard workers confirmed this. Much of the work that cooperatives carry out is seasonal maintenance, but a growing portion of their clients call for help transforming their vineyards. Increasingly wary of chemical pollution and the "pesticide treadmill" upon which they currently run, many growers are eyeing organic production as the way forward.[44] Organic is a growing

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[43] Between 1840 and 1880, phylloxera, oidium, and peronospora arrived from the New World and wreaked havoc on vineyards until agronomists found chemical solutions, primarily copper sulfate sprays or resistant rootstocks.

[44] The pesticide treadmill describes the losing race that farmers run against pathogens, in which the continual application of pesticides spurs the evolution of pesticide-resistant strains of pathogen, leaving crops always vulnerable to creatures that outpace agronomists and farmers increasingly reliant on toxic chemical pesticides (Dover 1985).

sector across Italy's wine regions, increasing by roughly 13 percent each year since 2009 (*I numeri* 2017). Billed as both traditional and profitable—organic wines can command a higher price for discerning drinkers—the transition is not complicated, but it is labor intensive. "You don't have to the rip out the roots, just graft the organic varietals on—we get a lot of that kind of work these days," reported the owner of a labor coop. "But it is three years of transition before you can be certified. It's not a huge sacrifice, doing the organic treatments is not the hardest thing. Especially if you can use a tractor to weed between the rows. It's less fumes than a weed trimmer too."

In the New World, biodynamic farming and permaculture smack of New Age visions or sustainable technologies. In the Astigiano, winegrowers describe them as a return to much older forms of agriculture. "It's not a big leap for us, to go organic," said the director of another viticultural labor cooperative with a shrug. "It's what people were doing here not so long ago, you know? It's our roots in a sense, farming like this." Whether or not the methodology that organic certification demands—specially ordered seeds, approved sprays, maximum concentrations—bears any resemblance to what his great-grandparents did each day, his claim domesticates an imported production system by tying it to local pasts. Mara, a social node in Piedmont's community of biodynamic and natural winemakers, continually disparaged her neighbors' "new" practices—herbicides that "kill" the soil, sulfur dosages that "suffocate" the wines—while referencing the past—*come hanno fatto i miei nonni* / how my grandparents did things—as her guide for proper viticulture. Winery websites insist that "respecting the earth" is part of traditions here: "Tradition

is the key word for our reality: respect for the earth of our historic hills, respect for the traditional methods of vinification, respect for our roots and the experience gathered in many years of work," reads the home page of a Canelli winery, claims that are not entirely unfounded, given the lack of agrochemicals used in the past.

The past becomes malleable in these moments, something to bend and repurpose. Claims about *our roots* and *how my grandparents worked* obscure the monumental changes that those generations lived through, folding monoculture into permaculture and glossing poverty as sustainability. As current practices become increasingly untenable, winegrowers employ the past to anchor new approaches to working the land and preserve a sense of belonging to a coherent history.

Profits and pressures

Weighing the costs and benefits of each approach is an imprecise science when it comes to grape quality or environmental impacts, but a carefully calculated one when it comes to finances. Small producers operate on small budgets and under increasing pressure from the nexus of GI standards, regional and national agrifood regulation, and the various demands of EU policy and export quality control. Visiting a new winery one November afternoon, I found the owner hurriedly flipping through paperwork, frantically searching for a particular form. The local consortium official had also chosen that day for a surprise visit, and my host apologized for the delay, but it was rather important that his winery pass the inspection. I waited quietly while the two of them went from one book of records to the next, examining receipts and

ledgers, obtaining bottles for testing, moving from desk to cellar and back again, until the inspector finally departed—everything in order—and the winemaker's shoulders descended at least two inches.

When tradition becomes bureaucratized into DOC regulations, the present becomes constrained by particular ideas about the past. In blogs, at town halls, and over beers in the piazza, winemakers deplore the web of regulations and the infrastructures through which they are enforced: unannounced visits, self-reporting, and never-ending paperwork. "We are vignaoli, not bureaucrats. Leave us to do our work!" a winemaker at the town hall cried, damning bureaucracy as a thankless drain on time and resources. In its current form, the system favors industrial wineries with more technology and employees to keep track each step of growing and making wine. Regulations fall particularly hard on the small producers, who may not have the technological capacities, historical records, or labor time available to keep up with the ever increasing rules and forms. Likewise, labor laws do not fall as hard on the big wineries – they can afford to contract more expensive workers, or risk the fines for getting caught with cheaper *lavoro in nero* (under the table work), fines that would bankrupt a smaller operation (interviews, Tommaso and Daniele).

The world advertised by wine travel blogs and tasting room décor is one of family farms and artisanal winemaking traditions. In this story, the growing of grapes and crafting of wines is carried out exclusively by family and friends, with each generation inheriting a set of skills and responsibilities from their elders. There are no inspections by state agents for adherence to DOC regulations or contracts with

companies that churn out millions of bottles of bottom shelf bubbles. What it means to grow and make wine in Canelli is still tied to the physical world and means of production, but also contoured by the pressures of the state and global capitalism writ large: bureaucratic labyrinths, economies of scale, and consolidated corporate power.

Bruno summed up the current state of affairs as he saw it, the end of an era: "The agricultural structure organized around small peasant farms, the one that characterized this area for centuries, is in crisis, it's completely changed, and quickly. The small farmer is disappearing, because they can't survive anymore, it doesn't make any money, it's not an option for the farmer outside of the Zero km market, which is limited. You're not allowed to sell your products at a good price." When I asked him what he saw as the driving force of this change, he blamed the restructuring of the agricultural market and daily provisioning, predicting a future devoid of the farms that have characterized this community and landscape.

> *The big supermarkets, the big food companies are the bosses, they set the prices, the quantities, quantities that small farmers can't possibly furnish, and so they favor the expansion of the big farms. They're driving out that which was once the norm here: they were all small farmers with two or three hectares of land, no more…now they can't survive anymore, there are a few left but they'll be gone soon. And this is why you can't understand, you young people, the drama that we live in the face of these changes that we can't comprehend. We lived that, and now we live this, but you have only known this reality, you never lived the other.*

A few generations before, children born into contadino families had few options beyond taking up their parents' chores. In 2015, working the land was a maverick move for young Italians. "Today it takes courage to become a farmer, and a hell of a lot of work to remain autonomous," insisted the cellar manager at Nizza

Monferrato's cooperative winery. "You need more and more land planted to make a living," he explained. As margins drop and expenses—fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, tractors, not to mention a winery and its assorted machines and permits—continue to rise, growers must increase their profits in order to pay all the bills. The Italian state offers grants and loans for young farmers, encouraging a nation of unemployed youth to take up working the land. But there has not been a significant return thus far, even if the profession of contadino is still an honorable one.

For many Italian farmers, working under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy means less freedom, more expenses to keep up with rigorous standards, and more competition from the agricultural powerhouses of Spain and France. Farming alone is rarely enough to pay the bills, and farmers of all kinds in Italy have taken up new activities to stay afloat, like farmstead bed and breakfasts (*agriturismi*) or selling preserved goods made from their perishable produce. Vignaioli have crop insurance and state subsidized health care, but the precarity of their endeavor remains. Rather than hoping that the seasons will carry out their usual patterns, growers expect fiercer storms and hotter summers as global temperatures rise. New pests transported by international shipping and trade can destroy an entire livelihood before farmers even develop a name for it. The grapes that were selling well in the United Kingdom when a grower converted half of their holdings to it five years ago are now out of style, and the newest set of consortium standards or export law requires those that vinify their grapes to invest in thousands of dollars of new equipment.

The hillsides manifest the material transformations of winegrowing here, but an equally important driver of change is invisible: the hierarchy of power and profits. At the top, a handful of industrial wineries, luxury brands, and multinational distributors command the highest markup and access to marketing tools. They purchase wines and grapes from dozens of smaller cantinas and vineyards, setting the prices each year for raw materials whose production costs vary. In the middle, landed farmers remain at the mercy of their land, their plants, and the whims of the weather. Small wineries are hard pressed with competition from Spain, France, and the New World. Both vignaiolo and vinter must navigate a global labyrinth of import regulations and an increasingly glutted market. At the bottom of the pyramid, hundreds of immigrant workers, both full-time and seasonal, carry out the daily tasks of tending vines, cleaning cellars, and picking grapes on family-owned farms.

At the fulcrum of these pressures, vignaioli have reorganized the set of practices and structures of labor that keep wine and money flowing through the valley. The story line of tradition works to smooth out the transformations of ecologies and economies that have played out here in the last two centuries. Old methods have become fashionable again, and "modern" approaches to agriculture or enology amended in favor of "sustainable" or "traditional" ones. For now, the hillsides keep the names of the families who cultivate them and the memories they hold of previous generations. The lines of vineyards perched on steep inclines attest to the continual work of human hands that go where tractors cannot, the carefully pruned and trained lines of the vines are evidence of constant care. The landscape

remains human because winegrowers and makers have found a much needed ally in keeping their businesses and traditions alive: immigrants.

Chapter Three: The New Contadini of Canelli

> *Dietro una bottiglia di vino c'è sempre un contadino. / Behind a bottle of wine there is always a contadino.*
>
> Nascetta Story 2017

> *In the vast area of the Langhe, if tomorrow the Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Romanians suddenly decide to go home, goodbye harvest.*
>
> Canal 2015

Contadini veri e contadini finti **(Real peasants and fake peasants)**

The avenue that runs through the heart of Asti is filled with peasants on a Saturday morning in September. Wrapped in homemade shawls and patched woolen jackets against the cold, they wear scarves, hats, and kerchiefs to keep out the dust. They carry pitchforks and buckets, leading horses or proffering baskets of bell peppers for sale. Others pull wheelbarrows over the cobblestones, haul armfuls of firewood, or sit atop barrels of grapes, skirts hoisted up to their knees. The *sfilata dei contadini*, the peasant parade, is a mixture of last-minute dress-up borrowed from grandparents' closets and carefully crafted floats. Some of the more elaborate truck beds carry entire scenes down the street: men shoveling dirt through a sieve or teenage girls cleaning bottles with rags. Their tennis shoes and clean fingernails, however, give their costumes away. No one's hands are mottled with pellagra, nor do any of the children traipse across the cold cobblestones with bare feet.

At the peak of the wine harvest, Asti hosts the *Douja d'or*, the Golden Carafe, a wine festival that showcases geographically protected bottles from across Italy, with a heavy emphasis on local producers. The market square fills with stands offering

regional specialties—ravioli, rabbit stew, braised beef—everything redolent of butter, anchovies, or garlic. The *Palio d'Asti* transforms a parking lot into a dirt race track where riders draped in velvet mantles from each village gallop furious laps. Drum brigades in Renaissance garb march through the piazza, filling the streets with a heartbeat that echoes off stone church facades. Territory and tradition are consumable in every sense, and the past seems to come to life again, if only for a weekend or two.

"It's our tradition!" the marketing manager at Stellato Cellars replies when I ask her why people are so eager to dress up as peasant farmers. Like the plates of steaming polenta in people's hands, poverty and manual labor are relics of the past to revive this weekend. "After all," Arianna reminds me, "we were all *contadini* once." Official statistics back her claim: until the 1940s, more than one-half of employed Italians worked in agriculture, a number that ran much higher in this area and one that dropped tenfold to roughly 5 percent by the 1990s (McCarthy 2000:10).

Anthropological studies of Italian industrialization trace how late state formation and a delayed transition to an urbanized society created a nation with strong ties to the image of the peasant as the backbone of the nation and the family as an economic unit (Blim 1990, Yanagisako 2002). *Contadino* was an occupation and quasi-ethnicity in a social world organized into tightly bounded social classes until well into the twentieth century. The plight of the contadino varied widely from one region to the next (in no small part because the place called Italy today was ruled by various kingdoms and city states), but the term encapsulated many kinds of small farmers: subsistence households, sharecroppers, and herders. As most land was

owned by the Catholic church or noble families until the 1800s, contadini paid rent or taxes to their landlords while scraping out a living from often what were often swampy, hilly, or rocky plots of land (Sereni 1961).

"Contadino" described the majority of the population on the peninsula until the mid-twentieth century, and it was not, until recently, a complimentary title (Montanari 2017). Contadino is a diminutive from the term for a rural area dependent upon a main town or land owner, a *contado*, a social world in which peasants were, along with the forests and hills, considered part of the landscape itself. Stories dating back to the 1300s loaded the term "contadino" with backwardness, depicting "ignorant, thankless, and brutal individuals who were incapable of profound sentiments or innovations" (De Simonis et al. 2004:19), closer to beasts than to their urban counterparts. In the years following Italy's unification, politicians described contadini as impediments to their vision of history and progress (Rizzo 2013), while Marxist scholars identified "contadino" as a class identity, one that had to be instructed in political formation along the lines of the urban worker in order to overthrow their oppressors (Gramsci 2011).

For most of Italian history, contadini were a downtrodden class, a category of person whose habitus was built around legal and rhetorical subordination. It was not until the postwar rise in prosperity, improved standards of living, and rural exodus that the contadino became a counterpoint to the ills of urban life (Harris 2012). Rather than an ignorant brute, the contadino began to represent the simpler and more genuine lifeworld of "back then" (Krause 2005). Contadini may have been destitute and

subordinate to their *padrone*, or landlord, but they were also self-reliant, possessed a vast knowledge of the lands they worked, and transmitted ways of knowing the world derived from the kinds of labor they performed.

While "peasant" no longer describes the bulk of Italy's workforce, the figure of the contadino does very real work in organizing Italian discourses of identity and territory. Urban and rural ethnographies of Italy describe a nation in which the peasant farmer is the citizen par excellence, and relations to landscapes and localized history continue to structure Italian concepts of difference and personhood (Black 2012, Castellanos 2010, Cavanaugh 2009). *Il contadino* remains an important symbol in creating market niches, establishing business relations, and rural development schemes (Black 2012, Mintz 1973:91, Verinis 2014, Wolf 1955). In agricultural social circles, contadini are the ultimate insiders, the people tied tightly to the land.

Most importantly, contadini are the human roots of a place. The people who work the land in Italy reproduce the territories that Italians hold dear—Alpine pastures dotted with sheep, gnarled olive trees covering the dry plains of Puglia, and vineyards that sprawl over hillsides in Tuscany and Piedmont—and the places that give Italian life a particular set of textures and flavors. Producing these landscapes requires a particular set of skills and expertise, fluencies passed down from one generation of contadini to the next. Contadini are the genealogical source of the contemporary population: most families can trace their roots to contadino ancestors, and many still own a small plot of land that lies fallow within a few hours of the city or town in which they live. More than the salt of the earth, contadini embody the

regional microcosms of dialect, taste, landscape, and sensibilities that organize Italian identity. Working the land is a form of self-making for agricultural communities in an immediate sense. For urban dwellers, that labor yields both sustenance and symbolic goods: thanks to the work of contadini, consumers can maintain their connections to *la terra*, the land, by consuming the foods it yields (Castellanos 2010, Grasseni 2013).

Only one or two generations removed from a predominantly rural populace of small farmers, Italians inhabit a world in which "peasants" are still very much real people. Most major urban produce markets include a *mercato dei contadini* with stalls reserved for local farmers who sell their goods directly to shoppers. I counted contadini among my friends and interlocutors in Canelli. Well past retirement age, Alberto can still push a wheelbarrow fully loaded with grapes up steep dirt paths, taking the handles after watching me struggle to heave it a few yards. Mara trades her wines for fresh produce, cheeses, and bread through dense networks of like-minded farmers and neighbors, throwing together a dinner for a dozen at a moments' notice from a well-stocked cellar of preserves or sending someone out to the garden. Lorenzo's deeply callused and grooved hands display a lifetime of manual labor and outdoor living, and his short, curt phrases leave no room for pleasantries. Rosanna has little tolerance for dirt or disorder in her home, and even less for someone who cannot find a way to make themselves useful.

Who counts as a contadino today is not fixed; it depends upon who you ask. Various actors across economic and political spectrums craft different peasants as

they make their own histories and selves (Roseberry 1989, Williams 1977, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Somewhere between farmer and peasant, some claim that the term has been commodified and somewhat worn out in Italy: the corporate giant Eataly sells t-shirts declaring "We are all contadini." Nevertheless, it is still strategically invoked in daily parlance and to political ends: at the town hall to discuss consortium standards, a winegrower fed up with industrial buyers hollered, "I'm a contadino, and I'll tell you how things are for us," invoking her status as a form of expertise and authority.

Who counts as a *vero* contadino—a *real* farmer—is a particularly sensitive subject in the winegrowing world, where many would like to see the term redefined to exclude large landowners. Working the land with one's own hands came up repeatedly when I asked my interlocutors what qualified a contadino as the real thing. "If someone never touches the dirt that they claim to farm, how can they call themselves a contadino?" Mara asked me in return, frowning at the thought of it. "A real contadino, in this case a vignaiolo, goes out to their vines every day," affirmed Michele, who visits farmers in their vineyards to advise on fertilizers or herbicides. The contadino is actively produced through physical labor and performances of expertise. Enacting contadino-ness was only possible through working the land, my informants insisted, or at least continuing to live on it and engage with it once you were too old to be doing heavy labor. Someone who had left a childhood on the farm for city life might call themselves a *figlio di contadini*, a child of peasants, and retain a sensibility formed in that context, but they would not qualify as a contadino per se.

Even among the small farmers who remain on the land, however, the contadino is always somewhere in the past. It is a title compromised by the trappings of modern living, especially those of convenience and luxury. The families who might think of themselves as true contadini today still don a costume and props to participate in Asti's parade. A comfortable distance from filth, fatigue, and hunger is what makes the *sfilata* possible in the first place. Cleansed of the physical misery and powerlessness of contadino life, the past becomes a festival of satisfying work, hearty food, and strong communities. While Asti's residents enjoy pulling on the trappings of their common past for a day, no one wants to go back to the harsher realities that their ancestors survived.

In the Langhe and Monferrato, the contadino's intimacy with the land and expertise in viticulture is understood to imbue their wines and territory with a special set of tastes and meanings. Growers, vinters, and sellers of wine insisted that the people who buy their bottles abroad taste more than the label or the aromas, but the whole story and place behind it. "We have a tradition, a history, a culture, that are unique," claimed a sales representative for several local firms, "and we have to capitalize on this heritage, otherwise why not buy something produced in your own country rather than choosing an Italian bottle?" While maintaining a population of contadini who work the land is integral to reproducing the material trappings and social structure of local lifeworlds, Italian contadini are becoming ever more difficult to recruit. "You have to be brave or foolish to go into agriculture today," quipped one of the retirees who could usually be found at the tables outside the bar on the piazza.

“The costs of running a farm are always getting more expensive, there are more rules about this or that every day, and prices are not what they used to be.” Most young people in Italy today, often only children and afforded every privilege their parents can afford, do not consider working the land as a promising future. They have not earned university degrees in business, architecture, or medicine in order to spend their days wielding a weed trimmer.

While Asti’s Italian residents play at the tasks of the peasantry in their costumes—all the drudgery rinsed away—other men and women dress for another day of the harvest season. They moved here from Macedonia or Romania five, ten, or even fifteen years ago. Clad in mud-caked pants, long sleeves to keep out the mosquitos, and hats to shield them from the sun, they rise at dawn to get to work before the midday sun becomes oppressive. They know the quirks and habits of each row of vines and can always get the finicky engine to start. They earn enough to keep modest homes, saving scrupulously to send their children to university in the future. They are not the figures that Italians point out when I ask for an example of a *vero contadino*, but they are the new contadini of Canelli.

The contadino at work today

Contadini—past, present, and idealized—are the protagonists of this chapter. Whether real or imagined, the contadino is the central element of belonging in a community that claims them as a common past. What contadini do, the skills and languages in which they are fluent, and who is recognized as one of them organize the

values attached to various roles and identities in Canelli. In this chapter, I show how the immigrants who maintain this wine-scape earn a particular identity within the community, producing new selves through the labor of caring for vines. Earning the title of contadino and being entrusted with the legacy of skills and values that it evokes allows some immigrants to cross social boundaries policed by strict ethnic lines in Italy, generating a form of insiderness usually withheld from foreigners. In a country where citizenship remains tightly tied to bloodlines, working the soil offers a different kind of belonging. Rather than the territory as something closed off to ethnic Others, the creation and maintenance of these landscapes are what transform newcomers into insiders.

Being a contadino today means something very different from what it meant two generations before, and not only in terms of agricultural tools or lifestyle. What has happened in Italy is more complex: the set of values and meanings attached to the title has also changed. From peasants who were part and parcel of a landed estate, contadini came to represent the sustainable small farmers that organizations like Slow Food lionize (Harris 2012). In order to realize this transformation, ideas about what the past was like have been made-over with heavy strokes of nostalgia. Italians have reinvented their peasant past in order to generate new relationships to land and place, relationships that have room for immigrants.

In this chapter, I show how the invocation of the contadino in bodily forms and daily performances renders identities malleable. The contadino does not extend the mantle of Italianness, but it does resignify foreigners with values that make them

ideal employees and community members—the opposite of narratives about immigration to Italy that dominate popular media (Silverstein 2005). The embodied and place-specific knowledges that immigrants acquire through caring for vineyards—those of a local contadino—enable a transformation of their identity within the community. This happens through skilled labor on the part of immigrants *and* through discursive work by Italians: when Italians describe the Balkans as "back then," they account for their employees' skills and work ethics by identifying Balkan immigrants with the community's own peasant past, blurring temporalities and worlds. By comparing an imagined Macedonian countryside to the world occupied by Piedmontese grandparents, Italians author an identity for their employees that justifies the conditions in which these immigrants work. When the residents of Canelli refer to a Macedonian immigrant as a contadino, it binds that person to the shared patrimony of poverty from which local identities are hewn.

When Canellesi consider the present, they recognize the essential role that immigrants play in an economy built on vines. These men (and a growing number of women) replace absent kin, accept working conditions that Italians refuse, and embody a wealth of place-based knowledges and skills. Tied by mutual dependencies, Balkan immigrants work hard to support their families and Italian employers help them to navigate the logistics of living in Italy. When I ask about the future, however, the foreigners evaporate, either by acquiring the outlook of their Italian peers that render them unfit for vineyard work, or through a determined effort to deny Italy's increasingly multiethnic population. In either case, the peasant's days are numbered,

both by economic pressures that render their way of life unsustainable, but also by prejudices that preclude the potential contributions of Canelli's newest contadini.

If their children do not take up the work…

"I see seventy-year-olds struggling up the hillsides with a sack of fertilizer on their back," said Claudio, explaining why he founded a new agricultural cooperative. "There is no one in these families to carry on this work, and the vignaioli aren't getting any younger." At the winegrower meetings I attended, there were far more balding heads and stooped shoulders than young faces. Most of the vignaioli of the Belbo Valley today were born in the 1940s and 1950s, before the *boom economico* transformed Italian daily life. From a very young age, they rose before the sun to help their parents run the family farm. As adults, they lived frugally so that their children might have a more comfortable life. In many cases, they succeeded: the generation born in the 1960s and 1970s finished school, pursued university educations, or found jobs in local industries that freed them from the relentless demands of agricultural life. Today, few of these families have any young people willing to return to the vines and fields.

At the cooperative winery of Nizza Monferrato, the cellar manager cut straight to the point. "Our problem is that many [of the growers] are getting old…if their children don't take up the work, there won't be any of the small producers left." His tone was light, but a shrug that deflated his torso suggested that the matter weighed considerably on him. "There's been a return to the land in the area, some people in

their thirties and forties have come back, and here we're in better shape than other places in Piedmont. But if say ten producers retire, there are only one to two young growers who keep it going. For now, we are losing very few growers, in terms of the hectares planted and cultivated, but it is possible that in the future…things will start to diminish."

This story is not unique to Piedmont. Across Italy, the economic boom of the 1960s brought factory jobs, consumer goods, and basic services to thousands of communities across the peninsula. "That's the longer history of our cooperative," admitted the owner of Canelli's oldest labor coop. "During the boom, all the young people went to work in manufacturing, or for the state. They come back on the weekends maybe, but not to work in the vines. It's been lost, that generation. That's why we exist really, to fill the gap. The big families with lots of children have become households with two kids, and the generation of real contadini, contadini with small farms, are all in their eighties by now."

While some of the families I interviewed had longer histories of winegrowing or making than others, no one described themselves as newcomers. Vineyard and cellar work were part of everyone's experience, a lingua franca of labor. "When you are born here, you grow up knowing how to do certain things," Tommaso insisted. He described how even children from families of shopkeepers or bankers were familiar with the tasks and rhythms of the vineyard and cellar, lending a hand with their schoolmates or earning a bit of cash from a neighbor. "It's true that at the *Enologica*, the kids who came from vignaioli families had a head start in some things, but we all

grew up familiar with a pair of clippers and a tractor." Each generation of Canellesi inherited ways of knowing the land, seeing the plants, and performing the myriad of tasks that keep the vines healthy and orderly. Tommaso was born in the 1970s, one of the last generations to have mastered this set of responsibilities and experiences. They are skills that take time to master, and knowledges that are transmitted by being in a place and working closely with those who know it best.

For the generation born after the economic boom of the 1960s, increased prosperity and new opportunities freed them from the practices of living off the land. Over the course of two or three generations, practices that were once integral to keeping a household fed and clothed have become quaint pastimes that only grandparents might continue. Roberto, an undergraduate at the University of Turin's enological extension program in Asti, admitted that his family still has the land his grandparents once farmed, but no one has kept the habit of working it. "Some of the things I grew up with—raising rabbits, preserves and jams every summer, wine made in the basement—I don't think we'll keep doing once my *nonna* is gone. I don't know how to do some of those things. We never learned."

Other young people blamed technology for drawing them away from agricultural lives. Michele, fresh from university, sells agrochemicals to vignaioli near Asti. Of the dozens of farmers with whom he works, few have grown children in town. "The kids are plugged into the globalized world, social networks, TV, they don't want to be in the countryside. Maybe they do it to please their parents, but there's not much of a career to be had in areas where grapes don't sell for a lot. It's a

shame, because some of the young producers are the best: they're more inclined to experiment, they don't just do things how they've always been done." Today, Michele explained, most small to medium-sized vineyards have at least one full-time employee. "Nine times out of ten, that's going to be an *extracommunitario*. There are a lot of Macedonians and Romanians, a few Bulgarians too."

From the Balkans to the Belbo: how Macedonians became contadini

While Canelli's immigrant population includes Macedonians, Romanians, Albanians, and Moroccans, the community of vineyard managers was referred to as *i macedoni,* who outnumber other Balkan immigrants fourfold. Winegrowers described Macedonians as quick learners, hard workers, and reliable employees. The simplest explanation for their ubiquity in the vineyards was short but complex: *sono contadini*—they are peasants. "Ivan is a real *contadino*," affirmed Alberto, the balding patriarch at Stellato Cellars, while we watched his Macedonian vineyard manager prepare a chemical spray. "He has done this for a lifetime, it is his craft." The Macedonians who know the moscato and barbera vineyards like the back of their hands—like their own pockets, one says in Italian—knew how to care for plants, run agricultural machinery, and work hard. Some of their home communities were trellised with hobby vineyards, a row or two of vines for making wine or grappa at home. Most, however, did not arrive in Canelli already experts in viticulture: the art of growing grapes had to be taught.

The first Macedonians arrived to Canelli in the mid 1980s, but until the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the declaration of the Republic of Macedonia, the number of immigrants to Canelli was negligible.[45] As the president of Canelli's Macedonian cultural organization explained, during the Communist period there was plenty of work to be had in Macedonia. With the end of Communism, however, Macedonia entered a long and tumultuous period of transition—in many ways still in motion—that created a myriad of social and economic difficulties for its populace. The manufacturing sector's shift from state management to private companies was slow and halting, and thousands lost their jobs in the process. The majority of the Macedonians in Canelli come from the eastern part of the country, where small-scale agriculture remains a primary form of employment. Nonetheless, most families relied on industrial labor for some part of the household income, and the collapse of the manufacturing industry forced many to leave home in order to find work abroad. In the Astigiano, the hills are steeper and the agriculture more specialized than in eastern Macedonia, but the cooperative members I interviewed assured me that farm work pays two or three times as in Italy as it does in Macedonia. Italy promised the chance of a fresh start or a way to help families get through lean years.

The Macedonians who arrived to Canelli were not entirely new to vineyards: *vitis vinifera* is cultivated throughout the Balkans and many Macedonian family farms have a few vines growing amidst fruit trees and vegetable gardens. "But it's not for

[45] Data from ISTAT studies conducted between 1980 and 1995, accessed at https://www.istat.it/

wine;" laughed Petar, a Macedonian student at Alba's enological and viticultural high school, "in Macedonia you grow grapes for making grappa!" All of the Macedonians I spoke with confirmed this, emphasizing that grappa and beer were much more important in Macedonian social and culinary life than wine. When I asked about the up and coming wine industry I had read about in his home country, Petar conceded, "Sure, there's wine in Macedonia, but there are maybe eighty wineries in the whole country today. It's not a part of the table like it is here, maybe something you have on a special occasion, or drink at a bar in the city. It's not a habit like here."

Winegrowing has a long but tumultuous history in Macedonia. In the 1980s, the region produced two thirds of Yugoslav wine, but production plummeted after the 1992 breakup.[46] Unlike viticulture in Piedmont, winegrowing in Macedonia (and its neighbors to the east and north) remains largely divided between industrial winemaking and subsistence production in households. Today commercial viticulture is on the rise in particular areas, but Macedonian winemaking areas are much smaller than those than in Piedmont, and with different growing conditions and practices.

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[46] Macedonian winemaking dates back at least 4,000 years, and wine and viticulture remained part of rural life and diversified agricultural into the modern period. In 1982, Macedonia had 40,000 hectares of vineyards, mostly organized into large vertically integrated agro-conglomerates that shipped bulk wines to Slovenia, where it was bottled and distributed through the Yugoslav market. A smaller portion was bottled in Macedonia for the local market (Porter 2006). After the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia, a few small boutique wineries established themselves in the 1990s, a number that continues to grow today. The industry is still considered nascent, with European investors eyeing affordable land in the Balkans outside of EU regulations (*The Economist* 2011). As in Italy, most winegrowers are smallholders who sell their grapes to larger wineries.

"The biggest differences are that here it is very commercial, while in Macedonia it is more for a family to use themselves," said Stefan, a member of the largest agricultural labor cooperative in Canelli, "but agricultural work is agricultural work—it's always hard, but here it pays much better."

With their experience in agriculture—"Macedonians know how to work the land," Italian vignaioli insisted—these early pioneers soon found work in the vineyards of the Belbo Valley. "In the first years, nobody came knowing the work," the owner of Canelli's oldest cooperative explained. "They learned from the first vignaiolo they worked for, or we trained them. Now, the new members are not showing up like that. They've all come to us from other jobs on other vineyards in the area, they already know the work." The first to arrive learned from the old contadini, Italians born in the 1930s and 1940s who could no longer shoulder the heavy work on their own. In the past, these men had employed southern Italian workers or university students to help with previous harvests, or Moroccans or Albanians to help with vineyard work. So while hiring immigrants was not new, most workers did not remain more than the year or two it took them to move on to less arduous jobs. The first Macedonian arrivals—some as young as twenty, but others already middle aged—found employers who remained wary of newcomers, but who were accustomed to taking on *stranieri* (foreigners) for a season. Working closely with their new employers, these men learned how to prune a vine in winter, how to graft scions onto old roots, how to tie off new shoots in spring, and a dozen other tasks calibrated precisely to accommodate variations in weather, pests, and international

markets. In reproducing these landscapes, Italians and immigrants also collaborated in producing a new kind of contadino.

Skill and trust

Ivan has been the vineyard manager at Stellato Cellars for a decade, and working in Italy for almost twice as many years. When I ask to take his picture, he insists on shouldering his weed trimmer backpack, the one stained with sweat, copper spray, and vineyard dust. In the photograph that I promise to send his daughter, the pack wraps around the compact muscles of his shoulders, the trimmer's pole gripped firmly in both hands, and the vineyards he tends fall away down the valley behind him. Though over fifty, Ivan still moves like a young man, snipping off clusters of ripe grapes and throwing them into a red plastic crate twice as fast as I can manage. Within minutes he is well ahead of the harvest workers half his age. "Beh, it's easy," he insists, smiling at my admiration. "You just *clip clip,*" he says, squeezing his clippers, slicing air, and moving seamlessly between one cluster of grapes to the next. He does not look down to make sure the grapes he tosses land in the crate, nor to find his footing as he shifts to the next vine. He is already looking for more clusters, dragging the crate behind him.

Harvesting grapes is perhaps the simplest labor that Ivan performs here. In summer, he climbs back and forth across these hills with a weed trimmer or a backpack full of sulfur solution, spritzing row after row of a dozen hectares. He knows the names of all of the weeds and wildflowers, pointing out those that sting

hands, stick to pant legs, or tangle with low hanging vines. When it is time to for the *potatura*, the pruning in January, he works in the snow. “I wear five pairs of socks and rubber boots but it’s never enough,” he conceded, wincing at the memory. “After an hour you can’t feel your feet.” Pruning vines is best done in winter—the leaves and weeds are gone, and the dormant vines risk minimal chance of infection. It is slow and monotonous work, but very important. Left to their own devices, a grapevine grows to a dense mass of old vines with relatively little “fruiting wood” each year. Vines grow in every direction, more like a sprawling bush than the neatly trellised forms associated with viticultural landscapes. Pruning determines how the vine will grow come spring, how many clusters of grapes it will yield, and the potential for the fruit to develop the flavors, sugars, and acids that vinters desire.

Figure 26: Pruning is usually done in the snow, but Ivan agreed to demonstrate how he chooses which cane to cut and which to leave on an afternoon in September, choices that will determine the shape and yield of the vine for the next year (photo by author).

It takes Ivan three months to prune the vines, both due to the size of the vineyards and the precision required for the task. He shows me how each vine must have a certain number of stalks clipped off or trained, and how you decide which to cut. "This is from last year, this is the one we'll leave. This one goes—it's growing out the side. These two will be the main producers next year. You see how they're going to be the most horizontal? That's what we want, a good horizontal base for the new vines. You have to cut as close as possible, a clean cut, but not exposing too much of the plant." After lopping off three stalks in quick succession—his clippers move like an extension of his fingers—he gently bends the main shoot down, pulling it parallel to the supporting wires and tying it off. The result is a form that will yield well-spaced bunches of grapes next summer.

Ethnographies of high-value agricultural products observe that successful cultivation requires a nuanced knowledge of a territory and its biota (Besky 2014, West 2012). Caring for grape vines is highly skilled labor that draws on ways of reading and manipulating the plants and ways of knowing the environment in which they grow (Krzywoszynska 2015). "It's not complicated work," Stefan said at first, "anyone can do it. But," he added, "doing it well takes some time. You have to pay attention to how each of the contadini want it done—they can be very particular about the details. Some of them follow you like a shadow at first, but once they see that you work well, they tend to leave it up to you. Especially after you've worked with them for a few years." Some practices are simpler and more standardized across the hills: harvesting, trimming weeds, or rotating soil. Others are attuned to the specifics of a

location or the approach of the vignaiolo, like trellising styles, pruning techniques, and thinning out summer leaves. Vignaioli are most likely to hire outside help for the former, and to keep a full-time assistant for the latter, someone they have personally trained and trust.

Knowing the land, knowing the vines

When vineyard workers become fluent in a set of skills transferred through apprenticeships and local idioms, they become bound to a longer history of producing place, products, and people. Working the land and performing place-based knowledges are practices of enacting belonging and making place in rural contexts (Caldwell 2010, Ives 2017, Verinis 2014), practices that enable the folding of immigrants into locality and tradition here. Grasseni deconstructs performances of locality in an Italian village as they relate to the local landscape (2004), arguing that everyday actions, gestures, and recollections continually conjure and construct the valley and surrounding mountains. Even within a closely knit community, different visions of the landscape exist in relation to a specific set of skills and practices. Keeping those skills and practices *alive* in human actors is vital to keeping place in existence, both materially and discursively.

In the wine world, *techne*—bodily ways of knowing—describes a bundle of untranslatable sociocultural values that connect geography, notoriety, and tradition in daily tasks (Daynes 2013, Jung 2016). When I walk through Mara’s vines, she points out the lush greenery below them in contrast to her neighbors’ bare soil, stripped by

herbicides. Antonio draws my attention to the long vines that shoot upwards before curling over the rows, explaining that the "sloppy" look provides shade for delicate grapes in the summer. Lorenzo's father shows me which bunches will develop well—*this one is in an ideal spot on the cane*—and which will be culled to concentrate the plant's resources to those that remain. When a Macedonian vineyard manager masters the particular pruning technique that a vignaiolo learned from their father or tends plants inherited from former generations, he participates in bringing a certain place into the world, both materially—by shaping the form a vine will take—and symbolically—as those vines sustain a way of being in place.

Winegrowers emphasized the non-transferability of these kinds of knowledges, insisting that they could only be acquired through years of working directly with the vines. Studies of artisanal food describe producers who draw on sensory and experiential knowledge that are understood as a localized, embodied, and nontransferable skill set, one that creates objectively distinct products (Terrio 2000, Paxson 2012, Grasseni 2011). Vines are particularly unruly plants, requiring patient and adaptive care. The knowledges that make the vignaioli successful growers—how to recognize an ailing plant, where best to cut the vine, how much leaf canopy to leave—are specific to each hillside, and at times contradict viticultural science.

"I've got two kids who studied at the *enologica* in Alba," a sunburned winegrower griped while we waited our turn to weigh loads of grapes at the public scales. "One is going to study in Turin, and the other one has come to help me in the cellars for the harvest. I don't know what I would do if they both came back. They

come home from school with all of these ideas about how things ought to be done, trying to boss me around. 'My professor said this or that'… And I say, 'Why don't you bring that professor here and I'll show them a thing or two!'" He shook his head incredulously at the idea of his children knowing better. "I've been growing grapes for forty years, and you can't just read a textbook and know how to grow grapes, or make wine for that matter. It's all theory, there's no substance to it. Every year is different, and you have to know the plant, how it works, and how to adapt to whatever that vintage throws at you."

Other growers gave formal education more credit, but qualified their endorsement with the indispensability of hands-on experience when dealing with the unruliness of vines and the unpredictability of agriculture. Antonio's family has been growing grapes on his land since 1850, and he graduated from the enological high school a certified enologist. All the same, he affirmed that most of what he knows, he learned from trial and error. Pausing in the damp cool room that houses his barrels of Chardonnay, he admitted that winegrowing had taken some time to master. "For four years before I could make wine I just worked with the grapes…it doesn't take much to grow grapes, sure, but if you want to make something particular, it takes a lot of experience to get it right. Studying gives you something, sure, it helps you open your mind, but the basics, the points of departure—that comes from practice. School helps you understand, but to really understand you've got to *do* it." Besides the particularities of his own vines, Antonio emphasized the volatility of the process itself that makes experience essential. "There aren't real rules, or one technique that works

well every year, it always changes. Nature doesn't have rules as like we would like to think, and the capacity to adapt, that comes from practice."

Years of performing the same tasks in a particular place is more than perfecting technique. Winegrowers cited experience and the host of knowledges it entails as the single most valuable tool at their disposal in facing the uncertainties of each year. The landscapes that Italians and immigrants collaborate in crafting are dynamic things, and not only because humans make and remake them. Each vintage brings a different rainfall in spring, the chance of hail during summer storms when the first buds will emerge, and careful choices in pruning, thinning, and training the vines. Vintages of moldy grapes taught growers the ideal timing and quantities for sulfur and copper sprays, calculating when to apply based on the last rainfall and the next projected storm. Hot summers that burned exposed clusters led vignaioli to leave more leaf coverage in June and thin more aggressively just before harvest, especially on the south facing side of the vines. "No two years are ever the same," growers agreed, but with enough experience to work with, they can usually navigate whatever the land or sky throws at them. After a few seasons with a winery, Balkan employees began to acquire the skills that make them valuable workers and the ways of knowing that make them trusted employees.

In their daily tasks, Macedonian workers demonstrate fluency in local knowledges and chores, performances that affirm the value of their labor and slip them into the bodily forms associated with contadini: the lone figure bent low to prune vines in winter or the blacked fingernails and leathery hands from decades of

farming. Their expertise in local weeds, different grape varietals, and regional weather patterns conjures the kind of connection to place that Italian grandparents remember and grandchildren fail to learn. These immigrants materialize a habitus, an embodied way of being in the world (Bourdieu 1977), that lies at the heart of local claims to tradition and authenticity. Vineyard work is as skilled as it is demanding, and particular crafts and materials require workers to develop new connections between the senses, the hands, and ideas or imperatives (Hallam and Ingold 2014). Like the carpentry apprenticeships that Herzfeld describes, learning a craft like vineyard work is also a form of "self-crafting": the primary site is that of the worker's body, which becomes a location for memories to become materially accessible (2004: 25, 26). The bodies of immigrant vineyard managers—their senses, their posture, their appearance—substantiate the image of the contadino, while their memories and expertise allow them to perform the ways of knowing of which contadini are the proper custodians. On snowy hillsides and in damp cellars, wine workers acquire ways of moving, thinking, and sensing through their work that produce new selves alongside a new vintage.

The language of the vineyards

Another equally important performance of fluency is not visible but audible—it happens in *dialetto.* When I first began working alongside Lorenzo, a winegrower in his sixties, and Mihai, his Romanian right hand, I quickly lost the thread of their conversation. Not because they were using technical terms or code, but because their

words sounded slurred, swallowed, full of sounds that were no part of the Italian I knew. Not quite French, nor fully Italian, it was *piemunteis* (Piedmontese), specifically the version spoken in San Marzano, the tiny village at the end of the road. The young men who found steady employment in the vineyards a decade ago speak a fluent, but heavily accented sort of Italian. Working in the vineyards means working with vignaioli, an occupation and social world in which standard Italian is secondary. The language of the vineyard is dialect.

Dialect is ubiquitous in Italian daily life, but not immediately noticeable to the outsider. It may be a local term for a pasta shape or an informal greeting exchanged in the piazza, but it is everywhere once you learn to hear it. Each region of Italy has its own dialetto—*piemontese, calabrese, pugliese, siciliano*—but these are actually groups of dialects, as each town with any history claims a unique set of vowels, words, and phrases. Dialect is history in spoken sounds: inflections and vocabulary borrowed from former kingdoms or past invasions. *Piemunteis* mixes the French of the Duchy of Savoy with pre-unification "Italian," dropping the last half of words like the former and keeping the musical inflection of the latter: *andiamo* becomes *duma*, and *buongiorno* is reduced to *bon di.*

Piemunteis is more intimate than Italian, reaffirming shared roots. Spoken amongst family and old friends, it tells old stories, makes sly jokes, or teases siblings. When I go walking from the old family farmhouse into town with a retired winemaker, he greets his former neighbors in the language they shared as children. As long as multigenerational families remained in tight-knit communities, children

continued to learn and transmit the linguistic world that existed only there. The generation with white hair grew up speaking standard Italian only at school, and still prefer to converse in dialect with their family and neighbors. Middle-aged parents lived in dialect as children, and still enjoy cracking a joke or telling a story in this familiar tongue. Young people might understand it from time spent with grandparents, but rarely choose to speak it, and many admit that they cannot.

Speaking Italian opens up a wide range of possible social interactions and experiences for foreigners in Italy, but speaking the local dialect allows one to be recognized and heard on a richer and more potent register. Dialect can be deployed as a badge of political stance (Cavanaugh 2012), membership in a particular neighborhood or region (Pine 2012), to protest dominant discourses (Heatherington 2001), or to contest ownership of a place or practice (Herzfeld 2009). Across Italy, immigrants employed in outdoor markets, elder care, or street peddling are quick to realize the importance of dialect in soliciting customers or communicating with clients. The immigrant street vendors that Castellanos interviewed in Bergamo explained that, "It is common knowledge among those of us who have to make a living in the streets…If you speak the special language of the locals, they will be pleased, they will laugh, and one hopes that perhaps they will buy" (2006: 29). In order to find and keep a job, immigrants learn the ways of saying that are unique to a place and hold special significance for its residents. In doing so, they transmit a world and the language that it keeps alive. When immigrants speak in dialect, they are less Other, less threatening, and easier to imagine as part of a place.

The oldest of the winemakers that I visited, who work in cellars with infinite layers of mold, dust, and spilled wine, spoke exclusively in dialect with my companions. Canelli's dialects include a rich vocabulary for every detail of the wine world, many of which cannot be translated into Italian, let alone English. *Ha un bel leć* said one vinter to another (it has a nice *leć*), lowering his nose into the glass in his hand and taking another sip. *Leć* is a shibboleth of sorts whose definition varies, but one whose use implies membership in a community rooted in vines and wine. "It's a wine that is just a little bit fizzy, *un vino vivo*, a living wine," Ada explained when I asked what the word meant. "Yes," seconded her grandson, "but it means a wine that is well-made and has that little something extra, you know it when you taste it, it's impossible to name…it's *leć*!" There are local names for every tool, season, and task that winemaking encompasses. The sunny side of a hill is a *sorì*, just a splash of wine is *na stisa d'vin,* and when grapes begin to turn from green to purple, the term is *anvajré.*

The old vignaioli also speak in dialect with their employees. Many of their vineyard managers speak as much *piemunteis* as they do Italian, both a result of their work world and a key skill for finding employment. Whether vineyard workers learned dialect from their co-nationals or picked it up from an employer, understanding and speaking in *piemunteis* creates a crucial form of comprehension and recognition between Italian employer and Macedonian worker. Michele insisted that with *vignaioli*, who are already wary of strangers, speaking dialect is crucial for establishing new clients: "In the rural areas people aren't disposed to trust outsiders,

they tend to hold their cards close. If you speak dialect, they'll open up a bit, you're less threatening. They have a language all their own. If I show up and start using technical language they won't have anything to do with me. You have to use their language if you want to work with them, you have to meet them on their own terms." Whether a grower is explaining how they want something done to a worker or asking after a certain block of the vineyard, the conversation is carried on the language that belongs to this place and its past.

When Balkan immigrants become fluent in local ways of knowing, doing, and speaking, they reproduce the material world of vineyards as well as a symbolic world of histories and meanings. In doing so, they also produce new selves. By becoming *macedoni* and *contadini,* they keep vineyard work in the hands of peasants, where tradition and marketing insist that it belongs. Their labor is one side of an encounter between immigrants and Italians: in addition to the mastery of skills and languages that Macedonians perform through their labor, Italians also actively construct a construct a background for them that confirms their contadino qualities.

Time travelers

It is after midnight, but the air is still warm and welcoming, apart from the mosquitos that bite through thin shirts and around sandal straps. Empty glasses and bottles litter the long wooden table where a group of young Italians from winemaking families gathered to see a friend recently returned from a trip to the Balkans. Invited to a wedding in Macedonia, he and his wife had taken the opportunity to visit

Romania as well before coming home. “It’s another world there,” he exclaimed. “It’s still a rural country, people eat the food they grow and the animals they raise, and everything is still done by hand—it’s beautiful, unspoiled, the kind of life that here…it’s so much like here, but fifty years ago, it’s like going back in time”.
“But, they have internet and smart phones and SUVs, right?” I interject.
“Sure,” he conceded, “actually the internet in Macedonia is great, but daily life is so different. Much less mechanized. It actually made me think, you know, why the Macedonians here settled in. It wasn’t a huge change for them, to take up the work of our grandparents.”

The young man was not the only person to use time travel when talking about the Balkans. Italians whom I asked about life in Romania or Macedonia consistently used temporal comparison—*back then, used to, back in time*—to describe a place they had been or formed ideas about via interactions with immigrants in Canelli. “There they are living in another world,” insisted Mara when I asked her about her trip to Romania. “How they live—the whole family works, and they grow up very fast. It’s closer to the world my mother grew up in than what my sons know today.” Traveling east was a way of crossing into a parallel world, one that reminded many people of an Italy that has all but vanished.

The Balkans as *back then* is not an exclusively Italian idea—it can be found throughout Europe and the West. Wolff’s analysis of the invention of Eastern Europe traces the cultural construction of an enlightened West in contrast to a backwards East, a project he claims was designed to reaffirm the preeminence of the West and its

exclusive claim to Europeanness (1994). In the texts and images Wolff analyzes, Europe posits itself as *here* and *now* with the Balkan world as *there* and *then*. This temporal distance is part of a much larger phenomenon in which time and progress position some places and people at different points of a linear march towards civilization, and the idea that different societies inhabit different times manifests in even the most progressive of Western spheres, anthropology included (Fabian 1983). Even within the boundaries of the Balkans, a practice of "nesting orientalisms," or the habit of calling neighboring countries "more Balkan" than one's own (Bakic-Hayden 1995), replicates European hierarchies and Othering. Ballinger notes that no matter where one stands, the Balkans always appear to be "somewhere else" (1999). Whether organizing East and West in terms of industrialization, liberal democracies, or actual time, European ideas about the Balkans shape it as a place always lagging behind the West, or frozen by the Socialist era in a preindustrial bubble portrayed as both idyllic and backwards (Torodova 1997).

Temporality usually creates distance and Otherness in Italy, as it historically has in the Hegelian logic that lurks within European racism and immigration talk (Silverstein 2005). In Italy's northern regions, ethnic Others from the South were considered backwards or otherwise "behind" well before the 1990s. The South, or the *mezzogiorno*, is consistently represented to this day as a disorganized, immoral, and un-modern place populated by a different ethnicity than that of the inhabitants of Lombardy or Veneto. These perspectives structured the early stages of Italian Unification in the 1850s, underwrote political and economic inequalities between the

regions of Italy, and fuel the contemporary right-wing separatist party, the Lega Nord (Aprile 2011, Derobertis 2012). Today, "backwards" is a common term in Italian utterances about immigrants from the Global South, dismissing the unfamiliar as uncivilized. "They have a medieval mindset! They're living in another century! They need new heads screwed on!" groused an elderly winemaker while pouring tastings at a truffle fair in Asti. It was just after the Paris attacks of 2015 and emotions were running high, with many European media outlets categorically demonizing Middle Eastern immigrants. Time, in this logic, organizes a plurality of religions and cultures into a hierarchy of progress and stagnation with Europe unquestionably at the lead.

The differential incorporation of various immigrant groups in Italy is structured by Italian ideas about time and place as they organize both local identities and the qualities assigned to other ethnic groups (Ambrosini 1993, 2001, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012). Vignaioli participate in these discourses when they construct Macedonia as a place lagging behind Western Europe in a temporal sense. "It's another era," one winegrower told me, "they still work the land, grow their own food and keep chickens and a cow—a lot of families can't afford a tractor, so they grow up working hard, not like our kids playing with their phones all day." Most vignaioli's claims emphasized not how different Macedonia was from Italy or Canelli, but how similar it was to the past of rural Piedmont. In this imaginary, the Balkans become a time capsule that preserves the values and workers that Piedmontese youth fail to embody.

By organizing the universe temporally, with the Balkans lagging just behind Canelli, temporal distance becomes a form of connection rather than difference. “The older generation, the ones that came over in middle age or more, they are not unlike the old *piemontesi*, you know?” asked Francesco, the son of winemaking parents. He laughed, contorting his face into the squinting grimace of an ornery old man. “They are distrustful, they keep to themselves, they don’t cause trouble and they think of their own families—it was something we could relate to, it made them easier to…digest.” The perceived difficulty of life in Macedonia links the lifeworld of sending communities to “back then,” the idealized past of Canelli itself, and forges a particular kind of person, one comparable to local contadini. Placing Macedonian immigrants in the past works against their difference: categorical outsiders become men and women who come from the same world that was once here.

Relics from the past are not quite the same as backwardness: Old World wine capitalizes on the appeal of a rose-tinted past to sell what are often industrial products. In order to work Macedonians into the image of the contadino and narratives of tradition, Italians cast Balkan immigrants not as invaders from elsewhere but rather as settlers from a not so distant past. By conjuring a particular vision of the sending communities, the Italian community of Canelli naturalizes the presence of this population in their own world, the terms in which they are employed, and the skill and determination they bring to their work.

“They are made to work”

Macedonians are valued *because* they are understood to come from a different world, one that makes them suitable to fold into the narrative of tradition. Stories about Canelli’s past and Italian stories about the Balkans emphasized the difficulty of life, hardships that conferred particular qualities on those who survived them. As Daniele put it, “It’s a very agricultural world there, they are all contadini, so they come here ready to work, and they work hard.”

There is a firm conviction in the Italian imagination that the place where one is born and raised determines the lifelong character of that individual (Castellanos 2010). Constructions of identity across Europe have, at strategic moments, relied on a fusion of blood and soil to determine the boundaries of one social group and one nation from another, predicated on a rich cultural history of lineages and landscapes tied tightly to one another (Linke 1999). Invoking a combination of landscape, weather, and traditional livelihoods—each region of Italy (as well as neighboring countries) is characterized by a set of assumptions about what kind of people live there, and why they are the way they are (Parasecoli 2014). Beyond simple stereotypes, the geographic determination of character also allows for a naturalization of the labor market: some people are understood to be inherently disposed toward certain kinds of work. In Piedmont, Italian rationalizations of Balkan skill and tirelessness are a blend of the place they imagine their workers come from and the parallels they draw between here and there. By emphasizing Macedonian or

Romanian life as unforgiving and resourceful, they draw ties between the Balkans' agrarian present and Canelli's contadino past.

When members of the winemaking community assign responsibility to immigrants' homelands for their employees' work ethic, they insulate themselves from accusations of racism that are increasingly potent in a nation enflamed in immigration politics. *Sono fatti per lavorare*—they are made for working—was a common Italian description of Macedonian employees. Watching Niko, the Macedonian cellar hand, jog across the warehouse to find her son, Rosanna turned to me and said quietly, "You know what makes them good workers? They run. They don't walk from one task to another, they run." Characterizing them as physiologically robust, Italians also explained that Macedonians are "made" for working by the context in which they came of age. Especially when it comes to hiring teenagers, Macedonians are considered more productive and efficient than Italian youth. Lorenzo assured me that the nineteen-year-old who comes to work on his winery each summer, the one who attacks his tasks with a physical confidence usually seen in Olympic sporting events, is a product of his environment. "They grow up fast there," he offered by way of explanation. "It's a working life, from a young age you either make yourself useful, or you're on your own."

Northern Italians are known among their co-nationals for valuing hard work and hard workers, and the Macedonian reputation for putting in long hours of uncomplaining labor encouraged vignaioli to hire them. It also justified terms of employment different from those contracted with Italians. Cultural norms surrounding

meals, family, and industrial labor mean that Italian workers may expect a long lunch break, regular quitting time, and Sundays off. Balkan workers, on the other hand, are understood as less entitled employees. When I asked why he had chosen to hire Macedonians (rather than Italian workers), Daniele explained that running a small business has no room for relaxed schedules: "Macedonians, they are used to living hand-to-mouth, so if you tell them to do something, they do it—till it is done. Even if that means working a twelve or fourteen-hour day." All of these descriptions and comparisons to the past played up the positives of subsistence farming and rural life. They did not linger on the factor that once motivated Canelli's contadini to rise before dawn and keeps Balkan employees working long after sundown: money. The double-bind of the immigrant to make enough to survive while also sending remittances to kin rarely emerged in my conversations with Italians, though it certainly did when I spoke with Macedonians.

Whether or not these descriptions of Macedonia bear any resemblance to the experiences of the immigrants who have made a home in the area, they participate in making Balkan immigrants in Canelli less Other and very employable. Their willingness to work hard for low pay and fewer holidays is not seen as exploitative employment, but rather the natural disposition of people who grew up expecting little else. By romanticizing the lifeworld of their ancestors with admirable qualities—persistence, intelligence, tirelessness, and self-sacrifice—Italian winegrowers graft those qualities on to their employees, obscuring the imbalances of power that continue to organize this economy.

Contributi, taxes, and Italian employees

Hiring a full-time employee is a serious investment for small businesses in Italy. While anything official in Italy requires an intimidating amount of paperwork, winery owners insisted that it was the finances of employment that prevented new hires. "I'll tell you why no one is hiring in this country!" exclaimed a young man assembling trays of *aperitivi* behind the bar. "I studied economics, but a middle schooler can understand. If I want to hire someone at ten euros an hour," he explained, "I end up spending twenty euros an hour what with all the *contributi* (contributions). No one can afford to hire full-time at a living wage. So what do I do? I hire people part-time, short-term, *a tempo determinato*, and this way I get out of paying those taxes and no one is making enough money to live." His analysis, though painted in broad strokes, captures the general trend of short-term contracts and low wages that plagues anyone hoping to find an entry level (or above) job today.[47] In short, taking on a long-term employee at full-time only makes sense if the business can expect to generate considerable value from that person's labor, more than double what they expect to pay them.

La crisi, the ongoing economic "crisis" in Italy (what began as a crisis in 2008 has become the norm, a new way of being in the world, even if the term implies a temporary reality), has left many Italians unemployed, particularly young people. The widespread return to agriculture and manual labor predicted in the early years of the crisis, however, has gone largely unrealized. "Sure, of course I hired some people from the area," recounted Daniele. "Someone comes to you, out of work, a family to raise, I try to do what I can. But—and it pains me to say this—I've never had so many problems as with the Italians." The local that he hired had proved an unreliable employee, characterized by missed workdays and unlikely excuses, sloppy work and bickering with the more experienced immigrants at the winery. "Clearly, he was a bad apple," Daniele admitted, "but even with the others, they were always late or asking for ridiculous favors." Eventually, Daniele stopped taking on Italians completely,

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[47] The labor market deregulations enacted in 1997 (*Legge Treu* number 196) and the *Legge Biagi* in 2003 (law number 30) introduced new measures meant to invigorate the Italian economy, including short-term contracts (*tempo determinato*) and part-time work that was exempt from benefits and protections previously accorded to employees. While short and part-time jobs did proliferate, they have cut into the share of full-time, long-term employment available in Italy today and do not usually lead to better employment, which leaves young people trying to enter the job market with a life of endless precarity and low wages (Barbieri and Schrerer 2009). Even then, these positions remain scarce and Italian youth unemployment hit 40 percent in 2015 (Leonardi and Pica 2015).

preferring to work with a small crew of Macedonian men, as well as the occasional resettled refugee who needed a first job.

Most growers had hired local help at some point, but rarely with much success outside familial ties. "They think it's going to be like working at their grandparents' farm," theorized one vignaiolo. "You know, playing around for a few hours. Oh, how relaxing it must be to work outside all day!" he laughed. "They're not ready to really work, to be out there till the last row is done." Many Italians, of course, work very hard. The men and women who run the vineyards and wineries here start their days early and are a flurry of motion well into the evening, juggling a dozen different tasks on any given day. But the consensus among vignaioli was that Macedonians were a better investment in the vineyard, and more recently, in the cellar as well.

The Italian employees I encountered in small wineries were, apart from the family members themselves, mostly women. Recent graduates or middle aged, they worked part-time managing marketing or accounting. They served as the face of the winery, answering phones, filling out paperwork, and making sure shipments went out on time—roles in which language skills and familiarity with Italian bureaucracy are essential. Some held similar positions at multiple wineries, rushing across town at lunch time to start their second shift. Larger wineries like Canelli's dynastic cellars can afford to keep a full-time staff of Italian employees to run their offices, cellars, and cellar tours. But the only Italians I found employed full-time at small wineries were family members, most of whom still shared a roof. Each winery organized things in their own way, but an overall pattern predominated. Women—mothers, sisters, daughters, friends of the family—took charge of the paperwork, publicity, and hospitality. Fathers, sons, and cousins directed the operations of the cellar itself and the vineyard, shouldering the physical tasks and hiring on foreign workers to fill the roles left vacant by absent or nonexistent children.

Skilled work and blurred lines

The immigrants who keep the contadino lifeworld alive and keep Italian family wineries in business occupy a liminal position in Canelli. The terms of their employment slip between that of a hired hand into apprenticeship, between paternalistic structures and the roles of absent kin. Whether or not they are interested in becoming part of the future of Piedmontese wine is unclear—the parents with

whom I spoke would rather see their children pursue careers outside of agriculture. But the absence of Macedonian entrepreneurs in the local winemaking scene is no accident: while Italian employers entrust them with core skills and responsibilities each day, they are also careful to exclude Macedonians from particular forms of power and value.

According to the president of an agricultural labor cooperative and the Macedonian cultural association *Ponte di Pietra* (whose name references the Stone Bridge of Skopje), the members of the first phase of immigration were watched carefully by the community and judged according to how hard they worked. Satisfied with employees who learned fast and stayed late, the community began to lower its initial wariness of the newcomers. This analysis of Macedonian integration into the communities of the Belbo Valley mirrored the stories that winegrowers and their employees related to me: as winegrowers put more trust and responsibility into the hands of their Balkan workers, the relationships between Italians and immigrants solidified around mutual dependencies. Italians receive labor that kinship relations no longer provide, and immigrants receive assistance in establishing new lives for their kin in Italy.

Stefan was among the early arrivals who settled in the area in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As we worked our way down a row of ripe moscato, tossing clusters into red crates, he recounted how these pioneers created a network for those that followed, training their co-nationals, offering places to stay, and helping them find work. Of the first wave of immigrants, some returned home after years of hard work

and careful savings to build a new home or simply live more comfortably with their families. Their friends or cousins who stayed in Canelli eagerly showed me pictures on their phones, pointing out the beautiful woodwork trim on new homes or shiny cars acquired in their hometowns. "What you make—or what you used to make—in a few weeks here could support a family for months there. It was a small sacrifice to make," said Ivan. Harvest workers come for a month or two at most, but vineyard workers spend six to ten months of the year in Piedmont, returning home to see their families for a month during the winter holidays and late summer. His smile crumpling, Ivan admitted that being away from his family is the most difficult part of his job.

Other families settled permanently in the area, often with the help of their employers. If a new arrival signed on with a labor cooperative, the owner likely accompanied them to Asti to sign off on their permits of employment and residence, easing them through the labyrinth of signatures, stamps, and forms that characterize Italian bureaucracy. "There is a village in Macedonia where they'll put up a statue of me in the square one day!" one cooperative owner guffawed. "I employ half the town!" Family wineries often house their employees, setting them up in an old family property or paying for a small apartment. Ivan lives in an apartment formerly inhabited by his employer's parents, while Niko and his wife and daughter live in a house appended to the winery itself. "My son has wanted to pay him more for a long time now," explained Rosanna, "but the money is always so tight in this business.

When we rented the new winery, offering him the [on-site] house helps us all save money, and it's better than anything he could afford at market price."

This paternalistic arrangement is common in agricultural employment beyond Italy, and may be financially beneficial to both parties, but it also crosses the boundaries between work and home, which can complicate relations between employer and employee (Gray 2013). In many ways, the relationships and dependencies that Italians and immigrants exchange in Canelli blur the lines between family and worker, insider and outsider. Balkan workers only became necessary once the traditional Italian family structure transformed, with young men from the East filling the shoes of absent children, or Balkan women performing the elder care that middle aged Italian women could or would not. The demands of viticultural work require an apprenticeship early on, followed by close communication and irregular hours long-term. Vignaioli depend upon their foreign employees to carry out the tasks that make the difference between a mediocre or excellent harvest, between breaking even and turning a profit. In turn, winery workers depend on the family that employs them to secure their residence permits, help them bring over spouses or children, and establish a life in the Langhe.

Each of the dozen wineries I visited had at least one employee from the East, many of whom had been working at the same winery for a decade or more. Mostly men between twenty and fifty, they performed and organized all kinds of work: one or two to manage the vineyard, another to help out in the cellar and look after the new intern, all of whom might contact kin or neighbors to come for the harvest season.

Italian wine producers and their and immigrant employees speak a language all their own, a combination of dialect, unfinished tasks, and ongoing projects. The workday was punctuated with exchanges such as:

Vignaiolo: “Does tank five still need—“

Macedonian: “I’ve started the pumps and it should be done in an hour.”

V: “Right, and the filters?”

M: “On the desk in the garage, but the order is short.”

V: “Then let’s finish up the rows by my father’s house. I’ll pick up more from Paolo’s later.”

Figure 27: An Italian winemaker and his Macedonian right hand unload freshly harvested grapes into the crusher (photo by author).

On some farms, Italian employers and Balkan workers behaved like old friends, sneaking away from family dinners for beers in town or laughing at private

jokes at the table. At other wineries, everyone maintained a more formal employer-employee relationship. All of them, however, readily affirmed the indispensable role these men played in the family business. “There’s no way I could keep this up without Goran and Andrej,” admitted Antonio. “Honestly we’ve wanted to hire another person to help out, and give them some time off, but it’s just too expensive after all of the taxes and contributions.”

Winemaking includes long days and longer nights, especially during the harvest. But winemakers with a trusty cellar hand can leave before the last tank has been punched down, or leave the winery to have lunch with their families. They know that their employees are more than capable of carrying out the requisite tasks and dealing with any problems they encounter. Nonetheless, my questions about Macedonians becoming winemakers were generally met with confusion: “There, they drink beer. Beer and grappa. And man can they drink!” winemakers told me. Italians do not identify Macedonia with wine production or consumption. By describing Macedonians as beer drinkers, vignaioli disavowed them of the kind of cultural heritage that Italian winemakers claim. Italians were eager to talk about Macedonians or Romanians as contadini, but categorically excluded them from the knowledge and skills that make one a vignaiolo or a winemaker.

Non commandano

In spite of all the praise heaped on Macedonian employees, the winegrowers I interviewed collectively insisted that their indispensable workers were not eligible to

become partners in the family business. "*Non commandano*," (they don't command, or make decisions) Michele explained, shaking his head. "Their bosses don't give them that role, it's a question of mentality." *Non commandano* became a chorus of sorts in my interviews, the short reply that seemed, to winegrowers, a sufficient explanation for why any given Macedonian or Romanian served only as the present, rather than the future, of the family business. "I've asked myself the same question you know," confided a wine exporter from central Italy. "It struck me as strange, this arrangement with the old contadini and their Macedonians. But you know what the difference is? The Macedonians follow instructions. They don't lead."

The sentiment was not confined to the older generations. The children of growers were unable to imagine their family's eastern employees in the future of the business. Francesco's family grows and makes wine for a small but faithful consumer base in area, delivering everything by van each month. Like many young Italians today, Francesco is an only child, a dramatic shift from the broods of six or more siblings that once characterized these communities. At twenty-five, he felt isolated when imagining a future with aging parents and no siblings: "My parents aren't getting any younger, and it's hard, because I can't do it all on my own." "But doesn't your father have a Macedonian assistant?" I prompted. "Of course. He's been with us for nearly twenty years now, he's my father's right hand," he replied. Here Francesco paused, before explaining that "It's not that it's unmanageable right now…it's just…I

don't know if I would be able to carry on the business alone. Finding a good partner, someone you can trust and work well with, that's near impossible."[48]

Family firms are at the core of Italy's economy, but on unsteady footing as of late (Holmes 2000, Blim 1990). Yanagisako's study of textile firms in Lombardy documents the difficulty of weathering the transfer of responsibility and power from one generation to the next. Not just anyone can become part of the business, she insists. "Labor is never abstract, but provided by people with particular social identities and histories...whose labor is employed, extracted, valued, and commodified in particular ways" (2002: 5). Yanagisako and Rofel's more recent study of transnational fashion firms highlights Italian reluctance to bring non-kin—especially ethnic Others—into key positions within small businesses, even when the solvency of the company is at stake (forthcoming). This attitude transcends the fashion world, shaping the gastronomy sector of *Made in Italy* as well. No matter how fluent in dialect or expert in vineyard care they may be, Macedonians are not Italian, and therefore not family business partner material.

When I pushed the matter, everyone in Canelli's wine community agreed that a future without the Balkan workers was uncertain, and many forecast the end of an era as family businesses become consolidated into corporate farms.

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[48] "It's not only the farmers who are getting old, the drinkers are dying out too," Francesco added. "The old contadini drink a bottle a day, there is always wine on the table, but no one our age still drinks at lunch these days." Studies conducted by ISTAT, Italy's National Institute for Statistics confirm that the vast majority of daily wine consumers all qualify for pension plans, while younger generations might consume wine only once or twice a week at most.

"So who will carry it on then?" I pressed Michele, "if not the children or the employees?" "They'll either take a recent graduate, some local kid who knows enology and viticulture, and for six or eight years they'll pay him to work the vineyards and cellar, with the understanding that one day the vines will be left to him, or sold for very little, when the vignaiolo retires," he replied. "Or they'll sell their land, or rent it." "And the Macedonians?" I prompted. "No, it's not going to happen any time soon," Michele insisted. "They see them as workers, but not as more than that. They don't think they can run things on their own."

With Balkan workers categorically excluded, the future of the vineyards is bleak. "What will become of these farms?" I asked the owner of the labor cooperative that services hundreds of wineries across Piedmont and neighboring regions. "They'll all become large farms—it's already happening." He frowned, and leaned back in his chair to turn up the fan that was doing nothing to budge the hot damp air pressing down on us. It was the first week of September, and telephones refused to be silenced in the next room where his secretary was frantically assigning work crews for the harvest. "The ones who grow grapes, who make wine, there will be very few of them down the road," he continued. "Most of our clients make their own wine, they don't sell grapes to big wineries. Otherwise you have to pay someone all year to tend the vineyards, and you end up making next to nothing."

While I heard this logic repeated by most Italians I asked, it was not replicated in the relationships performed by Italians and immigrants working in wineries and vineyards. The immigrant cellar hands and vineyard managers took orders from

Italian growers and winemakers, but they were also clearly experts in the tasks and projects at hand. “Niko knows how to do everything!” Rosanna affirmed, watching Niko operate the press and leap down from the controls to fix a rattling tube. “Before we had Niko,” she explained, “my son was stuck in the cellar. He couldn’t leave for more than an hour during harvest, and even when things calmed down, a weekend trip was difficult. But Niko learned everything—he pays attention that one—and he can take care of things for days at a time. So now Tommaso can go to conventions, or meet with new buyers. It’s been a lifesaver for us.” Rosanna’s son added to his mother’s praise with immense respect and gratitude for the young man with whom he works day each day. “Niko does everything. For three years now he’s been my real right hand. He’s a truly fantastic person because he’s never looking at the clock. If you give him a job to do, he simply does it—till it’s finished. Nights, holidays, it doesn’t matter. And this is incredibly important for a small business like ours. And he’s very smart. He’s young—only twenty-six years old—but he’s lived quite a bit. He’s very much got it together.”

Entrusting vineyard and cellar work to immigrants is essential in Canelli, but also a gamble. When I asked winegrowers and brokers about increasing competition from New World corporate giants, members of groups replied that they had three things other places do not: “Our history, our territory, and our know-how.” UNESCO status promotes local history in regional museums and nostalgia drenched marketing. Geographical Indications delimit access to a branded territory, securing the right to wrap bottles in DOC ribbons that flag quality or authenticity to foreign drinkers. The

“know-how” (which is always said in English, an imported term from the business world) remains more slippery. For production practices that can be encoded into *mente,* cognitive ways of knowing unbounded by time and space, like writing or blueprints (Paxson 2012), intellectual property laws defend the boundaries of participation. Communities of knowledges that depend on *techne*, embodied skills that cannot be easily explained without experience, must “rely on other types of boundaries to defend their trades. These barriers arise from the dense connectivities of an economy, links that transfer special knowledge…and that monopolize opportunities for particular categories of people” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2011:54).

The “know-how” that Canelli’s growers cite is impossible to copyright or enshrine. It can be sustained by working bodies and experienced senses, but not detained by customs officials if they leave the country. By trusting foreigners to know how to grow wine grapes and vinify them, vignaioli also risk losing ownership of their economy. Herzfeld’s account of apprenticeship relations describes how masters of a craft carefully guard their technical secrets for this reason, skills that their apprentices only discover through careful observation on the sly (2004). This is where *non commandano* comes in. By insisting that their “right hands” are incapable of making key decisions or avoiding particular kinds of training, vignaioli and winemakers protect the value of their own labor and exclude non-Italians from a future in the business.

This strategy is mirrored in the fashion world, where Italian brand managers and designers insist that their *italianità*—a fusion of Italian blood and lifestyle that

becomes a quality of one's character, creativity, and taste—renders them capable of labor and roles that their Chinese business partners could also feasibly perform. These roles are contingent, however, and constantly evolving as people in uneven fields of power generate and assign categories of labor and the value of that labor through international collaborations (Rofel and Yanagisako forthcoming). In Canelli's winegrowing community, *non commandano* serves to neutralize the potential threat that Balkan employees pose, keeping the know-how that confers value on the resulting wines firmly in the hands of Italian owners. The future of winemaking is not allotted to Macedonians or Romanians. Instead, Balkan workers are constantly relegated to the past.

And the next generation?

The Balkan residents of Canelli do not imagine themselves to come from past eras or a bucolic world of peasant values. Their lives exist here and there contemporaneously, and some local habits or attitudes seem provincial to families used to living across borders and languages. Nevertheless, the immigrants with whom I spoke described their experience of settling in the area positively. It was similar enough to the place they had left to retain some practices and habits from home, but it also offered their families financial stability and educational opportunity. "We were only, what, eighteen when we came over?" recalled Stefan. We sat a plastic table outside a café on the piazza, sharing a round of cold beers after he and the other two men at the table had finished a long day in the hills during harvest season. "We

almost grew up here," he continued. "We speak the language, we go to play soccer, we have friends here and the kids go to school—our life is here. Some people talk about going back to Macedonia when they are older and have saved up a bit, but I doubt they will. Especially once you have kids here, it's hard." Well socialized by Italian schooling and Italian friends, the generation born or raised in Italy is conscious of their ties to the East, but also shares the tastes, logics, and desires of local youth.

The highly successful integration of young people transplanted to or born in Italy means that like their Italian peers, they are unlikely to follow their parents into the vineyards. Macedonian youth are not categorized as contadini by Italian winegrowers, and few people expect to see them in agricultural roles in the future. At a Macedonian family's birthday party for five-year-old twins, I asked the president of the labor cooperative that employed nearly everyone present, "Do you think these kids will go into wine work?" He shook his head in reply. "Beh, it's hard to say, but many of them no. Their parents will want them to study, to do other things with their life." The couple sitting next to us, overhearing our conversation, leaned in to share their experience:

> *When the kids are little, they like going back to Macedonia. They speak the language, there are lots of families, they have more freedom there…it's more free, we don't have to lock the doors and the kids can go play where they want. We come from small towns and people are not afraid of thieves or strangers. But once they are twelve or thirteen, they don't want to go as much. They feel the difference from their cousins, and their friends are here. Sometimes they stay in Canelli when we go back. Our kids are like Italian kids, they are used to the comforts we give them and the limited chances they have here. They want to go study in Spain, in England, in America. Those who have studied and worked hard will probably leave if they can. They didn't grow up like we did—for us, Canelli and the life we have here is enough, it is*

> *good. For them, this is the base, the normal, and they want more. They won't want to go work in the fields or construction.*

Like most of their first generation peers around the world, the children of Macedonian and Romanian families in Canelli occupy two worlds at once. They are more likely to grow up with the kind of practices that once characterized *contadino* lifeworlds: keeping chickens, cultivating a kitchen garden, making home preserves and goods from scratch. Cristina, a Romanian student at Asti's extension program, explained that her parents' frugal habits were born of economic insecurity. "In Romania, the wages are low and life is expensive, especially with six kids, and so my parents kept doing the things that made ends meet." When I met her, Cristina was midway through her undergraduate degree in food science, hoping to land an internship with a coffee or chocolate processing company in the region. Her Italian boyfriend described Cristina's household as a blast from the past: "It reminds me of how my grandparents lived. Sure, the cooking is different and there were new things that I had to get used to, but they make their own salami, and raise rabbits, and there's a big vegetable garden! Things that were normal here before."

Cristina's home kept "local" traditions alive, but she grew up among mostly Italian peers at school and on Saturday nights in the piazza. Her world was also one of soccer stars and Euro-pop, European Union citizenship and Italian aspirations of the good life. Skinning rabbits or weeding vineyards were not part of the future that she was working hard to create with her degree. Today members of the first generation raised in Italy are graduating from college, pursuing degrees in international relations, or starting new businesses. "The girls are wonderful students,"

a Canellesi school teacher gushed, “they’re bright, they study hard. Some of the boys do well too, but many opt for more practical secondary training—the mechanical or engineering high school—or start working young.” Petar, one of the few Macedonian teenagers who chose to pursue winemaking confirmed this summation. “We don’t want to live with our parents forever,” he agreed. “We want to work. It’s important, to have your own money, your own home.”

The children of Balkan immigrants were quick to acquire their peers’ language and habits, as well as their outlook on the future. While every young person in Italy has their own set of plans that range from jaded teenage angst to determined youthful optimism, there is a general consensus—and not an unfounded one—that for many, the future will have to be found elsewhere. “In Italy there’s not much for us,” sighed a Macedonian high schooler interning at small hotel with few customers outside of the high season. Glancing around at the empty chairs and dusty lamps in the lobby, she sat on the desk next to the blank ledger. “There’s not a future here. I want to go work in England, or maybe in Germany, I don’t know what yet, but at least there are jobs there.”

For those who might try for a future as winemakers, the path is not an easy one, especially financially. “Buying vines or a winery, that takes a lot of money,” said another cooperative owner, while shaking his head at my question about Macedonians investing in their own wineries. He replied that the families he employs have other priorities that make investment in winegrowing land possible, but not any time soon. “Some have bought houses, apartments, for them the house is very important. Before

anything else, with the money they've made here, in the first years they use it to fix up the house in Macedonia. They all have beautiful homes there. Here some invest in real estate, but they buy mainly houses, maybe a farm or two, but very few." He paused to consider my question again. "I think in the long-term they will. Those that run their own cooperatives make a bit more, and down the road I think they would buy their own land." Whether or not settled families will invest in a future as winemakers, however, remains to be seen.

Figures 28 and 29: The Macedonian "pizzeria" that serves as a social hub for the community, and the small grocery in Canelli that carries dry goods and beverages imported from Macedonia and Romania (photos by author).

On encounters and new worlds

In order for young men from the East to become the ideal right hands of Canelli's vignaioli, Italians and immigrants made different sets of needs and desires

align in a particular form of collaborations. The resulting “encounters” (Faier and Rofel 2014) forge new kinds of people, places, and value; identities or qualities that did not exist previously. In Canelli, *macedoni* are recast as *contadini,* immigrants become a mundane part of daily life and family businesses, and working the land offers a way into a community. Rofel and Yanagisako argue that labor power does not pre-exist production: it is made by the relations, collaborations, and practices of production (forthcoming). On the part of the vignaioli, this meant picking out particular elements of the past and identifying them with an imagined Balkan world, folding time and space to make disparate places match up. For the men and women who took on these new roles, becoming a contadino involved acquiring new ways of knowing, doing, and speaking that earned them access to a support system of social capital impossible for immigrants to receive from the state.

Both sides of these partnerships become something new in the encounter, and collectively they realize forms of labor that are at once old and new. Through these collaborations, Italian families create a new relationship to the land mediated by trusted foreigners, one in which the luxuries of relative wealth can still be part of “traditional” viticulture on family-owned land. By highlighting their know-how and decision making roles, Italians reaffirm the value of their labor despite handing off the heaviest and most unpleasant tasks to others. Macedonian and Romanian families find steady employment and legal settlement that can support their kin or create a new future for their children in Europe. Through their close relationships with local

families and hard work, they have earned a local status that is not Italian, but not foreigner either.

The label has its limits. The social processes that fashion people into winegrowers or makers across Europe are run through with hierarchies of gender (Lem 2013), race (Guy 2010), and class (Ulin 2002), all categories which make Macedonian men from rural communities eligible to become contadini, but exclude others. As I discuss in Chapter Five, the asylum seekers who cultivate reclaimed fields at the edge of town are not recognized as contadini, even when their labor and projects bear a greater resemblance to older forms of agriculture here. Their Africanness and status as refugees renders them too Other to absorb into the fold of local farmers, a barrier that most agree will take another generation to surmount.

For the present, the arrangement between Italians and Balkan settlers works well enough for everyone. Wineries keep their land and business, immigrants find the work they need, and young people are free to seek their futures elsewhere. The future, however, remains unclear. Who will take up the work that Balkan youth raised in Italy reject? What will happen when the aging population of *contadini veri* is no more? How will pressures from a global market and changing weather patterns restructure value, work, and ethnicity in the Belbo Valley? While some of the factors remaking the community and landscapes of the Langhe and Monferrato are external, local ideas about who is eligible to participate in certain forms of labor, ownership, or recognition will also be central in shaping the next generation of contadini and a community's ties to the land, questions I explore further in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four: The Harvest of Shame

Bisogna cambiare tutto per non cambiare niente. / For everything to stay the same, everything must change.

Giuseppe Tomasi*, Il Gattopardo* (1958)

From festival to crackdown

By late August, the moscato harvest is in full swing, and the back roads that I pedal to the winery are suddenly full of vans and tractors driven by leathery men with bare chests and hat brims pulled low to keep the sun out of their eyes. Thick tires kick up clouds of dust on the dirt tracks and creaking trailers stain the road with sticky trails of grape juice dripping from crushed fruit. The golden bunches of grapes that hung in twos and threes beneath every vine vanish, only to reappear heaped on the back of a truck barreling down the road into town. At the winery, three men and a forklift are trying to load too many boxes of wine into a rental truck—*maybe if we stack them higher they might fit?*—and everyone is tight-lipped after working till two in the morning to finish packaging the order.

At noon, Alberto arrives to check in with his wife before heading to the vineyards for the afternoon. Noticing my obvious interest, he smirks and asks, "What, don't tell me you want to come work in the vines?" Before I can answer, his wife is shrieking at us both. "Did you see the helicopters yesterday?!" Rosanna demands, shaking her head. "We can't risk having you in the vines," she says more quietly, throwing me an apologetic face. "I'm sorry, but without papers…those fines are

murderous!" Alberto turns both palms up, a silent *well, so much for that*, and I resign myself to another day of boxing bottles and cleaning equipment.

My confinement to the cellar was not for lack of trying: the winery's accountant had looked into every possible legal solution to get around the labor laws. An internship? But I was not an Italian student. A short-term contract? But I did not have a work permit. Despite everyone's efforts to find a way, when harvesting began, it was agreed that I could not be found in the vineyard, especially not with a pair of clippers in hand.

Rosanna's concerns were well-founded: in the last twenty years the *vendemmia* (wine grape harvest) has transformed from a festival of family and plenty to a bureaucratic nightmare of labor laws and police raids. It is hard to say when the *controlli* (inspections) began in earnest. Some growers claim that by the 1990s there were already patrols, but other insist that they never worried until 2000. In any case, an offer of free labor during harvest season would have once landed me in the vines from dawn to dusk for a month. This was a running joke among the vignaioli to whom I offered two able hands in exchange for an invitation to their harvest. "It's like giving candy to a diabetic!" one grower laughed. "Someone who wants to break their back all day for free, but that you can't hire." Others found it a disappointing reality, throwing into relief just how much the harvest had changed: "It used to be that we'd have had you stay for a month, like the students who used to come, it was an entirely different story in those days. I'm sorry, but it's just not possible anymore. We can't take that risk."

The new vendemmia

Each family winery I visited had a vivid memory of the specific day that "everything changed" when it came to harvesting their grapes. Rosanna recounted her own, shaking her head and shifting into the tone of voice she reserved for scolding the interns: "Tommaso was home from university with some friends, they would go up to the vines with guitars and sandwiches and spend the day working and singing. We'd done this for years, and then one day the *carabinieri* showed up and demanded papers for everyone.[49] 'They're our son's friends!' we said. 'There's no exploitation going on here, can't you see they're playing music and fooling around?!' But it did no good." The winery was fined for their "undocumented labor," and that was the last year that anyone who was not a direct blood relative or employee was part of the harvest. Rosanna was indignant about this state of affairs. "Our friends in the cities, they want to bring their kids so they can see what the vendemmia really is, spend a little time in the countryside, you know? But I have to turn them down, it's such a shame."

Starting in the early 2000s, a series of new regulations transformed Italian agricultural traditions. The stated purpose of the legislation was jump starting the

[49] Italian law enforcement is segmented into multiple levels of governance and authority. The *Polizia di Stato* are organized by local prefect and *questore*, or chiefs, and serve as a civilian police force, as do municipal police within the bounds of their own *comune*, or municipality. The *Carabinieri* are a national guard organized by the military that share duties as civilian and military police. Another unit of the military, the *Guardia Finanza*, is in charge of investigating and regulating tax evasion, financial crimes, smuggling, and border customs.

stagnant Italian job market by introducing new types of contracts for part-time or short-term work, but its legacy has been one of unintended consequences. These laws have generated more precarious forms of employment and fewer full-time positions or livable wages in all sectors, and the new regulations for seasonal work contracts, so central to agriculture, made past practices—gathering family labor or taking in university students for the harvest—nearly impossible to realize thanks to various bureaucratic hurdles. Today, everyone is very clear on the rules: anyone harvesting who is not a relative of the first four degrees—no second cousins, no in-laws—must be a paid worker, with all of the requisite paperwork in order (Confragicoltura 2015). As a result, few Italians participate in the work of picking grapes from Canelli's vines.

UNESCO status protects specific physical structures here, while Geographical Indication labeling maintains chemical standards for the resulting wines, but neither institution safeguards the relationships that built those cellars or sustained the vineyards in the past. Instead, labor laws intended to prevent exploitation have outlawed the casual or reciprocal exchanges of work and value that historically brought the harvest in. Describing this transformation was emotionally fraught for the generation who lived through the vendemmia as a family festival that brought the community together. When the topic came up at the dinner table, my middle-aged neighbor set down her glass firmly so as to have both hands free to gesticulate her feelings on the matter:

> *Now you have to have everything in order, you can't bring your family. I can't say, "Beh, today's Sunday, I think I'll go to my friends' farm and give them a*

> *hand with the harvest, then we'll stop to have a glass of wine together, help them out and spend some time together." No, I can't do that anymore, because if the police show up…something that was a beautiful tradition has become something so complicated, they've thrown a real stick in the gears for the growers and the workers. For example, the students, now they have to be enrolled at an office or some cooperative, you can't just go an earn a bit of cash, now there has to be insurance…there wasn't this assault, the helicopters circling up there counting heads. The vendemmia could be a party, for the kids who have to go back to school, as it was for us. You didn't do it as steady work, so all the rules weren't necessary.*

Instead of Italian students or retirees, the vineyards fill with foreigners during the months of the vendemmia. In Canelli, the organization of harvest labor revolves around a parking lot ringed with apartment buildings, a discount supermarket, and the Macedonian restaurant that serves as the hub of the expat community. Here, brightly painted buses disgorge hundreds of workers from Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria. They are easy to recognize in town in their knee length denim, tennis shoes or flip flops, and a small bag with their documents and valuables always worn on the body. Moving quickly, labor recruiters herd the men and women into groups or directly aboard battered vans. Those who arrive early enough in the season beeline to the dormitory run by a catholic charity in the middle of town, hoping to find a bed and shower before limited spots fill up.

Canelli is the labor contracting hub for the entire Monferrato and Langhe regions. Each weekend in late August through September, dozens of buses arrive carrying hundreds of workers who are sorted and transported to villages and vineyards across the region. The "arms" of seasonal laborers (as it is expressed in Italian, *i braccianti,* from *braccia*, or "arm") have been the force that keeps millions of bottles of Moscato d'Asti flowing since 2000. In the first years, harvest workers

were recruited through personal networks organized by the settled Macedonian and Romanian families in the area. They were neighbors, friends, or kin from home who could find a place to stay with the contact who recruited them. But as numbers increased each year and arrivals overflowed these networks, "phantom" cooperatives appeared overn ight to recruit and hire out picking crews.

Figures 30 and 31: Empty crates wait for the next day of harvest work, and vans in Piazza Unione Europea wait for harvest workers to arrive before shuttling them to the vineyards outside of town (photos by author).

In the weeks that follow, by midmorning the men and women who have come to pick grapes have vanished from park benches and the low wall alongside the roundabout. In the hours just after dawn, they can be seen walking the defunct railroad tracks in twos and threes to the appointed meeting place with their employers, or else simply climbing into vans in the piazza. Following their trails, I climb the road north of town past fenced yards, woodpiles, and apple trees. After the road tops out, it follows the ridge from one slope to the next, each of them latticed by vines heavy with fruit. There are no other walkers. I pass only scrappy sedans parked haphazardly on the shoulder where someone is working on the vines below, or piles of empty red crates sticky from yesterday's haul. It is a quiet landscape, with only the low pitched whine of a tractor crawling up a hill to break the silence.

Walking slowly, however, you soon hear voices—bits of conversation, hollered questions or commands. Beneath the canopy of leaves, muddy tennis shoes and red crates move between the forest of vine roots. These hills are crawling with hundreds of workers at the peak of the moscato harvest, but festival or merriment are nowhere to be seen. Instead, workers reappear in town at sundown, caked with grape juice, mosquito bites, and dust, their torsos slumped and steps heavy with exhaustion. If you trek farther into the hills, you will find abandoned farmhouses littered with filthy mattresses and empty beer cans, the ashes from a small fire scattered among piles of clothing and trash. The lucky ones have contacts in the area to stay with, cousins or former neighbors who settled in Canelli years before. Others choose to go it alone, stringing up tarps and cardboard along the riverbanks or nearby woods.

Those with cars might opt to find a secluded place to park for the night, but police patrol the edges of town, handing out tickets to anyone caught trying to spend the night roadside. At the height of the season in 2012, park benches and piazzas were full of people desperate for somewhere to sleep.

Figures 32 and 33: Macedonian harvest workers recruited by a full-time vineyard manager for the season (photos by author).

At five or six each evening, the tractor trailers and trucks of various sizes start clogging up the roundabout, dusting me on my bicycle and charging down the road with great masses of jiggling moscato to dump into the crusher or sell to another winery. At the same time, groups of weary workers sit on the edge of vineyards waiting for their rides, the muddy and overcrowded vans that haul workers from parking lot to vineyard and back again. These men and women have been picking

grapes since seven or eight in the morning, and they slow down the checkout line at the supermarket—the euro coins are unfamiliar, and counted out one by one—buying beer, rotisserie chicken, and bread for tonight, bottles of water and bananas for the next day.

Sandwich signs outside the stationary shop on a Monday morning in late August marked the end of summer. "Books and supplies for school!" read one, while the other broadcast local news headlines: "The *braccianti* arrive to the Belbo Valley."[50] Like autumn leaves and ripening grapes, the appearance of the harvest workers has become part of the annual cycles of life here. They are an essential component of the local economy, but a presence that locals do not savor. Highly visible as they walk through town to buy food or sleep on park benches, seasonal workers remain unacknowledged by Italians walking nearby.

Landscapes, laws, and labor

In this chapter, I examine how the landscape, the state, and the substitution of foreign workers for Italian labor have broken the relationships and rhythms that once characterized the vendemmia. From a ritual that strengthened community ties and rewarded a years' worth of hard work, it has become a season marked by paranoia, police raids, and ungracious hospitality. Climate change and monoculturalization

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[50] *Bracciante*, the common term for an agricultural laborer, comes from the word for arm, *braccia*, and denotes the physicality and strength that the work at hand requires. Braccianti literally sell their arms (and backs, legs, hands, feet, etc.) for hourly waged labor. Braccianti are hired for temporary, low skill level jobs, typically in agricultural but also in construction. As the term is used in Italy today, it also connotes foreigners.

have intensified the demands of the season, making what was already hard work hotter, hurried, and less lucrative. State regulations eliminated the informal arrangements that once supplied labor and provided workers with housing, a vacuum in which corrupt labor cooperatives appeared to recruit temporary workers for rock bottom prices. The opening of EU borders in 2007 and the increasing numbers of immigrants arriving to Italy from around the world generated a population of structurally vulnerable workers outside of legal or kinship protections. Finally, the 2008 financial crisis that precipitated the new economic era (called *la crisi* in Italy) transitioned from a temporary upheaval to a new normal—a reconfiguration of the relationships and roles forged by the labor the harvest requires.

Not everything about the wine harvest has changed. The demands of plants, yeasts, buyers, and bill collectors still throw daily life into overdrive for the months of August and September. But the same pressures that once tied a community together—plant life cycles, intense labor, the economic centrality of this season—now make it an anxious and divisive period in which workers, growers, and authorities are all on edge and untrusting. Winegrowers cannot control rising summer temperatures, extract themselves from decades of expanded plantings, or overturn the regulations passed in Rome. They complain bitterly about the way these forces and their unintended consequences have stripped the harvest season of its joys. Yet they do not identify with the plight of harvest workers today, no matter how much the injustices these workers face parallel the stories of contadini exploited by the industrial wineries no more than two generations ago (Chapters One and Two). Ethnic difference and

minimal contact between landowners and workers have dehumanized the role of harvester, while municipal fears of a contaminated image block any measures to accommodate the harvesters.

Seasonal migrant labor—underpaid and grossly abused—furnishes agricultural industries around the world (Besky and Brown 2015). Subjugated and often silenced, workers are the invisible force that keeps a globalized food system spinning. After joining the EU in 2007 and gaining the right to work without a visa, Romanians and Bulgarians (and Macedonians with Bulgarian passports) became ubiquitous in European agriculture, boarding buses and trains to the fields of Puglia, greenhouses in England, and orchards in Switzerland. They appear frequently in European journalism reporting mistreated workers or labor shortages, perhaps not as racialized as South Asian or African immigrants (starting in 2015, these nationalities also began to appear in the groups waiting around Canelli's parking lots in the hopes of finding harvest work) but often treated little better.[51]

What makes Canelli's harvest workers unique is the symbolic weight of the vendemmia and the work-based traditions it entails *and* the transfer of that labor to people who do not need to be fed, housed, or protected by labor laws. Keeping harvest labor in human hands is essential: local topography, planting patterns, and quality standards demand people, not machines, to do this work. The human quality of the work is also important, as the harvest represents the realization of a year's

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[51] For examples, see Tondo and Kelly 2017, Leogrande 2015, Mangano 2017, and Dima 2017.

work, the literal fruits of one's labor. In order to cope with new labor laws, the winegrowing community has replaced traditional exchanges of casual labor rendered illegal with a different form of illicit work, one that protects them from culpability or fines. By outsourcing the flexible and underpaid labor that has long characterized winegrowing in this region, Canellesi are able to fondly remember roles they no longer occupy, both by turning them into a romanticized source of value and by abstracting the people who carry them out into a faceless whole—*i braccianti*.

The restructuring of who does harvest work comes at a cost: in a community where one's sense of self and public identity are constructed through the labor of growing and making wine, dehumanizing those who perform harvest work frays the ties that bind people to the land and the products they create from it. In the case of year-round vineyard managers or cellar hands, molding them into the figure of the contadino allows for the incorporation of outsiders without breaking form. Harvest workers, however, are too many and too poorly treated to be cast as a traditional element of wine production—there is nothing picturesque about people sleeping in the streets—and so they are removed from the storyline entirely. Pretending not to see or limiting how and when harvest workers can be visible, the city of Canelli negotiates its dependence on seasonal workers by rendering them less human than their peasant predecessors and blaming nameless outsiders for the conditions in which they work. In this way, parallel worlds of festivity and desperation live shoulder to shoulder during the harvest season, creating a taut atmosphere of uncomfortable dependencies.

***Come era prima* (how things used to be)**

Within living memory, the grape harvest was a very different world. Bruno, the voluble octogenarian who was a fixture at the small bar in Canelli's main piazza, recalled the harvests of his youth as a never-ending series of tasks that kept every member of the family busy for weeks. When I asked him what he remembered about the harvest, he launched into a vivid description of the typical day: "During the vendemmia, you'd get up early, in the cellar you had to get the barrels ready. All year the wooden barrels would dry out and shrink, so they might leak and lose wine, so you had to keep them damp and seal any cracks. Then you washed them, and there were no detergents, nothing, the last wash would be done with herbs. So you would make a fire outside, put the boiler on to make an infusion, and my father would climb into the barrels and spray them with it."

Once the equipment was ready, "and as soon as the dew formed and the weather permitted," Bruno and his father would set off with the ox cart to the vineyard ten or fifteen minutes from the family home. "You'd begin to harvest grapes with homemade baskets," he explained. "They had two handles and held about forty kilos of grapes. Working in pairs you'd go down the row, one in front of the other, and when it was full one person lifted it up on their shoulders and the other person helped, and they'd set it down on a ladder, and then two of us would hoist it up on our shoulders to carry down to the cart. You'd work like that all day."

After a long day of harvesting, Bruno would return home to fetch the oxen, hitch them to a cart, and haul the grapes back to the *aia*, the courtyard, to dump in a

vat. Then, he recalled, the fun began: "After two or three days it would be full, and so then it was time to crush—that was the real moment of communion, when the neighbors would come—we'd help one another—and us kids jumped in the vat barefoot to stomp the grapes with our feet." Meanwhile, his father dug out the must and loaded it into a brenta to transfer to large barrels to ferment for a week or so. "Then at times you'd have to tend to it, because when wine ferments it *expands*," he emphasized, spreading his hands apart. "You never filled the barrels to the top, only partway, because there was the risk of it overflowing, so you'd have to go check on it and stir it with a pitchfork, the stems and skins would all get pushed to the top."

Once the wine had finished fermenting, Bruno recounted, "in the cellar you'd smell a fragrance, it was an odor of acid really. When emptying out the barrels, someone had to go in and dig out the must, and there was the danger that the gas on the bottom could kill you. In any case, we'd drain off the wine and then press what was left. There was a hand-press, every three or four hours you'd go and push back and forth—there was no mechanical press."

The vendemmia was and remains the most important economic moment of the year: everyone's prosperity depends on a successful harvest. Bruno described it as a holiday of sorts, "because it was the moment of the rewards of all that effort, an enormous effort, that my father had done…working all day with a hoe, or worse, working all day with the spray pack on your shoulders, at least twenty kilos. All day going back and forth, up and down the rows, he'd come home wearing a green mask of *verderame* (copper sulfate spray, a ubiquitous anti-mold and anti-fungal treatment

in viticulture).” After a year of uncertainty and risk—one bad storm, a chilly spring, or rain that came too early or too late was all it took to ruin a harvest—the harvest was a collective sigh of relief.

Then and now, the season was a time of great activity and ferment, with grapes, people, and vehicles moving in every direction. Contadini worked from dawn to dusk, long hot days of repetitive labor (Revelli 1977). In the pre-war years, most families had no more than a hectare of vines, work that could be done by a nuclear family, especially when raising a dozen children was not exceptional. Kinship ties were central in organizing agricultural labor: extended family often lived nearby and it was customary to gather cousins, siblings, and in-laws in order to harvest various crops. “We used to go from one town to the next—it was a reciprocal thing,” explained Lorenzo’s father. “One month we’d all go over to Calosso or Calamandrana to help them bring in the grain, and then they’d come here the week after to help us, then in the fall the grapes would be ready and we’d do something similar, and strangers would turn up in the piazza looking for work, because even with all your cousins and uncles there was always too much work to do.”

The vendemmia brought together family, friends, and neighbors in an exhausting but exhilarating effort to collect on a year of hard work. Children had important responsibilities—fetching water, sorting grapes—but also the glee of stomping clusters into wine or staying up past bedtime in the cellars (Monticone 1965). Cristina, who was a teenager in the 1960s, recalled how she made her first earnings during the harvest, striking out of the family domain into the world of wage

labor. Rosanna’s memories, on the other hand, centered around the family working together: “I remember that as kids we would always eat in the vineyards during the vendemmia—bread, walnuts, dried tomatoes—because there was no time to go home and cook. For us it was great fun, maybe less so for our parents. Everyone worked so much, there weren’t the comforts of today.” Parents worked hardest of all—picking, loading, and transporting the clusters of fruit that would keep a roof over their family’s heads.

If other tasks required families to spend most of their time on their own farms, the vendemmia drew an entire community into a series of encounters and mutual dependencies. When I told my neighbor Cristina that I had run an errand for a vignaiolo, picking up his receipt from the public scales by the main road, she was delighted that we had shared an experience. She went on to relate how in her youth, “the public scale was run by the town, but the big wineries like Gancia and Bosca had their own inside the factory, and there was so much traffic that they’d hire a few more kids to help. We didn’t really weigh the grapes, but we’d write down the receipts to give the vignaioli…it was also a chance to chat, to wait in line with someone, to see neighbors or friends who had come to weight their harvest.”

After it was all said and done, families and friends celebrated with large meals and luxuries, a point that Bruno emphasized in his rendering of the season: “The vendemmia was a moment of festival, a collective thing… The big party was when you sold the wine, the cart driver came with the cart and the barrels and bit by bit you’d pump the wine from the barrels in the cellar to the ones on the cart and then

you'd celebrate! You'd eat meat, you'd go to the butcher to buy it, because when the wine was ready it was a big event!" After months of sweat and sacrifice, the collective labor of families and neighbors paid off debts and filled stomachs. Harvest work tied community members to one another, and to the land that sustained them.

As Bruno, Rosanna, and Lorenzo's father described, the grandparents and retirees of the Belbo Valley grew up in a network of communities that relied on extended families, neighbors, and itinerant day laborers from the foothills to bring in a harvest or plant a new field. "Before," Claudia told me, "there was always a sharecropper who'd work, or the children of peasant families to harvest the grapes. My father used to hire a few men from the hills, from the Alta Langa." When plantings expanded dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s, farmers sent for more distant contacts to keep up with the harvests that increased each year, hiring out university students or retirees after exhausting their own personal networks. "One year a pair of students walking down the road asked if there was work, and they stayed with us for weeks," Claudia continued. "For years it was all students, the young people who'd left to study in Turin came home with a dozen friends in tow for the vendemmia."

The generation who came of age in the 1980s and remember Septembers spent between the rows, sunburned and sticky with grape juice, working like mules with their friends for a week or two. A sociologist at the University of Turin grinned while describing her vendemmia days. "You'd go to the bar and everyone's fingernails would be black from the grapes…but it was a big party, we'd lob the rotten bunches

at one another and help each other out, and the vignaiolo would put on a party for us at the end of the harvest. You'd make enough to get through the fall term, maybe take a trip over the holidays." Students would work long days for low wages and could usually find housing with cousins or friends, if not the vignaiolo who hired them. Silvio, Cristina's husband, emphasized that the hospitality was simple, but sufficient: "It was almost a given that those who came from other provinces, the students, would have room and board at the grower's home. They'd work, eat and sleep there, the family would make lunch and dinner for everyone."

When the last bunches had been brought in, the vignaiolo offered his workers a grand dinner—richer than the usual workday fare—called the *ribota.* Cristina recounted how "The more generous ones, at the end of the vendemmia would offer their workers a fine dinner, a big ribota!" For a decade or so, this workforce of students, retirees, and family friends were enough to supply the labor demanded by thousands of hectares of ripening grapes.

The harvests of the 1950s to the 1980s, even if seen through the rose tinted lens of nostalgia, are seasons remembered fondly: big harvests, big dinners, and a system of casual labor that benefitted everyone involved. Since a certain point in the 1990s, however, it became a world that was impossible to maintain. The increasing intensity of the labor required, a shrinking population of willing able workers, and Italy's sedimentation into bureaucratic labyrinth of regulations for agricultural labor have made this version of vendemmia impossible to realize today.

Time, plants, and labor

Many of the practices of the contadino world that bound family, neighbors, and territory to one another have vanished, but the vendemmia continues to orchestrate collaboration across social boundaries, in no small part because of the intensity of work that a vast monoculture requires. In the past, contadini harvested two or three cash crops through the summer and fall, while tending to a dozen others throughout the year. Today, all of that labor has been concentrated into a much briefer period: on the vine, wine grapes develop from tart berries into sweeter softer fruit, with sugar levels and acidity fluctuating depending upon the temperature, rainfall, and sun exposure in the weeks leading up to harvest. Unlike wheat or hay, which can be harvested over weeks, ripe grapes leave a small window before they become overripe or begin to rot. Some winemakers visit a vineyard daily as harvest draws near, tasting grapes and measuring sugar levels for weeks before deciding precisely when to pick. Heavy rains mean swollen but diluted grapes that will mold quickly, while cool, cloudy weather stalls the ripening process. A streak of hot sunny days sends picking crews and cellar machinery into overdrive much earlier than expected.

August in Canelli keeps temperatures hovering at thirty degrees Celsius until after dark. The air is heavy with dust, humidity, and expectation. The white hot days of closed shops and quiet nights are run through with a current of anticipation and industriousness: it is time to work. Wine grapes orchestrate a chaotic choreography between humans, weather systems, infrastructures, machinery, and photosynthesis. If, as Bastian argues, "each clock can be read as an affirmation of a shared social relation

to something" (2012:31), then life in Canelli is structured by social relations with grapevines. The harvest calendar reads like a menu: First come the whites—moscato, chardonnay, arneis, sauvignon blanc—and then the reds—pinot nero, barbera, gringolino, carbernet—and finally the nebbiolos. On the appointed day, workers begin early, moving quickly to get the grapes in before the sun reaches its peak and "cooks" the fruit. Once off the vine, grapes must be processed as soon as possible in order to keep their flavors from deteriorating.

Figure 34: Just picked grapes are hauled immediately to the cellar for processing in order to best preserve their flavors (photo by author).

Plant-based time (ripening, wilting, rotting, fermenting) does not line up with the Weberian rationalization and routinization of human times (sleeping, meals, overtime). Rather, what Brice (2014) calls "planty time"—in which vines temporalize

human action—throws human social and physiological time into a frenzy during the harvest, utterly refusing to conform to scheduled working days or human physiology. As grape leaves turn sunshine to sugar, there is no time for the leisurely pace or extended meals for which Italy is famous. Meals and sleep become haphazard affairs, delayed or skipped entirely in order to keep the picking, crushing, and pressing in motion. “If I eat something now, I’ll just get sleepy afterwards!” a cooperative manager insisted while loading bins of grapes onto the back of the tractor. “Better to wait until the evening.” When I asked the harvest workers in town what they had for lunch, they shrugged, holding up the bag of stale bread and canned tuna handed out by the charity dormitory where they sleep.

The rhythms of the harvest are merciless: picking stops at sundown, but work in the cellar continues through the night. “Here the wine is good,” a winery intern conceded when he finally arrived back at midnight to the apartment building we shared, “but they work you like a dog.” Even with machines to do the heavy lifting, clogged pumps have to be fixed, inventory boxed and shipped, a crust of skins and seeds two feet thick punched down several times a day, and someone has to drive to the depot to pick up more potassium metabisulfite (one of the many chemical ingredients in winemaking) before it closes. Driving a forklift at breakneck speed, workers stack bins and barrels ten meters high in order to make room for the new load of grapes arriving each day.

“How do you say vendemmia in English?” a winemaker asked me one day, the winery in full swing with pumps and presses roaring. “Technically it is the grape

harvest," I hollered back, "but anyone in the industry calls it Crush." "Crush?" he asked, unsure what the English word meant. "It means to squash, or demolish," I explained, squeezing an imaginary bunch of grapes between my hands. "Ha! That is perfect," he exclaimed. "It's true, the vendemmia crushes more than grapes." Winery owners and workers acquire dark rings beneath bloodshot eyes, giving orders before climbing back up into the driver's seat of a truck in a haze of adrenaline. When the season tapers off in October, it is not uncommon to hit a wall of exhaustion, if not before then.

Historically, the grape harvest began in mid-September, continuing through October, with the last grapes brought by November. In more recent years it has been creeping up on farmers, with record setting summers from 2014 to 2017 pushing the harvest well into August. "It's been getting earlier and earlier," growers agreed, "that's global warming for you—the harvests have been good, but if it keeps up we'll be in trouble." Not only is the harvest earlier today, it is also shorter. One scorching day after another in August and into September mean that grapes reach maturity quickly before rotting and shriveling on the vine. "Only a few years ago, the moscato harvest lasted at least three weeks," recounted the director of the *Lavorare Insieme* cooperative. "Now they harvest the entire moscato crop in ten days—everywhere." When the first truckloads of grapes rumble through town on their way to the cellars, everyone in the piazza stops to watch. "Did you see the grapes?" "Already?! It can't be time yet." "It's earlier every year."

The shift in seasons changes more than the harvest calendar: the new climate compresses the task of picking grapes, demanding more workers, faster paces, and more stress.

> *Until some years ago, the vendemmia was a party of family, friends, clients and everyone, it all ended with a big dinner in high spirits. Now there's no more party: it has turned into a nightmare for everyone. It's ugly work—everything is more concentrated and sped up. It's a crisis because of the wave of inspections that should be done in May or June, and not during the ten days of the moscato vendemmia. And then this year there were simply weren't enough workers to hire* (Piero Montaldo, Vallibbt News 2011).

During the harvest it remains common practice for a full-time Balkan employee to contract a team of harvest workers from their home communities. "Every summer they ask me to call people for the vendemmia, and I put together a crew," explained Ivan. Even with personally recruited workers and some 600 to 700 harvesters furnished by official local cooperatives, this labor force serves a vast area, from Gavi to Moncalvo. The Moscato d'Asti DOCG territory alone comprises fifty-two communities that are planted with some 10,000 hectares of moscato (Consorzio 2017). By one cooperative owner's estimate, you need about ten workers to harvest one hectare in a day. When these grapes begin to ripen, the demand for labor—now, not next week—outstrips the numbers and organizational capacity of local labor cooperatives, even with their additional hired hands for the harvest.

Growers cannot entirely predict or manipulate when grapes will be ready for harvest, and so vineyards require a highly mobile and flexible workforce. Understaffed and working against the clock, picking crews push their bodies to new physical limits in order to keep their position and return home with something to

show for their efforts. Labor laws set maximums for the hours per day, with reduced hours for especially heavy work, like lugging crates of grapes uphill. When I asked a group of Bulgarian workers returning to town about their schedules, however, they laughed at the notion of limited hours. "Six hours?" they asked me incredulously. "We work from eight in the morning till noon, then from one to six or seven in the evening," the harvesters explained. When the workers begin trailing into town towards sunset, they are visibly exhausted, caked with dust, sweat, and grape juice.

Grapes are still harvested largely by hand in Piedmont today, a system that requires intense periods of work in a community that is no longer accustomed to physical labor seven days a week. The defining qualities of the labor pool have not changed significantly, but their identities and the conditions in which they spend the season have as the season compacted and new laws made it difficult to carry on the casual labor relations that made harvest work appealing for young Italians. In the context of highly regulated labor and pinched finances, new forms of labor contracting evolved to keep businesses running and law enforcement satisfied, forms of exploitation that have defined the experiences of immigrants employed in seasonal work in Italian agriculture.

Agricultural exceptionalism and Italian bureaucracy

Italy has a strong agricultural tradition and a heavy economic dependence on farming of all kinds. This country the size of California is covered in a patchwork of farms and gastronomic firms, and produces more wine annually than any other single

nation (over 48 million hectoliters in 2016).[52] Italy is also a top producer when it comes to legislation: the *Banca di dati normattiva* estimates that some 75,000 laws govern the people of this peninsula.[53] A bloated bureaucracy is part and parcel of everyday life for Italy's inhabitants, whether they are paying utility bills in cash at the *tobaccaio*, applying for a new official residence with a myriad of forms and stamps, or being asked to show a receipt for the pizza they are carrying by the financial police. Ethnographies of Italian life are peppered with accounts of the state systems that people experience as unfair, oppressive, and ineffectual (Herzfeld 2009, Grasseni 2013, Stacul 2005). The state has always been untrustworthy and alien in Italy (a legacy of national unification without popular support), but never more so than in this era of high unemployment, extensive subcontracting, and rampant corruption (Muehlebach 2012).

In the winegrowing world, vignaioli point to regulations and bureaucracy as some of their biggest obstacles to staying in business. Organizing agriculture into the language of law, capital, and property is a problem around the world: plants refuse to conform to the regularity of material involved in other industries. An industry mired in uncontrollable factors and historically reliant on large households to provide flexible labor does not adapt easily to laws designed for factory floors or cubicle workers (Mann 1989). When patterns of work and the acquisition of industry skills

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[52] https://www.bkwine.com/news/worlds-biggest-wine-producing-countries-2016-short/
[53] http://www.normattiva.it/

are bound up in kinship ties and local traditions, regulating labor becomes even more difficult.

By 2000, the Italian state had been trying to crack down on *lavoro in nero*—under the table employment—in multiple sectors for years, citing the protection of workers from exploitation (but also guaranteeing that the State would receive its cut of taxes and fees). The "Biagi laws," introduced in 2003, laid down a new set of rules and punishments for those who broke them (Francaviglia 2004). Any agricultural workers without proper paperwork were considered *in nero* (illegal, literally "in black") and would incur heavy fines for their employers. Within a few seasons, widespread opposition to the restrictions on employing kin generated amendments to the original legislation: in 2008 and 2013, members of the Italian Senate proposed various exceptions to labor regulations for the agricultural sector, citing the seasonality of agricultural work and the networks of kin that traditionally sustained it.[54] Fining farmers for employing family members was not the goal of laws meant to prevent exploitation, they argued. By limiting the legal exemption to a particular degree of kinship, however, the amendments cut across the diverse social relationships of reciprocity that historically sustained these communities and that continue to be essential to running a small business. Neighbors, friends from

[54] Law number 45 of April 28, 2008, put forward by Peterlini, Pinzger, Cossiga and Thaler Ausserhofer, and Law number 625 of May 7, 2013, put forward by Berger, Zeller, Panizza, Fravezzi, Palermo, Fausto Guilherme Longo and Laniece, downloaded from www.senato.it.

university, in-laws, or local teenagers now had to be officially hired, with the full set of bureaucratic practices that it entailed.

Taking on a new employee is no small task for farmers: proper procedure includes official identification and the compilation of dozens of documents, a hiring tax, a taxed hourly wage, and liability coverage. Many of the family-run wineries in the area admitted that they needed to hire more help in the cellar, for accounting, or in the vines. They could afford to pay someone a decent hourly wage, but it was the nearly 50 percent of that wage that had to be paid to the state in addition that posed the problem. Employers in Italy are responsible for contributing their employee's pension payments, health, accident, and unemployment insurance coverage, among other fees and taxes.[55] Those who fail to comply risk fines of thousands of euros per worker, no small gamble for the family operations with whom I worked.

The new laws effectively limited what kind of employment farmers could offer, or if they could hire anyone at all. As Silvio explained over dinner one night:

> *The new work safety norms demand permits even to feed people…you can't provide food for anyone who isn't family even if they're working on your property, and even family members have to be hired, and there's all the paperwork and regulations around that. Clearly, I'm not going to call up my cousin anymore because I'd have to hire him, register him, all that. It becomes more hassle than it's worth. Instead, more and more, also because the average age of farmers is always rising, only recently have a few young people gone into agriculture after abandoning it for twenty years. There are so many farmers who are seventy-five, eighty years old, and how are they supposed to manage? If before they could scrape by with family, now it's always harder for people like that to keep up with the new regulations.*

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[55] The expense of employee *contributi* is in no small part inflated by Italy's aging population. With ever more pension plans to pay out, the federal government's taxes on those who are still employed become onerous.

Maria, a winery accountant who organizes all of this each year and who tried to find a way for me to work legally, explained that the paperwork is endless. "For every step you take in the cellar or the vineyard, there is another one on paper. Even if you have a perfect harvest, if you don't do your documents well, you risk big fines or you can't sell that wine how you'd like to." This amounts to a considerable amount of time, stress, and money, even to hire a worker for the week. "The state never has our interests in mind!" wailed Rosanna on the day that she forbade my presence in the vines. "Never! The whole thing is built around collecting taxes, everything revolves around money! They don't care about the situation we producers are in."

Rosanna's sentiments were mirrored in the way that growers discussed the regulations and especially in their analyses of law enforcement techniques. The labor laws that transformed the harvest season were intended to target exploitative employers. Patterns in their enforcement, however, suggested that the authorities were more invested in handing out fines than chasing down criminals. Every grower I spoke with had some experience with the harvest season inspections. But very few of the hundreds of harvest workers—and virtually none of the corrupt recruiters themselves—ended up in the hands of the authorities. No one in the community of winegrowers expressed surprise at the practices of enforcement in place. But for me the question remained: Why go after the growers rather than the shady labor cooperatives who were supposedly the targets of laws against undocumented labor?

Winegrowers were united in their response. "Why don't the *controlli* go after the real problems, the fake cooperatives? Because there's not money to be had there,"

Daniele responded bitterly. "If they really wanted to clean things up, they could sweep a few bars where those Macedonians hang out at night and that would be that. But instead, they come to my house…Because there's much more money to be made by fining someone because they are missing a document than actually arresting the people responsible."

The mayor of Canelli's explanation was slightly different, but he did not contradict the growers' assessment. After disavowing any personal responsibility—"This is not my office, it is the job of the state," he reminded me—he explained how he would go about it:

> *I'd follow the coop, sure, but only to a certain point, and I'll tell you why. I'd follow the coop but to the farm that hires them, and that's who gets burned, that's who gets the fine. Because the cooperative, I can slap it with a fine, but then it will reappear the next year, the next week under a different name… It will only pop up again, I don't have the tools to really shut it down. Because if you're working* in nero*, you can open anywhere, anyhow. I have to follow them to the farm. Because the farm is different. It is land, a place—it can't go away. It has property, tools, machines—if I give them a fine, they have to pay*.

Dismissing the phantom coops as too mobile and adaptive to be worth the chase, law enforcement and city officials shifted their attention to the growers. While the growers who contract with cooperatives are effectively cogs in the cycle of exploitation, most consider themselves victims of a greedy administration rather than complicit actors in a larger scheme of profit. "How am I to know that the workers aren't getting the wages I pay out?" demanded a winegrower who had struggled to find a harvest crew that year. "When I can I ask my employees to bring their friends over, that way at least I know who I'm hiring, but it is hard to get enough people on time when the harvest starts." The labor sourcing that was formerly organized by

kinship or school holidays has become an arena of distrust and calculated risk for harvest workers and growers alike.

From cooperatives to caporalato

Some of the agricultural cooperatives in Canelli have been in operation for more than a decade and can be counted upon to operate legally. Others come and go, promising growers that all their paperwork is in order while offering highly competitive rates for labor costs. Social cooperatives were initiated in Italy in the nineteenth century as a way to reinforce communities and provide jobs to locals. The movement continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, and in 1948 the Italian republic formally recognized the importance of these institutions across the country.[56] Cooperatives are widespread in Northern Italian agriculture, where small plots of individually owned land and vastly reduced rural population make labor coops particularly effective at distributing workers to different tasks and areas throughout the year.[57] Perhaps most importantly, cooperatives enjoy a legal loophole that exempts them from the strict labor laws (the legacy of decades of organizing and strikes by Italian workers) and heavy taxation that burdens privately owned enterprises (Earle 1986).

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[56] Article 45 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic

[57] Today, there are 43,000 cooperatives in Italy, 5,100 of these are agricultural cooperatives, an element of rural life very much embedded in Italian society. Of those 5,000 agricultural coops, 10 percent are *vitivinicolo*—winegrowing and making—operations (La Repubblica 2015).

Effectively, regulations passed in the name of preventing exploitation or tax evasion have rendered agricultural traditions and community practices illegal. In communities with increased plantings of single crops, where local labor was increasingly harder to find, agricultural labor cooperatives filled a new niche in the Italian labor market, providing reliable and documented workers on demand, and circumventing the tight controls on wages and hours via the loopholes that labor laws permitted only such cooperatives (Jensen et al 2015). The two oldest agricultural co-ops in Canelli, both founded in the 1990s, were the first to capitalize on the demand for flexible labor. While the original founding members of Canelli's labor coops were nearly all Italian, today the majority of members are Macedonian, Romanian, or Albanian. The expansion of agricultural labor coops in Italy coincided with an uptick in the number of immigrants arriving to Italian shores, eager to find work, and often without complete documentation. In the twenty years since, a plethora of cooperatives—both respectable and "phantom"—have sprung up in the area, furnishing growers with workers outside of the kinship ties that traditionally governed such labor and, more often than not, outside the protection of Italian labor laws. In order to cope with the new laws, a form of labor originally devised to benefit communities though the equal distribution of work and gains—the cooperative—has been *co-opted* into an effective means of exploiting the most vulnerable workers.

In the Italian context, extracting wealth from underpaid labor has a long history that shapes the terrain workers navigate today. Vast estate holders controlled hundreds of sharecropping families in the *mezzandria* system in central and northern

Italy (Bull and Corner 1993), while a bloated aristocracy taxed peasants mercilessly in the south (Aprile 2013). Even after families gained control of their land, southern Italian emigrants who went north for work and peasant families across the peninsula exhausted themselves in the fields to scrape out a living (Revelli 1977). In this corner of Piedmont, industrial wineries gleaned profits from the labor of the vignaioli for generations before winegrowers gained direct access to the market. The quaint villages that dot the hilltops have a long standing tradition of exploitation along class or ethnic lines, and well-honed coercive techniques (Monticone 1965). The arrival of undocumented immigrants and refugees, however, generated new forms of vulnerability and exploitation.

As the contemporary gateway to Europe, Italy receives more undocumented immigrants than any other EU state, which leaves employers with a vast supply of disposable labor. Over the course of a generation, exploitative contracting called *caporalato* exploded into the Italian agricultural sector. Caporalato has deep roots in Italy, and historians trace it back to the emigration of Southern Italians to northern farm fields, though today it is most pervasive in southern regions with a strong mafia presence (Simonetti 2016). Not unlike the mayordomo system that organizes much of California agriculture, caporalato is organized by head contractors—*il capo*—who recruit undocumented workers at a wage below the minimum, underreport their total working hours, skim "housing" and transportation costs from their earnings, and offer labor at rock bottom prices to farmers. The system relieves the farmer of the burden and responsibility of hiring laborers while the *capo* skims a profit from the backs of

powerless workers. Since its origins in newly unified Italy, the face of caporalato has shifted from southern Italian workers—the original "Other" in the Italian national project—to the nameless African migrant, among the most dehumanized and vulnerable members of Europe today (*Internazionale* 2016).

The dehumanization of farmworkers in Italy is accomplished by depriving them of rights and dignities and by minimizing their visibility though physical distance or discursive erasure. Scholarship documenting the conditions in which farmworkers live and labor around the world highlights how legal status and ethnicity enable new systems of subjugation for workers (Besky and Brown 2015, Horton 2016, Staid 2011). Whether deploying ethnic slurs to justify the physical suffering endured by farmworkers (Holmes 2013), naturalizing them as part of the landscape's flora and fauna (Besky 2013), or devaluing the bodies of immigrant farmworkers in the language and logics of regulations (Guthman 2016), the practices of agricultural employers and regulators are highly creative and effective in delegitimizing workers' humanity, leaving them with little recourse to public recognition or legal protections. In order to avoid public outrage or sympathy, employers geographically segregate their workers, typically in shoddy housing that lacks basic services or safeties, a phenomenon that stretches from Washington state and the California coast to the shanty towns of Almeria, Spain and Saluzzo, Italy (Holmes 2013, Bacon 2018, Gertel and Sippel 2014, Garassino 2017).

In Italy, public repugnance toward immigrants is well documented (Daly 1999, Randall 2009, Riccio 1999), especially for the undocumented migrants who

assume the low paying roles that employed most Italians two generations ago (Staid 2011). Despite the widespread presence of immigrant farmworkers in Italy, their exclusion from the means of production also excludes them from agricultural unions or farmers' markets, occluding the fact that immigrants plant, pick, and process most of the food produced in Italy today (Couhnihan 2016). Italy's agricultural sector includes Tunisian fishermen, Nigerian tomato pickers, Sikh dairy workers, Chinese rice gleaners, and Romanian greenhouse laborers, to name a few. Each industry deploys stereotypes about their employees' ethnicities as a justification for the conditions of their employment: Africans are accustomed to the heat (Cole and Booth 2007), Indians have a great respect for cows (Cinotto 2009), and the Chinese have a millennia of rice growing in their blood (Fagnola 2016). Drawing on Italian structures of identity rooted in geographical determinism (see Chapter Three), the racism that explains away exploitative relations in Italy is a fusion of prejudice, economic convenience, and local ideas about place, biology, and character.

The heat, dirt, and low wages were always a part of Italian agriculture, but the arrival of a legally vulnerable population permitted new levels of indignity and rhetorical handwashing on the part of their employers. "The contadino mentality is still here, and that's why they exploit them," a local journalist insisted, while we discussed the problem quietly in the back of a town hall. "The logic is this: my grandparents were exploited by the landowners, my parents by the wineries that promised one lira per kilo and when you showed up after a two-day journey by oxen cart they'd only give you half a lira. And when the southern Italians came up, they

were paid less, because if a local worker needs, say ten euros an hour to pay rent, and some southerner only seven, for him that's plenty, so there's no problem. And that's what they do with the braccianti today."

By 2010, journalists and activists had begun documenting the caporalato controlled tomato fields of Puglia and Campania, where African migrants were living in de facto slavery, conditions which led to riots, murder, and strikes in the communities of Rosarno and Nardo (Staid 2011, Il Corriere 2010, Valerio 2011). In 2013, the Piedmontese town of Saluzzo had taken the spotlight as workers marched through the streets demanding water and bathrooms. In Canelli, federal labor regulations passed in the name of protecting workers slowly generated new forms of precarity and exposure for the community and for the harvest workers it attracts. An article titled "Piedmont: The harvest of shame" appeared in national newspapers in the winter of 2013 (Mangano), smearing the reputation of regions usually considered exempt from such practices.

When I began asking people in Canelli about the vendemmia—how it was, what had happened, how it worked today—two different visions emerged. Some would describe the anticipation and energy of the season, insisting that it was not to be missed, as long as I did not mind working hard. Others grew defensive around an issue that has dragged their community's name through the mud. At times, the same person would espouse both views, simultaneously celebrating and ruminating on what happens in Canelli in August and September. In order to manage this, the miserable conditions in which the braccianti spend the season had to be glossed over, so that the

labor itself might retain its historic role of bringing a community together. This semantic method is mirrored in how Canelli's elected officials do their upmost to erase the importance and visibility of harvest workers. Despite silencing the uglier side of the season, however, the distance that the new vendemmia creates between Canellesi and their vineyards also ruptures the "spirit of the thing," no matter how it is presented.

Fetishizing farming

The *enoteca* is empty on a Tuesday night, warm yellow light spilling out into the street and catching in the rain puddles between the paving stones. The only faces looking back at me from inside are those of peasants, busily stripping grapes from vines in a mural that stretches across an entire wall. Their dress and hats date the scene to the late nineteenth century and suggest that the artist was working from imagination—work clothes are rarely that clean. A man and a woman in the foreground dance around one another, while the others look up from their baskets and ladders, clapping in tempo. From the looks of it, it is going to be a *buon annata*, a good vintage.

The painting captures the version of the vendemmia sold by bottle labels and recounted ad nauseum on winery pamphlets. While the specifics of the scene are fanciful, the overall spirit of the thing aligns with the story I heard any time I asked about harvests past: the vendemmia was a time of celebration. The lionizing of past harvests and the immense quantities of labor they demanded operates along the lines

of what Herzfeld calls structural nostalgia: the firm belief that the lifeworld of the previous generation was more authentic and fulfilling than the current moment (1997). It is also a structural perspective: representations of agricultural worlds have long idealized farm life, but only at a good distance from it (Guthman 2014). In the Astigiano, the romanticization of winegrowing work became possible only when it was no longer a daily form of exhaustion. For urban drinkers of Canelli's wines, this began as early as the 1960s, when Italy's rural exodus for industrial centers was in full swing. Gancia's advertising from the period features costumed "peasant" girls in starched blouses and spotless aprons happily gathering up small baskets of grapes.[58] There is a distinct lack of dust, sunburns, and sticky crates that threaten to push you back down the hill you are trying to climb.

The simultaneous glorification of harvest work and distancing from it in the Astigiano are part of a wider phenomenon in Italy and the industrialized world in which the image of a grinning farmer replaces the gaze of an undocumented farmworker. Obscuring the face of farm labor is essential to most industrial agricultural products: the iconic Chiquita banana woman dancing beneath a basket of fruit stands in for workers sickened from pesticide exposure (Moberg 2008), and coffee packaging from Papua New Guinea shows exoticized figures in ceremonial dress rather than the second-hand clothes coffee growers often wear (West 2012). Conscious grocery shoppers might scour labels for ethical trade markings, but ultimately know next to nothing about the people who make their food possible

[58] http://www.gancia.it/it/casa-gancia/la-nostra-galleria/immagini-storiche/

(Friedberg 2007, Benson and Fisher 2006). When farm labor is part of the picture, it is often in the form of a “double fetishization”: representations that both conceal the origins of commodities *and* replaces that reality with idealized lore (Cook and Crang 1996).

Figure 35: *“La festa della vendemmia”* by Raffaello Sorbi, 1893. Image from Wikimedia creative commons.

In Canelli, harvest workers are abstracted from the products of their labor by their limited visibility that allows for more appealing narratives—the storytelling that reanimates the vendemmia “as it was.” Winery websites feature pictures of the winemakers’ children posing with grapes in the vineyard, while the regional museum of winemaking greets visitors with life-size cutouts of contadini, frozen in sepia tone work clothes with baskets of grapes at their feet. Winemaking families still put in long days of work during the vendemmia, but Italians are a minority among the vines

today. Erasing or demeaning the people who perform the bulk of harvest work fractures the meaning of labor that is supposed to connect community members to their land and to one another.

While some of the patterns and demands of contadino life resurface during the vendemmia, the substitution of foreign *braccianti* has altered the spirit of the thing, what locals called the "feeling," that an ethic of reciprocity and solidarity once cultivated. Lorenzo referenced the title of a famous essay on Italian migrant workers in Switzerland—*Volevamo braccia sono arrivati uomini* / We wanted workers, instead people came—to describe the transformation of solidarity to service: "They don't give [them] so much as a drop of water in the vineyards. Whereas before we kids had the job of coming around with the bottle of wine, the jug of water. There was a different energy, you worked a lot but there was humanity. With what little there was you'd put something out for lunch and when they were thirsty you brought them something to drink. Everyone worked hard, but no one suffered, at least not from thirst."

Some of this energy remains. The vendemmia is still a time of collective relief at having brought in the grapes and optimistic speculation about the wine that can be made. But rather than spending long days with extended family and friends, contracted labor means less contact between the vineyard owner and the workers, who are largely managed by the cooperative foreman or immigrant vineyard manager. The distance that Italian winegrowers keep from their harvest workers matters, as does their eviction from public spaces in town. Gone are the days when growers

hosted their workers in spare rooms or farmhouse bunks—most *vignaioli* have little to do with their picking crew, leaving it to the labor recruiter or co-op official to organize their days.

"How much do they pay you?" I asked a group of workers waiting for the bags of food that CARITAS handed out each evening.

"Hah," replied Joseph, a young man from Senegal, "you know it's never as much as they say it will be, but they make you swear not to tell anyone, so I can't tell you."

R: "The cooperative, is it run by Macedonians? Bulgarians?"

J: "Albanians. Not my first choice, but when you show up looking for work you can't be picky, you go with who will take you."

R: "And do they give you something to eat for lunch?"

J: "Are you kidding? Maybe some are better, but these guys…I bring some bread and make a sandwich with the tuna they give out at the dormitory."

"Some of them are alright you know," chimed in a Bulgarian man nearby, a seasoned veteran who had spent several harvests in Canelli. "They bring us water, there is one vignaiolo who does a real lunch for us—bread, salami, water—*e' molto bravo, bravissimo."*

Harvesters chalked up their working conditions to the stinginess of growers, while vignaioli pointed their fingers at a new set of laws: in the name of health and sanitation, anyone providing workers with food must acquire a food and beverage permit and ensure that cooking and eating premises are up to regulations. Beyond

water or packaged goods, feeding one's workers amounts to paperwork and added expenses that most growers opt to avoid.

The community of Canelli acknowledge their dependence on the *braccianti*, but they do not invite them to toast a successful season at the end of the job. Instead, they cling to the remaining elements of a community's annual celebration, pasting pretty pictures from the past over the ugliness of the present. When exploitative prices and exhausting labor were shared by the families of the Belbo Valley, it was nothing to conceal or ignore. Hard work was well documented and later celebrated in museums, books, and memoirs. Only once Canellesi liberated themselves from kneeling in the dirt, thanks to machinery and Macedonians, did the peasant past become something to celebrate in costumes and festivals. But when the workers who have assumed that labor became too visible, it threw the community into crisis.

Visibility and *vergogna* (shame)

Media coverage of Canelli's *braccianti* began in 2013, after the association PIAM ONLUS (Progetto Integrazione Accoglienza Migranti, Organizzazione non lucrative di utilità sociale) of Asti denounced the deplorable conditions in which the harvest workers made camp (PIAM ONLUS 2013). The year before, the workers had gathered in the Piazza EU, just a few blocks from the center of town, constructing village of tents, parked cars, and cardboard. Within the week, residents of the surrounding apartment buildings began complaining: garbage was piling up on the sidewalks, workers loitered in front of the supermarket or the café. Those who hadn't

found work often drank the day away, and by nightfall fights broke out. Without anywhere to shower, harvest workers bought bottles of water from the supermarket, partially undressed behind vans or in alleys, and washed themselves in public.

As the 2013 vendemmia approached, Canelli's administration decided to relocate the tent village to an authorized area in the industrial zone, far from the eyes of residents and visitors. In an empty lot, two chemical toilets and a single shower were put out for the hundreds of people who camped there for weeks. Two months after PIAM's disparaging blog post, the story was picked up by the national newspaper *L'Espresso*, coining the name that would stick for years to come: *La vendemmia di vergogna*, the harvest of shame (Mangano 2013). This ignited the media storm and city council battles that would set the tone for my first two seasons in the area. Canelli's reputation was at stake, but the city was not equipped to house harvest workers, nor could they get through the harvest without them. Indispensable in the vineyards by day, workers became a problem to make disappear at night. Canelli's mayor enacted a "hard line," prohibiting any sort of official campsite or accommodation, and so workers camped on riverbanks, industrial zone parking lots, and in cars parked by the edge of town.

While activists arrived to speak in solidarity on the behalf of migrant workers around the world, local citizens and city council members put forward proposals to create a designated campsite or temporary accommodation for seasonal workers. Mayor Gabusi would hear nothing of it. "The chemical toilets and whatnot have only created more problems for our citizens," he told a reporter covering the meetings.

"And we have to think of the Canellesi, who find themselves in a very difficult moment—this is not a happy occasion for anyone" (*La Nuova Provincia* 2014). By 2016, the region of Piedmont had earmarked funding for communities hosting large numbers of seasonal laborers to encourage the conversion of old buildings or construction of new facilities to accommodate workers. The proposal included a clear path through the bureaucratic red tape usually surrounding such projects and offered to cover expenses not recovered via operation. While the offer was valid for any community, there was no doubt as to which town the provisions were meant for. Gabusi would hear none of it. When a local reporter asked him why he refused the funding, he replied:

> *The administration of Canelli is entirely opposed to the creation of an accommodation camp. Not only would it fail to resolve the problem, but because it would be absurd to use public funds to feed an illegal labor racket when our citizens can no longer find work as harvesters…Contrary to what happened last September, this year the City of Canelli has prohibited illegal camps on public space, successfully protecting—thanks to the numerous raids by the Carabinieri, Vigili Urbani, and Guardia di Finanza—the decorum and safety of our community. There are not, as in previous years, any encampments in the industrial zone, nor in Piazza EU* (Grasso 2015).

With few options to choose from, hundreds of workers accept the miserable lodgings that cooperative contractors offer for rent. In 2016, police ousted seventy workers camped out in a building "that could scarcely accommodate a dozen" with neither plumbing nor electricity. Another twenty people crammed in "worse conditions" were discovered down the road (La Stampa 2016). Everyone is familiar with the practice: the phantom cooperatives sell their workers accommodation and transportation by docking their wages. Instead of receiving decent housing, workers

are dumped in *cascine*, the structures that once housed peasant families or farm animals, now slowly decaying into splinters and broken shingles. They pay five to ten euros from their wages each night for a floor to sleep on, money that goes straight into the pockets of the cooperative heads.

"What is to be done?" I asked the vignaioli, the workers milling in the piazza, and public officials. Answers varied: each person had a different idea of whose responsibility it was to do something in the first place and what was at stake. Charity workers and immigrant advocacy groups were furious at the filth and indignity in which braccianti spent the season and impatient for the city to provide them with bathrooms and beds. Vineyard owners and their families agreed that no one should sleep on the ground, but insisted that they could not provide housing themselves without spending inordinate amounts of time and money on paperwork. Townspeople blamed the cooperatives for paying workers too little to find accommodations, but also admitted that the community had no affordable hospitality available beyond the church dormitory. While everyone agreed that workers sleeping on park benches or riverbanks was unacceptable (except for a public official who was overheard muttering, "They are beasts, and for beasts the ground will do fine."), it was not clear who ought to provide them with an alternative.

Mayor Gabusi was the most decisive, arguing that any effort to provide housing for workers would only encourage further exploitation. When I asked him about the matter, he launched into a well-rehearsed response:

> *If you want to come and work, fine, very well…the people who give you work are the ones who are responsible for accommodating you, if they leave you to*

> *sleep in the piazza, that means that you're* lavoro in nero*…in the past years, there were encampments, showers, and now they want to build an accommodation center. I'm against it. You know why? Because if you build this, they will come, and a lot more will arrive…Instead of spending regional funds on accommodation that isn't our responsibility, we should spend money on increased patrols to end the phenomenon of the* caporale*, and to hire retired or unemployed people of the area who would gladly work the harvest. We'd have work and the money from the vendemmia would remain here, instead of getting on a bus back to Bulgaria…I understand that it pulls at the conscience, the heart…the proposal of a center is theoretically just, but where they have done it, it has failed. And even if we did build it, it wouldn't deal with the problem of the exploitation, it would just protect the image in terms of people sleeping on the street. But it would only feed the* lavoro in nero.

The practice of rending workers less than human via strategic distances and selective invisibility has a long history in the employment practices of agriculturalists around the world (Besky and Brown 2015, Mitchell 1996) and is highly effective at diffusing a collective sense of responsibility on the part of the host community (Guthman 2016, Holmes 2013, Horton 2016). Workers that no one sees are workers that no one is asked to care about. The community's inconsistent approach to housing harvest workers highlighted the uncomfortable relationship between locals and the *braccianti*. Apart from the mayor, who insisted that unemployed Italians could and would take up harvest work, no one suggested that the men and women who arrived by the bus load should be dissuaded from coming. "Without the foreigners, we wouldn't have picked a single grape," admitted one grower frankly. The workers were not the problem, locals insisted. Nor did they see themselves as responsible for the *braccianti*'s plight. Rather, they pointed a finger at the corrupt cooperatives, the contractors who scraped most of the good wages paid by the vignaioli and left their workers to sleep somewhere out of sight.

Figures 36 and 37: Abandoned farmsteads serve as housing for some harvest workers, others camp out at the defunct train station (photos by author).

In municipal rhetoric and everyday practices, the Italian community in Canelli distances themselves—figuratively and literally—from the workers who guarantee the viability of their harvest. Unlike the men and women who work in the vineyards year-round, the new contadini of Canelli, *i braccianti* are not naturalized into the landscape or the industry. They remain a foreign presence, one that is squeezed for labor and then pushed out of public view. From a barely tolerated presence in the piazza, the harvest workers were exiled to the industrial zone on the edge of town. When even that became too much of an eyesore, officials began giving out tickets for loitering in public spaces, sleeping in cars, or using the old camping spots. The owners of cars with foreign (read: Balkan) plates parked in the same spot for more than two nights would be fined sixty to eighty euros. In the name of decorum and safety, workers were made to disappear from view.

Decorum vs. decency

When I asked the mayor about his future plans for the city, neither *braccianti* nor *macedoni* were part of the vision he described. "We have to learn from the example of Tuscany," he repeated, evoking a bustling tourist destination, complete with bistros and boutique hotels.[59] In Gabusi's Canelli, harvest workers simply vanished into the endless rows of vines, or stopped coming at all as local students and

[59] Tuscany does indeed have a robust tourism industry of wine touring, but also relies heavily on imported labor for the grape harvest each fall, something the Mayor either did not know or did not care to mention.

retirees reassumed the roles that regulations and industry pressures had pushed them out of nearly two decades before. Not all of Canelli's residents refuse to see the *braccianti.* Growers do not dispute their absolute reliance on the mobile workforce, and CARITAS, a national charity run by the Catholic church, operates a dormitory in the center of town.

The building has been used as an emergency dormitory for years: it hosted Albanians and Moroccans in the 1990s and reopened in 2010 to house a growing number of harvest workers. On its first night of operation in August 2016, I arrived early to meet the staff and volunteer my help.[60] I found the place in a state of loosely choreographed chaos: it was nearly time to allow people in, and nothing was ready. Downstairs, a dozen volunteers were hurriedly cramming plastic bags with cans of tuna or beans and packages of crackers and cookies. High school students and retirees unloaded bags of stale bread and bruised fruit donated from local shops. At the door to the stairs leading up to the dormitory itself, a young man with a clipboard was trying to keep the gathering crowd calm.

"How many people come to the area each year?" I asked the CARITAS director. "Beh, in the southern Astigiano, at least a thousand," he estimated, "if not

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[60] The dormitory that houses and feeds harvest workers was run by a revolving roster of volunteers from CARITAS, *CrescereInsieme*, and the community at large, including settled immigrants, retirees, students, and community leaders. Over the course of a month, I spent three evenings a week at the center packing bags of dry goods, checking in workers as they arrived to claim a bed, and trying to locate additional bedding, towels, laundry detergent, or first aid as needed on any given night.

more.” The dormitory sleeps twenty-eight, five more spaces than they had last year. Beds were laid out in two rooms of unfinished cement and dust, with old twin mattresses in metal bunks or in rows on the ground, threadbare sheets folded on each. Even without occupants, the space felt cramped. There were a few showers, a washing machine, and metal cabinets stocked with toilet paper, soap, and a haphazard first aid kit. A sign at the door read “Please keep the stairs clean and orderly” in Italian, Macedonian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Albanian.

Figure 38: Harvest workers gather outside the dormitory, hoping to find a place to sleep for the night (photo by author).

The street outside was buzzing with anxiety: everyone knew that the dormitory would fill up fast. The crowd had new faces this year: young men from half a dozen different African nations arrived by train from Milan, Genoa, and Turin looking for work. A group of young Senegalese was camped out the steps, throwing

back cans of soda and playing music from their phones. A middle-aged couple from Bangladesh crouched apart from the group, clutching plastic bags of belongings. An older man, clearly hungry and tired of waiting, asked when they were going to give out something to eat. Some of the Bulgarians had started drinking already, their breath thick with beer and steps heavy on the pavement.

A week later the dormitory was still understaffed, with just one person staying overnight to maintain order, no small feat among thirty people who need a shower, an electrical outlet, laundry detergent, another blanket, or who had not received a food bag. Amidst the chaos, one man rolled out a thin green rug, the floral pattern faded and edges frayed. He knelt, folding forward and praying in silence while others stepped around and over him, everyone trying to get what they needed all at once. A few nights a week, I worked the check in list where occupants sign in and pay two euros as a token towards keeping the dormitory open. Some handed over their coins reluctantly. Others shook their head, eyes cast down, and murmured that they had not been paid yet. “They don’t pay us till the end of the month. They say this week, next week, but last year it wasn’t until the harvest was done.”

Others waited hopefully, leaning against the walls and hoping to at least charge their phones, on the chance that someone will not show up, that another spot might become available. Abdou was at least a foot taller than me and we joked about how those extra inches make harvest work even harder: the grapes hang low, and you spend the day doubled over or crouching. “I came last year but the harvest was already half over,” he recounted. “This year I have work at least, but it’s been a few

nights of sleeping outside. I know where the *cascine* are, but it costs too much and…well you can't sleep on the ground every night." Abdou was part of the camp at the defunct train station, sleeping in the shadow of the Gancia factory where many of the grapes he and the other workers harvest end up. The boarded up platform was covered with teenage graffiti and weeds poked up between the rail ties. During the day, neatly stashed duffle bags and folded blankets lined the benches. Broken down cardboard boxes were the only mattresses to be had. Scattered cans lined the tracks, the same ones packed into dinner bags the night before.

While well-intended, the dormitory and charity workers' efforts fall far short of addressing the problem. The cots and bags of donated food are sorry substitutes for the hospitality once offered to families, neighbors, or students. For the tiny fraction of workers who find shelter there, hundreds more remain without a place to sleep, bathe, or store their belongings. Most harvest workers spend the month in filthy conditions, anxious about their belongings, and especially for the few women among them, on guard for threats to their personal safety. The CARITAS dormitory is organized and staffed by the same people who run a food pantry, home goods supply, and financial assistance for needy families in the area year-round. Like these activities, the dormitory is seen as an ethical extra, something volunteers provide for others of the goodness of their hearts. It is not taken as an example of what every worker is entitled to, nor a realistic solution to the larger problem.

It's always been done this way

Today, helicopters or drones circle high above the vineyards in harvest season, tallying heads (or simply intimidating growers) before they demand paperwork for each person counted from the proprietor. Winemakers grimaced when I asked them about dealing with inspections, but also chose their words carefully—no one wanted to give me the impression that they have been cheating the law. Exhaling resignedly, Daniele's face was earnest, if wilted. "I don't mind showing them my documents," he insisted. "I have no fondness for bureaucracy but I abide by it. But the attitude they show up with—they treat you like criminals! My father turned to get his cap—they were going out to the vineyard, and he wanted his hat—and one of the officers pointed a pistol at his head! I told them to behave themselves in my home, otherwise I'd call the *carabinieri*."

During my first harvest in Piedmont, a local retiree had invited some friends over to help him pick grapes. He kept a hectare of barbera and nebbiolo, just enough to make wine for his family. Harvesting would be a day or two of work, the kind of arrangement that characterized family farms in the past. "We were there picking grapes, laughing and joking around because that vineyard is hard to stand up straight in," one of the harvesters told journalists. They had not been working long before they found themselves "literally surrounded by police, and an employment inspector, who demanded our documents and told us on the spot that we were guilty of *lavoro in nero*" (La Stampa, 2015). Undocumented labor in the wine harvest is fined at 3,900

euros per worker: an afternoon among friends had turned into a nearly 20,000 euro fine.

The news went viral, and the uproar was immediate. "*Si è sempre fatto cosi!*"—It's always been done this way!—insisted hundreds of online commenters. "The state is trying to ruin our traditions and communities!" wailed others. The local mayor denounced the charge: "We're not a town that hosts *caporalato.* The people here help one another, you break your back in the vines together in these hills" (La Stampa, 2015). Media coverage painted the old winegrower as the example par excellence of better times: the vines had been in the family for generations, he used only the simplest equipment, and the wine was shared among friends. "All I could have offered my friends was a dinner party, but thanks to this issue we had to cancel the party," said the grower, adding that he would have to give up the vineyard altogether after this season. After meetings between city officials and the labor inspectors, protests at city hall, and a viral online reaction, the charges were dropped, but the incident remained on the tip of everyone's tongue for the rest of the season: a scandal that threw into stark relief just how much the vendemmia had changed.

Public outrage at the fine levied on a retired hobby grower focused its ire at the regulations and inspections that outlawed older forms of organizing labor, which have indeed reshaped the dynamic of the harvest season. The unity and intensity of the community's protest was enough to force a change, something that the treatment of harvest workers has yet to elicit. The ethics of labor for the harvest, like the landscape itself and the lifestyles of the Canellesi, have transformed in ways that

extend far beyond the provisions of the law. Humans remain imperative to work long hours on steep slopes, to throw out moldy clusters, and to gently transfer grapes from vines to crates. The legacy of peasant farmers places much value on working hard, but the intensity of work that today's harvest demands is no longer realistic for growers to expect from Italians, at least not in their experience. Immigrants, on the other hand, are understood to come from different lifeworlds, which render them suitable for the work that local contadini once shouldered. Instead of making tradition permeable to outsiders, however, the indignities facing braccianti today make them a threat to tradition and decorum, something that must become invisible.

A community organized around agricultural labor takes serious risks by entrusting others with the tasks that once forged their social ties and senses of self, and so immigrants in wine production are either made into a part of the community or made to disappear. While other vineyard labor—pruning, trellising, thinning—enacts forms of caring for the land and sustaining embodied skill sets, harvest work is less specialized: it once included everyone, from the smallest children to grandparents and distant relations. Today the lack of training needed for harvesting means that the immigrants who perform it are not taken into families or businesses as apprentices. Instead, they are kept as far as possible from grower's daily lives and from public view. Enacting tradition is made possible in Canelli through the intimate inclusion of some workers and the distancing of others.

The economic benefits of using cheap labor and denying workers basic amenities comes with other costs. Labor produces landscapes, identities, and wine

here through a triad of mutually constitutive relationships: people contour landscapes, which in turn create certain roles for social actors. Working together, those landscapes and people produce bottles of wine, bottles from which people construct an identity for their businesses, hometowns, and territory as those wines move out into the world. Breaking these relations of coproduction by substituting machines for people threatens all three parties: the ecology and aesthetics of the territory, who can afford to remain on the land, and the quality and taste of the wines themselves. If the area becomes a zone of conglomerate farms that plant grapes for entirely mechanized agriculture, the whole *place* will cease to exist, as will the social worlds it generates and the wines they make possible. For now, cheap and dehumanized labor protects the integrity of the territory and quality of the wines, but it has already torn the social fabric that the tasks of the harvest once wove here.

Three piazzas

The piazzas in Canelli are three. Three piazzas, three worlds, each of them part of making this world spin on a September evening. One is not a piazza at all, more of a parking lot in the space between apartment blocks. Stepping out of the door of the CARITAS dormitory, I am eye to eye with rows of Senegalese and Nigerian young men in bright colored sportswear and skinny jeans, who lean against the wall with what is left of their plastic dinner bag—tuna, beans, cookies, bruised fruit and stale focaccia. They are chatting and in light spirits considering that they will be sleeping on a bench at the train station or in an old farmhouse tonight. The doors on

these streets are old, thick, wooden slabs with iron prongs, built to keep out. The decrepit facade across the way is for sale. A Bulgarian couple huddles on the front steps, talking quietly. Italian preteens clustered above us, by the church that has been converted to Orthodox Christianity to serve the Macedonian community, pretend not to stare. The bar on the corner is closing up for the night, the metal shutters thundering as they descend.

Around the corner, the glass and chrome *pasticcierie* has tables set out for the tourists sipping glasses of moscato, and the new American style pub is full of locals downing beer and burgers. A few runners from the "Wine Run" 5K this afternoon are still roaming town with their green string backpacks and shirts stained with sweat and colored powder. From here, you can hear the local marching band striking up over the tinny Euro pop that booms out over the entire town. Old men cluster at the windows of Caffe Torino to watch the match with Spain, the smoke from their cigarettes settling among the upholstered chairs. Locals and families who have driven in from the hills fill the picnic benches set out in Piazza Gancia, taking turns going back to the festival booths for another plate of *bruschette*, *foccacia*, or sausages.

On the far edge of the scene, the *bar dei cinesi* is a no man's land of sorts—the rickety plastic tables outside are surrounded by Macedonians, Bulgarians, Italians—*un po' di tutti.* It serves as the borderlands between the Italian festival in Piazza Gancia and the smaller unnamed piazza of *stranieri* framed by a slot machine bar, kebab shop, and the Balkan grocery. Here swarms of Macedonian kids on bikes do laps around the square, whooping and chasing one another between the clusters of

women chatting and smoking. The men on the benches sip cans of cheap Balkan beer, swatting away mosquitoes that swarm near the fountain. These families work in vineyards year-round, caring for the vines that bear fruit each fall and planting new vineyards in pursuit of shifting global tastes. They build houses and clean them, sending money back to relatives and living in the cramped apartments rising above us. Even with an organized event unfolding in the main piazza, it is much livelier here, tonight and every night of summer. There is more exposed flesh and unkempt hair, more laughter, more babies, more beer. People speak louder, children are left unattended, everyone is more casually dressed.

Each of these piazzas make Canelli the "City of Wine" being celebrated by concerts and runners today. They can see and hear one another, or choose not to, but all share an interrelated set of dependencies. Seated at picnic benches, the landowners, enologists, firm managers, school teachers and secretaries tuck into *cucina povera*, humble dishes made rich with meat and cheese. They own the vines, they make the wine, and they fly to Sweden and London to pour tastings for distributors and hope to sign a new deal. Not fifty yards away, young Macedonian families—whose children play hide and seek in flawless Italian—keep the schools full and the vineyards tidy. These men and women work as cellar hands and truck drivers, pseudo *contadini* who are not afraid of getting their hands dirty or working in snow and rain. The quietest piazza is not deaf to the party. Lanky Ghanaian teenagers bust a move or two, swaying their hips to the salsa beat that pumps into the night sky. Most of them will sleep on the ground tonight before rising at dawn to stoop beneath

the vines and shoulder sticky crates up a steep track. They will not see a euro till the end of the month, and they know well that it will be far less than what they have been promised. Nonetheless, they bring in the grapes that make Canelli the "Moscato Capital of the World."

Chapter Five: Polycultural Landscapes, Multiethnic Futures

A sense of "belonging" emerges not so much to the ancestral soil as to the social, cultural, and historical narratives that rework an inherited terrain in an unsettling fashion.

Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings* (2008: 59)

Integration is something you earn, NOT a right that you can claim by simply walking on Italian soil!

Piero Annoni, "Vendemmia Etnica"

At the *festa del paese* in Bubbio, a massive tent—the stripes of red and yellow reminiscent of the circus—stretches over rows of long tables, where 300 people busily tuck into bowls of "Grandma's minestrone," with plenty of "Homestyle focaccia" to sop up the last bites. The music starts later, interspersed with the kind of games that I can imagine as real sources of community fun before television, cars, and radios. Each is a remnant of agricultural life: who can empty the wine bottles into a bucket first or gather up the fallen hazelnuts? Tonight teenage girls costumed in matching dresses and aprons, the cheap blue fabric pulled awkwardly over their real clothes, are flushed and self-conscious as the crowd watches them carry out these rituals. Kneeling on the asphalt and careful not to scuff their shoes, the girls likely come from families with hazelnut groves and grew up eating the hazelnut cakes that can be found in every bakery here, but this work is a game to them. They scramble on hands and knees, laughing and chasing after errant nuts while pop music fills the air and the MC speculates on who might finish first.

Hazelnuts fall to the ground when ripe, each enclosed in a rock-hard shell that threatens to crack your teeth when you bite down on it. Small and brown, they hide

easily among the dead leaves and weeds beneath the trees, and gathering them by hand or with rakes must have been slow work. Hazelnuts were once the food of the poor, nuts that could be foraged to supplement small harvests of grain and little to no meat (Revelli 1977). Regional recipes include sweets made from hazelnut paste, savory dishes topped with chopped nuts, or simply a bowl of the smooth round shells and a nutcracker set out on the table to accompany a glass of wine. Only once chocolatiers in Turin began manufacturing cacao cut with hazelnut paste—the origins of Piedmont's signature candies, *gianduja*—did the hazelnut industry take off. The expansion of Ferrero's Nutella empire and a price spike in 2014 after the Turkish hazelnut crop failed encouraged the spread of hazelnut groves on every bit of land that was not already covered with vines, or in some cases replacing them.[61] Today, the *nocciola tonda gentile,* native to these hills, is a trademarked nut that commands top price on the global market. Hazelnut prices are published on the front page of local papers and a primary topic of conversation amongst the old men gathered outside cafés. While prices are not as high as in 2014, the 2016 harvest was set at nine euros per kilogram wholesale, and even more for organic hazelnuts.

We used an industrial vacuum sorter rather than baskets on the days that I harvested hazelnuts with the members of *Maramao*, Canelli's newest and arguably most famous agricultural cooperative, but it still took nearly a week to finish the job. It is hot, dusty, loud work—first dragging all the leaves and sticks and nuts away

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[61] https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/aug/13/hazelnuts-shortfall-price-rise-harvest-turkey

from the roots and into the middle of the row of trees, then winnowing out the nuts from the leaves and sticks with rakes (with questionable efficiency) or bending over to do it by hand, row after row. The vacuum sorter makes a deafening roar as it sucks up piles and spits out debris, noise that makes it hard to talk, and the three men operating it wear cheap surgical masks and earplugs. We are all covered by the raining dust, pulverized leaves, twigs, and sweat.

The cooperative members are much faster at winnowing with rakes than I am, and Aboubacar explains that in his village, they use a similar technique to harvest peanuts, describing the shape of the tool and acting out the motions one makes while using it. Despite the heat, the young men from Togo, Mali, Gambia, and Senegal dress in long sleeves and pants to fend off the swarms of mosquitoes in the shady grove. Most of the groves they are harvesting are not their own: the cooperative director's parents have volunteered their trees this year, and an elderly widow up the road has offered her hectare that will otherwise go unharvested. The last two hectares belong to an *agriturismo* overwhelmed by the simultaneous ripening of grapes, fruit, and nuts: in exchange for bringing in the hazelnuts, Maramao gets to keep half of them.[62] Hazelnut harvesting is everyone's least favorite task: hot, noisy, dusty, and slow. The machine keeps clogging—no one thought to clear the underbrush before the nuts began to fall, and there are too many twigs and leaves for the sorter to

[62] As farming in Italy is an increasingly precarious endeavor, many small farms have sought another form of revenue by offering "agricultural tourism": converting old farmsteads and family homes into bed and breakfasts that offer meals made with produce from the farm, and often the opportunity to gather fruit, feed animals, take cooking classes, or borrow bicycles to explore the countryside.

handle. But we keep at it, because each plastic sack of nuts is worth more by weight than anything else they produce. “This is your stipend!” called out Davide, the co-director of the cooperative, to the men at work, holding up a white sack bulging at the sides. “It’s a *lavoraccio* (a lot of work), but it’s worth it.”

The Italian teenagers of the Belbo Valley, their hands soft and nails clean, can play at work. Hazelnuts are something they encounter in cones of gelato or on trees their family has decided to invest in recently. Their parents may expect them to lend a hand, but largely provide for them, and most do not work their first job until after high school, perhaps pouring espressos or waiting tables during their university days. They may be anxious about pursuing careers in a country with record youth unemployment, but they have never worried about finding their next meal.

The teenagers and twenty-somethings employed at Maramao never had those privileges: they left their homes early in life, surviving civil wars, treks across the Sahara, Libyan prisons, unseaworthy boats, and Italian detention centers before being transferred to rural accommodation facilities in Piedmont. Harvesting hazelnuts, for them, is the task that makes one week in September particularly unpleasant, but also funds the modest stipends that allow them to purchase groceries and send money to their families elsewhere. Refugees and asylum applicants from across the African continent, they are part of a local experiment that tests of the limits of the transformative powers of agricultural labor: can working the land root refugees in Italian soil?

Figures 39 and 40: Game participants compete to gather hazelnuts, much easier on pavement than in the dusty underbrush of a hazelnut grove (photos by author).

This question is part of larger uncertainties about the future of this community and its territory, questions that have captured the attentions of journalists, scholars, and community members: Will the Astigiano become an industrial, mechanized monoculture of vines without people, or might hazelnuts supplant the world of grapevines and chase another boom and bust cycle? Will young people make lives for themselves in the territory, and can the hillsides become the site of diversified or sustainable agriculture once more? Who will do the work, and at what point will Italy imagine itself as a multiethnic nation? Each of these possibilities is tangled up in the others. As in the past, the labor that connects people to place will determine who leaves, who stays, and what kind of plants or people might become a part of the landscape.

The limits of labor

As Italy struggles to manage the arrival of undocumented migrants via rubber boats, truck trailers, and mountain passes, thousands of new arrivals are sent to rural province accommodation centers. The communities who receive them are experimenting with ways to fill absences and deficits with migrant families and migrant labor. These initiatives—internships in organic agriculture, jobs working on small farms, clearing brush and rehabilitating abandoned structures, free rent in depopulated villages in Italy's southern regions—are always represented in optimistic terms in Italian media, a bright alternative to the bodies washing up on Mediterranean shores and the rioting in overcrowded detention centers. The assumption is that

refugees and immigrants might best become part of Italy by occupying the lives and labor that Italians have left. "Creating roots and putting food on the table," agricultural labor is so central to Italian consciousness that few question whether or not it might be a good fit for people from elsewhere, especially when they are assumed to come from "less developed" countries.[63] In Canelli, a new agricultural social cooperative that trains asylum seekers in organic polyculture illustrates one possible future for the Belbo Valley, one in which a more diverse set of plants, practices, and people might thrive.

Working the land does more than grow food in these hills. For the people of Canelli, laboring with the territory—its soils, species, and weather patterns—constituted the basis of their daily lives, social status, and subjectivities for generations. From impoverished peasants tied tightly to the land, they became modest winegrowers and eventually independent winemakers themselves. More recently, immigrants from the East have built new lives in Italy through the particular skills and fluencies required to work with vines and turn grapes into wine, roles that switch their public identifier from *stranieri* to *contadini.* The African asylum seekers employed in reclaiming abandoned fields and scraggly vineyards carry out labor that closely resembles the work that previous generations of contadini once performed here: cultivating farro, tending vegetable gardens, harvesting orchards, caring for vines, and putting up jars of tomato sauce. Their polycultural practices, heirloom crops, and hard work have potential to help them establish new lives in Italy, as well

[63] Quotation from *Redattore Sociale* 2015a.

as to change local prejudices towards them as individual manifestations of Italy's "immigration crisis."

Examining the cooperative's struggles and progress, in this chapter I show that while the experience of farming has been successful in providing for newly arrived refugees and garnering the attention of everyone from local journalists to the Pope, neither working the land nor the fruits of that labor is enough to overcome deeply embedded forms of racism and perceived difference here.[64] The members of Maramao face a different set of hurdles than immigrants from the East: their Blackness, Africanness, and refugee status make it much more difficult for them to gain recognition as contributing members of the community, or as fully human beings. Without a vision of sustainability or storyline of tradition that includes people of all colors, creeds, and backgrounds—without, that is, an ethnically Italian audience who assigns value and meaning to the labor that migrants perform—the work that these young men do to revive local landscapes and tastes falls short of tying them to the territory. Like the harvests of past seasons, the work of rooting people to the land requires the entire community's participation to succeed.

Past patterns of integration and individual assessments of the situation suggest that, given time, this might change. The potential for the cooperative to "work"—that is, by achieving financial solvency and accomplishing its social goals—is bound up in what kind of futures are imaginable in Canelli, and who Canellesi are willing to

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[64] For details on the Marmao's visit to the Vatican, see www.crescere-insieme.it/maramao-dal-papa/

recognize as integral parts of making those places possible. Looking closely at how the men of Maramao create an alternative to winegrowing or state support, I tie their struggle to put down roots to the bigger questions facing the people who call Canelli home today.

The European immigration "crisis" and refugee accommodation in Italy

Between 2013 and 2017, an estimated 1.4 million people arrived to Italy by boat alone. Thousands of others drowned before reaching shore or rescue.[65] They came from Syria, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and Mali. They traveled from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, and a dozen other nations where life has been upended by occupation, civil war, insurgent violence, famine, and genocide. As part of the EU, southern European states (particularly Italy and Greece) play the role of a politically turbulent and economically floundering zone, one that offers a porous gateway to immigration from the Global South. Since the passing of the Dublin II regulations in 2003, this image has become law: refugees can only apply for asylum in the first nation to which they arrive, and unwanted migrants are sent back to whichever nation first registered them, effectively creating a southern buffer zone for northern EU member states. The shift to overland routes through the Balkans in 2015 changed the dynamics of the overall flows, with Germany and Hungary becoming

[65] See *International Organization for Migration* 2017

receiving states, although Italy remains the peninsula that reaches out towards the eastern and southern shoes of the Mediterranean (Kersch 2016).

The Mediterranean is the medium by which Italy has encountered different peoples and places for millennia, and the small boats struggling to reach Sicily and Calabria today follow paths that trade routes, military invasions, and imperial delegates traced before them. The sea is both a border and a bridge, one that "exceeds the categories [for people that] we have been accustomed to employ" (Chambers 2008: 37). None of the labels that describe new arrivals—immigrant, migrant, refugee, foreigner—do justice to the sacrifices and encounters made on the shores of the Mediterranean today (Cabot 2014, Lucht 2012, Papataxiarchis 2015, Pinelli 2015). Nor do they describe the myriad of forms of accommodation and incorporation (as well as abandonment, exclusion, and exploitation) that have been unfolding in Italy over the past two decades (Cole and Booth 2007, Però 2007). Italy's geographic position in the European immigration "crisis" has forever changed Italian experiences of daily life and nationalism, which work together to shape a particular understanding of the *extracommunitari, migranti,* and *rifugiati* who are a principle source of anxiety and conflict in current challenges to EU legitimacy, rising populist and xenophobic movements, and the dismantling of the Italian welfare state (Cavanaugh 2009, Dematteo 2012, Muehlebach 2012).[66]

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[66] Terminology for foreigners in Italy includes *extracommunitari* (people from outside non-EU member states, most often used for North Africans), *migrant* (migrants), *rifugiati* (refugees), and *stranieri* (foreigners); each of which denotes a particular set of connotations and is used for different nationalities and races. Some

There is a growing body of scholarship on Italian reckonings with immigration and racism in the context of the ongoing financial crisis, the fault lines of the EU, and the sense of a reality crumbling at the hands of austerity and neoliberalism (Giordano 2012, Schillaci 2011). Europe—always an unstable project rather than a clearly defined place—is shifting again, and many Italians experience these transformations as a betrayal by those they have put in power. The overall *feeling,* as my Italian interlocutors would put it, is perhaps best captured by an elderly Italian woman's words on the allotment of public housing in the urban North: "We're not racists. We were emigrants too. And we remember. It's not the refugees' fault, the problem is that we have rules that put foreigners before Italians" (Giordano 2017). The problem, as this woman sees it, is one of resources. Substituting citizenship for race, she defends hostility towards refugees in the language of whom ought to be entitled to state protections and goods: Italian citizens who contribute to them, not the refugees who are seen as a drain on public resources.[67]

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groups are most often referred to directly by geographic origin: *cinesi, africani, americani*, etc.

[67] This is in no small part due to the primary role of the Catholic church, via CARITAS, in providing services for immigrants in need, and as a result, gathering the most comprehensive data on immigrants in Italy. As Hawthorne and Piccolo explain, Catholic charities create the image of the immigrant as a guest in need, hardly the basis of a reciprocal or equal relationship. Meanwhile, Marxist concerns also posit the immigrant as problematic: he or she threatens to undo the protections won by the working class (presumed to include only ethnically white Italians) by accepting lower pay and poor conditions (2018). In this scenario, the immigrant has use value to be extracted, but little human worth outside their productivity.

Regardless of the economic validity of her claim (an entire industry has evolved around refugee accommodation, in addition to the jobs and tax revenue created by immigrants), these sentiments galvanize political and everyday actions that work to exclude and devalue immigrants, especially refugees.[68] The logical frameworks generated by Italians in a response to "cultural alienation" or abandonment by the state sacralize ethnicity and *italianità*—"Italy for Italians!"—grounding basic human rights in sentiments of earth and blood-based citizenship that leave no entry for immigrants or their children (Holmes 2000, Merrill 2006). Moreover, by drawing upon the cult of autochthony and tradition, politicians are able to push forward essentially racist agendas without ever using language of blood or race. Racism's invisibility or acceptedness in Italy allows it to act as "a legitimate economic and political response to capital demands and capitalist crisis" (Mellino 2012: 84). As a last resort, ignorance is commonly cited as an excuse for racism when it becomes too obvious or violent to ignore (Romeo 2012).

All of this plays out quite differently in different regions and towns across Italy. In the absence of a national discourse on immigration, the economic

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[68] Immigrant labor keeps Italians businesses profitable and their tax contributions support the pensions of Italy's growing retiree population (see Solari 2016). Meanwhile, Italian media and public discourse are rife with stories of corruption and profiteering in the immigrant industrial complex that has sprung up to process the hundreds of thousands of people arriving to Italy each year seeking asylum and/or employment. Money slated for immigrant accommodation, up to a thousand euros per month, vanishes into the pockets of facility operators or service providers, leaving immigrants in empty buildings without water or power, access to health care, or daily provisions. For specific examples, see Trilling 2018.

opportunities available to immigrants and past patterns of integration shape how each community responds to the arrival of *extracommunitari,* those from beyond the edges of the European community. In Piedmont, daily life has been infused with foreigners for over thirty years: as local inhabitants recalled, first came the Albanians, then Moroccans, and then Macedonians and Romanians (and of course, before any of these groups, there were the *meridionali*, southern Italians). Each group was met with a brand of wariness and skepticism that Piedmontese claim as part of their regional identity—*la diffidenza piemontese* is a common idiom—but eventually became a tolerated, if not celebrated, part of local worlds (Aliberti 2005, Leo and Davide, interviews).[69] In 2015, Canelli's population of over 10,000 people was 17 percent foreigners, half of them Macedonian, followed by Romanians, Bulgarians, and a smattering of Balkan and European states, as well as Morocco. A total of seven Sub-Saharan nations made the census list, totaling only sixteen residents in Canelli (ISTAT 2015).

Rather than a common sight Canelli's public spaces, Black bodies and African faces remained, as they do for many Italians, in unnamed images on front pages: blurred stills of sea rescues, bent double in mafia run tomato fields, and groups of

[69] Identity in Italy is structured by regional or highly localized affiliations (so-called *campanilismo*, referencing allegiance to one's hometown bell tower), such that one is first and foremost *canellesi*, then *piemontesi*, and only then *italiano*. National sentiment is secondary and often ambivalent, and has only begun to grow more relevant in the face of unwelcome immigration from outside of Italy. These categories structure Italian performances of localness and shape the way that immigrants arriving to Italian communities negotiate their interactions with locals. For details, see Castellanos 2006 and 2010, as well as Parasecoli 2014.

young men clustered around street corners in urban centers. Africans are portrayed by Italian media as refugees, prostitutes, de facto slaves, or criminals (Hawthorne 2018). So when African young men began arriving to Canelli from migrant centers in Rome, Milan, Syracuse, and Bari, they represented, to the Canellesi, a very different kind of immigrant. In 2014, the social cooperative *CresciereInsieme* (GrowingTogether) initiated a SPRAR project (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) in Canelli, an accommodation center for unaccompanied minors. Housed in a defunct parish church, the project hosts ten to twenty young men and provides them with housing, legal support, Italian lessons, and local internships. Their countries of origin include Mali, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Nigeria, but they are referred to as *africani* or simply *neri* (blacks) in casual conversation. Unlike white, often Christian, and culturally palatable Balkan immigrants, these men—some of them still teenagers—were *rifugiati*, a category of person often assumed to have no work experience or shared cultural values (Giordano 2012, Schillaci 2011).

They were also Black, a signifier that conflates ethnicity, race, and nationality in Italy, and one that was purposely constructed into the ultimate frame of difference in the Italian nationalist project. The barrier between Italianness and Blackness remains a difficult one to breach today, in no small part due to the gaping historical holes, whitewashed violence, and the determined erasure of internal difference in Italian nation building. Critical scholarship of Italian media and politics highlights how Italian colonialism disappears almost entirely and Fascism is cleansed of its

darkest (and lingering) core beliefs (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012).[70] African territories and subjects created a space for the Fascist government to carry out its nation-building experiments free of the confines of its own past (De Grand 2004) and transform its diverse population into a homogenized and civilized nation.

Incidente al largo della Libia, si capovolge un barcone con almeno 500 migranti a bordo

Recuperate cinque salme, operazioni di soccorso delle navi Bettica e Bergamini

ANSA

Il momento del ribaltamento del barcone (Fonte: Marina militare italiana)

LEGGI ANCHE

AP

Gentiloni: "L'Europa non torni in letargo sui migranti. Il populismo si sconfigge combattendo le paure"

FRANCESCA SCHIANCHI

Figure 41: "Accident off the Libyan coast, boat capsizes with at least 500 migrants aboard." A typical image and representation of Black bodies in Italian media, one of disaster, death, and desperation turned, in this case, into spectacle for Italian readers. Screenshot from www.lastampa.it, May 25, 2016.

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[70] Italy does not celebrate, acknowledge, or publicly remember its colonial exploits, sweeping them under the historical rug so to speak, but communities across Italy, East Africa, and the Dodecanese attest to a century of empire. The Italian colonial project lasted from 1882, when the government took hold of Assab, a town on the coast of the Red Sea and ended in 1960, when Somalia gained independence. During that period, Italy established colonies in Eritrea, Somalia, Libya, Ethiopia, the Dodecanese Islands, and Albania, at times through violent military and civilian conflict. Italy's African territories were a critical part of Mussolini's vision of returning Italy to the glory days of the Roman Empire, and the presence of non-European peoples within Italy (as the exchange went both ways) was a major catalyst in the creation of an ethnically European Italian population as distinct from African and Arab colonial subjects (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2013).

The blackening of Africa made possible the lightening of Italy, a process begun under Fascism, continued postwar through consumerism centered around tropes of whiteness, purity, and health (Lombardi-Diop 2012), and one that resurges in violent attacks and Fascist sentiments today (Hawthorne 2018).

Until quite recently, the categories of "Black" and "Italian" remained incommensurable, even within the population of people born in Italy to African parents, a barrier that a growing community of young Afro-Italians struggle courageously and creatively against today (Luciano and Balsamo 2013, Hawthorne 2017). Whether born and raised in Italy or recently arrived, Black men and women in Italy are interpellated as the essence of foreign, the highly visible Other that cannot become part of Italy: "African bodies are (re-) marked as iconic signifiers of illegitimate belonging, represented for instance in media images of packed fishing vessels entering the country clandestinely through southern maritime borders, and in tropes of itinerant street peddlers and prostitutes, suggesting that their very being in an Italian place threatens the moral purity of the nation state" (Merrill 2015). These forms of racism, resentment, and dehumanization set a formidable barrier for African persons of all status in Italy, and especially refugees, to surmount in order to find jobs, establish social lives, or simply walk down the street in Italy without fearing for their lives.[71]

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[71] Incidents of public violence against Black people in Italy—often anonymous and frequently lethal—have become commonplace news. In large cities and small towns, Black men and women have been gunned down in the street, beaten into a coma, or shot at from vehicles simply for being Black in public, with no previous encounters or

The assumed "indigestibility" of African immigrants tests the limits of the powers of labor to create new identities in Canelli, a challenge that new forms of accommodation in rural Piedmont have taken head on. Rather than ethical appeals for hospitality or charity, these organizations aim to build acceptance by putting immigrants to work, building on a deeply ingrained assumption that immigrants' claim to rights in Italy is predicated on their productivity.[72] Focusing on highly visible labor—cleaning public spaces, rehabilitating abandoned structures—or productive labor that Italians have shunned—beekeeping, agriculture, animal husbandry—new social cooperatives are drawing on the transformative potential of particular kinds of labor as it creates new relations between Italians and immigrants.[73] Italy's CGM group, an association of social cooperatives that "believes in work, and in work well done," sees work as the key to transforming Italy's approach to refugees.[74] The president of the association asserts that, "it is clear that we need to offer

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relationships to their attackers, who rarely face consequences that reflect the horror of their crimes.

[72] See Hawthorne's analysis of how the "Martelli laws," introduced in 1992 to regulate immigrant labor, created a legal precedent for the idea that an immigrant's right to live within in Italy could be quantified by their productive capacity, both as a laboring body and, as Italian fertility rates remain low, as fecund families (2018).

[73] In the 1990s, a new type of cooperative was legalized in Italy, the social cooperative, which undertakes actions meant to improve the localities in which the members of the cooperatives live. Social cooperatives began during Italy's leftist movement of the 1970s, gained visibility in the 1990s, often associated with large transnational NGOs, and were often staffed by volunteers. In the 2000s social cooperatives took on the form of small firms, often subcontracted by local and regional governments to run social services such as clinics, treatment facilities, therapy centers, education programs, and other welfare-related services (Vargas-Cetina 2011).

[74] http://cgm.coop/chi-siamo/

accommodation. But accommodation on its own is a loss. What is key is to go from accommodation to a business capable of sustaining itself and creating not only work but wealth for the territory. And I do not mean just money—wealth as a revaluation of places, exchanges of experience between generations, and a sense of belonging to a community. Even when the community changes" (Foschini 2017). Work, in these words, is the difference between a broken system of resentful hospitality and the holistic incorporation of newcomers into the community and its territory, one in which everyone, including the place itself, benefits.

Social scientists who research agricultural worlds also "believe in work," and ethnographies of rural communities around the world describe the transformative power of working with plants in bestowing particular rights or recognitions on the people who care for them (Cinotto 2011, Lewis-Jones et al 2016, Ohnuki-Tierney 1994, Ulin 1996). In South Africa, Afrikaans rooibos farmers cultivate their own indigenity through what Ives describes as a "hybrid ecology of belonging," in which the autochthony of the plants merges with the biography of the people, rewriting the story of a place and to whom the plant once belonged (2017: 7). Coffee growers in Papua New Guinea establish their connections to "modernity" through processing and selling their beans on the international market (West 2012), and plantation workers in Darjeeling couch their struggle for decent housing, pay, and resources in a set of moral obligations that they establish through their care for tea gardens (Besky 2013). By foraging for mushrooms in the Pacific Northwest, an assemblage of people uprooted from their homes or former lives forge new communities via their work with

the fungi and forests (Tsing 2015). In each case, a plant and place made valuable by a particular commodity chain offers those who work with it a set of claims upon who they are and to what they are entitled. To what extent those claims are realized, however, always depends upon the audience to which they are directed, a struggle for recognition that unfolds according to planes of power accorded by gender, race, and history in each of these contexts, and no less so in Canelli's hillsides.

A healthier relationship with the *territorio*

One of the earlier newspaper articles covering Maramao's activities announced that "a new agricultural start up is trying to create a healthier relationship between migrants and the *territorio,*" contrasting the program's opportunities for migrants to the abuses of *caporalato* in general and the phantom cooperatives that had marred the territory's image (*Redattore* 2015b). What if, instead of asylum applicants languishing in dormitory compounds or immigrants performing underpaid labor in the fields, these newcomers became the farmers themselves?

Founded in 2014 as a partnership between the province of Alessandria's SPRAR and the *CresciereInsieme* social cooperative, which provides educational and recreational social services for children, families, disabled persons, the elderly, and immigrants, Maramao was an experiment in solving several problems at once. "Canelli is a place where agriculture is the backbone of life, but it is a place that is growing older—there are no young people to take over for their grandparents here, and farms are falling into disuse," explained Claudio, a co-founder, to the room of

funders he was courting at a social innovation convention. "At the same time, the young men that I work with at refugee accommodation centers—unaccompanied minors, heads of families, young men who never got a chance to study or work outside their villages, they wanted something to do, they asked us for work, for a chance to give back. It wasn't hard to put the two together."

Maramao's stated goals are to: "cultivate, produce, and transform not only agricultural products but also relationships, approaches, and ways of seeing one another…we work to promote social integration, wellness for our participants, relations of trust in our territory between those who cultivate and those who consume the products, formative opportunities and job placement for disadvantaged individuals, including the asylum seekers and refugees present in our region" (Maramao 2015). The cooperative was jointly funded by *CresciereInsieme* and SPRAR, and began with several project coordinators (Claudio, Davide, and Maura, all middle-aged Italians), eight asylum applicant interns, and two unemployed Canellesi (the program is open to anyone in need, though largely composed of asylum seekers). They secured ten hectares of land that friends and family donated from their own properties—mostly fallow and overgrown—half of it vineyards and the rest hazelnut groves or arable land for vegetables or grains. Davide, a self-taught jack-of-all-trades who shows up by six each morning, explained that fallow land is not cheap to own: real estate is taxed heavily in Italy, and arable land at a rate based on potential

returns.[75] Grandparents living on pension plans considerably diminished by austere fiscal policies are faced with farm work they cannot do and taxes they cannot pay. Maramao offered an unusual but effective solution: absentee or elderly landowners could rent or lend their land to the cooperative to avoid paying burdensome taxes and see it put to use.

Figure 42: Some of the founding members of Maramao pose with their tomato harvest, with onions drying in the rafters (photo by author).

[75] Property taxes in Italy vary by the type of land (urban, rural, agricultural, foothills, mountainous) and the use of the structure (commercial, residential, uninhabited, etc.). Agricultural land is evaluated by its potential returns, and taxed accordingly. Owners can, in some cases, petition to have rural properties no longer in use taxed differently, but this is an onerous process that does not guarantee success. For more details, see Coletta et al 2009.

Maramao interns spend thirty hours each week participating in organic agriculture training and farm work in exchange for housing assistance, subsidized groceries, Italian language classes, health insurance, and a modest monthly stipend. Interns can apply to remain after completing a six month stay, but not all choose this path. The cooperative's original goals were to provide a launching point for newly arrived asylum seekers, retain dedicated members who could direct all daily operations, and become a financially soluble enterprise independent of regional funding. By their third year in operation, the program had hosted twenty-two interns, expanded to twenty hectares of land, and shifted to a model in which eight full-time participants lived and cooked together, paying for their own rent and food with their increased stipends. At this point the "experiment" had become a social cooperative, with two of the original refugee members as vice presidents. They sell their fresh produce, grains, and processed goods—including tomato sauce, jams, and wine—at weekly farmers' markets, to other social service organizations (soup kitchens, nursing homes), at fairs and festivals, and as of 2017, at their own storefront in Canelli.

As long as the cooperative receives funding to pay intern stipends and operating costs, there is no shortage of asylum applicants who might participate. The vision of the founders, however, is to create something that can operate on its own—that is, through the efforts of the refugees who comprise its members—without financial support and oversight from state and private entities. After two years of funding from SPRAR, CrescereInsieme, and regional grants, the cooperative has taken out loans to purchase equipment, machinery, and open a store, all in the name

of increasing their efficiency and profitability. Since 2014 they have more than doubled their total acreage, taken on new projects in food processing (crackers, sweets, wine), and experimented with new crops (strawberries, potatoes, kitchen herbs). While the superhuman efforts of the founding members, as well as the hard hours put in by the interns, have kept everything spinning thus far, the question remains: *can it work?*

Siamo rossissimo! Davide says after totaling their books. "We are still very red, and we knew it would be like this, at least for the first few years, but is it taking a long time to even creep towards a zero balance." When I last visited in 2016, the organizers found themselves in a bind with no obvious solution: they needed to cultivate more land and sell more products in order to break even, but they lacked the machinery, manpower, and time to keep up with all of the land and projects they already had running. This was difficult, Davide admitted, when his coworkers did not share his work ethic. "They're very business-like when it comes to their work hours. They'll leave at six hours exactly, even if we're still in the middle of trying to finish something. But when we need to have all the baskets of lettuce and tomatoes ready for the market at eight [in the morning], more often than not there are only one or two done when I arrive with the van." On his most discouraged days, Davide vented his frustration at the refugee members' refusal to assume roles of leadership or take initiative within their daily tasks. "I'm the boss, they say, even when I insist that it's a cooperative, that we make decisions together." He conceded that they are a long way

off from handing over operations entirely to the refugee members, but saw no other way forward than to keep trying, with patience.

Can it work? It is a difficult question to answer, as "it" does not define what kinds of labor (human bodies? machines? cultural?) solvency and sustainability demand. The competition that mechanized farms pose to selling profitable products is steep. Unlike Canelli's vines that demand constant human attention, many of the fruits and vegetables that Maramao offers are also grown by much larger farms in Spain or North Africa, operations equipped with more mechanized production schemes, fewer regulations, and expendable employees (Gertel and Sippel 2014). The wide gaps in cultural norms surrounding time, work, and ownership also make it difficult to hand off leadership from Italian coordinators to African coop members. Meanwhile, the networks of people and obligations that connect these young men to elsewhere make it difficult to put down roots. Nor does *can it work* directly address the more slippery challenges the cooperative faces, like creating a community in which the refugees themselves are recognized as valued laborers and commensurable with the other members of the local population. It is clear that making "it work" will require immense amounts of labor of all kinds, and from beyond the limits of the cooperative itself.

Grafting a polycultural vineyard

The morning I spend harvesting grapes with the Maramao is, blessedly, a cloudy one. The vines run vertically down a steep hill—I slip a few times on the

damp grass underfoot—and they are old scraggly plants, with a few small bunches of moscato per vine, if any. It is not hard to see why no one else will bother tending these rows. We work in twos and threes, dragging the red crates up and down the hill and leaving them tucked between the vines for a tractor trailer to pick up when they are full. Before we finish the first row, I have scratches from weeds on my calves, dirt and pebbles pressed into my knees (the vines are so low that it is best to work crouched or kneeling into the hill on some), and bits of botrytis mold and dried leaves stuck between my fingers.

We work with clippers in one hand, the other hand occupied with tearing away leaves and vines to get at clusters that have grown around the wires and stems. You cannot take your eyes off your hands, as it is easy to snip a finger rather than a vine if you are not paying attention. We are always moving, crouching, bending, dragging, lifting—it is thigh and back muscle work. But we have enough breath left to chat, to hum a tune, to joke around. "You got my finger!" Fabrice winces and clutches his hand between his knees, only to laugh and show me his perfectly intact hand when I drop everything in horror. Masud asks if me if there are vines like this in California, if there are hills like this, and someone uses their phone to play a calypso song in Wolof and English, about a president who is lifting the country out of postcolonial mayhem and decay, one who will make Africa proud.

Besides harvesting grapes, each of the cooperative members has completed workshops in planting new vines, grafting on scions, and trellising vines, skills they will be putting to use come springtime. The interns do not drink the wine that a local

winery vinifies and bottles for the cooperative (most are Muslim and do not consume alcohol), but they take pride in it nonetheless. “I like that we make wine,” said Ousmane, “even though I don’t drink it, I might like to learn to make it too. It is important here.” Hadim preferred working in the vegetable fields and greenhouses: “There are so many different things, it always changes, and everything we grow here I could grow at home in Gambia. Wine, hazelnuts, no, but the *orto* yes.” Both men agreed that even on the coldest mornings or longest days, their work as part of Maramao is better than the alternative, expressing their distaste and unhappiness with being given a bed and meals but not a job or purpose. “Canelli is small, but it is better to have work here than be in Rome without work.” Amadi, however, insisted that working by hand is not realistic in the long-term: “it’s not efficient enough, and there are farms—we met another project that has been doing this longer, and they have tools to do everything so much faster.” When I asked about their plans for the future, the conversation flopped. After a silence, Aboubacar chimed in. “You know why the Europeans are always sad? They think always of tomorrow. Of the future. We don’t think like this. If I have this to eat today, I am happy. Tomorrow is tomorrow.”

Collectively, their reflections represent various perspectives that a group of strangers from across the African continent bring to this project, and the possibilities they see for it in the future. The interns with whom I picked tomatoes and assembled baskets of zucchini spoke positively about the forms of labor they do here, were keenly aware that farming was a central element of local life, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity they had been given. Their statements, however, were always

composed in the conditional, or prefaced with qualifiers—*if, maybe, could*—no one committed to lifetime of growing organic produce, nor did they go into detail about what or where else they might do or go. The fact that I spent ample time in the cooperative directors' company no doubt guided what they did or did not say to me. Elsewhere, however, clearly beckoned: rumors of better options in Germany, relatives or friends in France to seek out, or living in Europe as a temporary project until it is possible to go home. The interns who had been there the longest remained skeptical about whether or not the cooperative's current approach could compete with more mechanized farms, and few committed to imagining where they might be beyond the next season.

The Italian organizers were more emphatically optimistic—"It has to work! It will work. It will," Davide insisted on the van rides between their scattered holdings—but no less aware of the challenges they faced and the precarity of working with people whose lives remain in motion. The staff at CrescereInsieme recounted instances of interns they had successfully placed in jobs at a local pizzeria or an artisanal flour mill. The Italian employers, happy with the refugees' work, had provided them with furnished apartments and assistance obtaining drivers' licenses, only to have them vanish one day, everything that could be carried taken with them. Other Maramao interns had gone on to work long-term at a plant nursery, in a café, or at a vineyard, but staff members insisted that it was hard to get a straight answer when you asked people about their plans. "They survived unspeakable things to get here, and they had to be strategic to survive," explained the woman who directs the

youth center. “So you can’t blame them for keeping their plans to themselves. And besides, if you’ve been on the move for years—and some of them have—why would you assume that you’ll be able to settle down starting today? Some of them have family they are trying to reach elsewhere. And they didn’t come to Europe wanting to pick tomatoes or wash dishes, it’s just that those are the jobs that are available to them.”

Multiple forms of motion and precarity make the future of Maramao uncertain. The cooperative brands itself as an agricultural “start-up,” and its members are learning how to farm effectively—as anyone who works the land must—through trial and error. They do not have a seasoned vignaiolo, tomato farmer, or hazelnut specialist to work with each day. Instead, they rely on brief workshops with visiting experts. Financially, the cooperative remains reliant on grants and loans to invest in equipment that allows them to expand their operations in the hopes of catching up to farms that operate on an economy of scale. Within the group, ambivalence about the work itself, cultural differences in work habits and communication, and a reluctance to commit to long-term projects tries the patience and trust of the people who, for better or worse, remain those with power and connections: the Italian founders and coordinators.

Can it work? will depend on what elements of *work* the cooperative members decide matter most, and will likely evolve as a vision over the coming seasons. Beyond profitability or member retainment rates, the stated goals of the project extend far beyond that of your average farmer. Maramao seeks to cultivate not only

organic foods, but also “relationships, approaches, and ways of seeing one another.” These are processes that working the land has historically determined here, but also goals that face deeply entrenched forms of prejudice in rural Piedmont.

Figures 43 and 44: Maramao cooperative members learn to prune and train vines in the winter and spend weeks harvesting grapes in September (photos by author).

Maramao in the piazza

The evening that I spend selling Maramao's produce outside the community center illuminates some of the less pressing but no less daunting issues that the cooperative encounters. It is late November, fog rolling down from the hills, and we stamp our feet and cross our arms tightly to keep warm against the damp chill. Business is slow but steady, mostly mothers picking up their children from soccer practice who buy a kilo of potatoes or a few bunches of spinach. After two hours we have sold out of most items, including a few bottles of wine from the previous year's harvest. While the morning market in a nearby village is staffed by Italian and African coop members, only Maura is here with me tonight. It has been difficult recruiting interns to do the jobs that require interacting with Italians, she explains.

"Some of the guys don't like working the market, and I can understand why. Especially in the beginning, we saw people shy away from our stand, or cross the street, or just stare at them. The interns are very conscious of it," she continues, "and they ask me, 'Why? My blood is red just like theirs.' Now that people are more used to us, I tease some our customers, "You were scared, eh? What did you think, that tomato sauce made by blacks would get you sick?" "Do you think that one day someone will see them at the market and think 'contadini' instead of 'rifugtiati' or 'neri'?" I ask her. Maura's smile fades. "Beh, I don't know…it takes time. We'll see."

Time and patience were also Davide's mantras when it came to convincing Canellesi that incorporating refugees into their territory was a positive change. Since

the cooperative is certified organic, he explained, they cannot plant directly next to neighbors who use pesticides or herbicides that could migrate onto their land. When he offered the cooperative's services to clean neighboring plots for free—replacing chemicals with human labor—some landowners outright refused. "They didn't want any *neri* on their land," Davide said, shaking his head. "When you're up against a wall like that, it doesn't make sense to bash your head against it. You can say something, sure, but it takes time for people to understand, to think it over, to change their minds. Whatever you do, you can't get angry or yell, because then you're finished. In a small place like this, you can't change people's ideas, you have to accept theirs at first. It takes a long time." Cultivating organically is challenging enough, but planting new ideas requires a patience, determination, and courage far beyond what farming itself demands.

When I was last in Canelli, the cooperative was in its third year, and time had done some of the work that Maura and Davide believe it can. While planting baby lettuces in the greenhouse one afternoon with Youssouf and Kassim, an elderly couple walking down the road stopped to admire their work. "When we first started, the neighbors wouldn't give us the time of day, pretended not to see us," explained Claudia, the donor of the cooperative's first piece of land and headquarters. "But after a while, they saw that these guys worked hard and caused no trouble. And they began to say good morning, even come around with baked goods now and then."

Figures 45 and 46: Daily tasks include tending seedlings, watering and weeding, harvesting mature crops for market, and embarking on new projects as the cooperative gains new plots (photos by author).

Maramao has received an extraordinary amount of media coverage, with journalists from Rome, France, and Germany coming to interview the cooperative members and publish images of the men with handfuls of tomatoes or videos of them at work in the fields.[76] In 2017, they received an invitation to the Vatican, where their work was honored by Pope Jorge Mario Bergoglio himself. In blogs, social media, and newspaper discussion forums, Italians from Piedmont and beyond have expressed mixed reactions to projects like that of Maramao, which put refugees to work in organic agriculture and beekeeping elsewhere in Piedmont, Calabria, and Lazio.[77] Reader comments about refugees employed in special agricultural programs elicited a smattering of the usual complaints—*Go farm at home! These resources ought to go to unemployed Italians!*—objections that overlooked the fact that Maramao is open to the community at large, or the reasons for which these young men found themselves in Canelli to begin with.

When I asked about Maramao around town, most residents had heard of the cooperative or seen their stall at the weekly market. Some had a few kind words to say—*It's a good thing they're doing there, it just goes to show what is possible*—while others gruffly acknowledged their presence without further comment. Other Italians have found the images of immigrants in familiar scenes more profound. A

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[76] http://www.maramao-bio.it/wordpress/rassegna-stampa/

[77] *Piedmont*: http://www.saluzzomigrante.it/, http://polyagrinova.com/ , https://www.beemyjob.it/. *Calabria*: http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-37289713. *Lazio:* http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/485928/I-rifugiati-lavorano-nell-orto-bio-e-rilanciano-i-prodotti-locali

father who took his son to participate in the grape harvest near Bergamo reported finding only Pakistani men in the vineyard, and upon further reflection, decided that "Integration is something you earn, NOT a right that you can claim by simply walking on Italian soil!" (Annoni 2013). In this view, employing immigrants in agricultural traditions that required them to "observe and assimilate to local customs and practices" catalyzed the kind of transformation of self that immigrants are expected to perform. The workers remain, in these images and texts, foreigners hosted on Italian soil, but engaged in particular kinds of employment that ask Italians to pause and reconsider their presence.

The members of Maramao occupy a liminal position, at once celebrated by media and progressive organizations while remaining marginalized by their own community. No one extends the title of contadino to cooperative members, referring to them as refugees, asylum seekers, or migrants in publications, and *rifugiati, africani,* or *neri* in casual exchanges. The work of making African refugees a commonplace part of a farmers' market, let alone recognizable as a continuation of traditional farming practices, requires a different sort of labor. Expertise in working with plants and returning to the fields day after day is insufficient to transform the value that Canellesi assign to the performances the Maramao carry out in their unwanted farmland. Unlike the Macedonian men who work closely with Italian employers, the Maramao have limited contact with Canellesi, and are understandably hesitant to engage with people who treat them like spectacles or contaminants. This

perpetuates other barriers—cultural and linguistic—that keep a certain distance between refugees and locals, even as they share a piazza on a summer evening.

"Italian people love Black babies, but then when you grow up they don't want anything to do with you," one of the older members of Maramao told me frankly on our lunch break. We sat in the grass with our tupperwares of last night's pasta, backs aching from sculpting a field of dirt into mounds and trenches for 500 tiny strawberry plants. "Sometimes I borrow my friend's kids and we go to the piazza, I buy them ice cream. Instead of staring, people will talk to me and pat the kids on the head." A younger member nodded, before adding that even then, the conversation never goes very far. "Italian girls won't accept an invitation to go to the bar, even if they will talk to you or comment on your muscles, it stops there. They are afraid or embarrassed to be seen with an African guy." This was why, a third man said with a smile, we like the way that you greet us, because it is different from the way that Italians look at us.

The men of Maramao are creative and patient when venturing into public spaces and community life. They are quick to recognize what locals respond well to, as well as the limits of socialization available to them. Despite their attempts at establishing relationships with Canellesi, they remain *maramao* in the piazza, a name chosen as a form of so-called auto-irony by the cooperative founders, and a label that they cannot escape even after removing their matching polo shirts and showering off a day of hard work.

Maramao is originally a Piedmontese word, the one used for foreigners, those with dark skin—*did you see those maramao in the piazza today?* It first named men

from southern Italy who came north for work, evoking an outsider with menacing connotations. "I remember my grandmother threatening me with maramao," described Ilaria, a young Canellesi mother. "*If you don't behave yourself the maramao will come for you!* she'd tell me. He was a boogieman of sorts." A flexible ethnic label, and not a positive one, "maramao" connoted the dark, unknown, or dangerous stranger. *Maramao why did you die? / You didn't lack for bread or wine / salad was in the garden / and you had a house.* So goes the pippy chorus of the 1939 hit by Mario Panzeri, sung by a group of cats (say mara*mao* aloud) to their lost friend. Along with the colloquial use of maramao as an ethnic category, this was the inspiration for the name that the cooperative's founders decided on. "They would be called maramao anyways by the old Canellesi, and in a sense, the song parallels both the needless suffering that refugees endure to come here—all those who never make it—but also the basic things they need to survive here: food, a place to live, and in this case, a garden to work in," explained Davide. Consciously taking on the negative label that these men would be given, Davide continued, was their way of trying to stare that diffidence in the face, and smile right back at it.

This is easier said than done. As numerous scholars of Black Europe have evidenced, people of African descent must perform intensive and endless emotional labor in order to be recognized as human in European social worlds (Balibar 2004, Fanon 1952, Hall et al 1978, Small 2018). Examples are numerous, such as the soccer matches in which Italians gleefully chant "There are no Black Italians!" and throw plastic bananas when star player Mario Balotelli (of Ghanaian descent, raised by

Italian parents) takes the field. It is also asking less of the white Italian members of the cooperative to greet racism with a smile when it is not aimed directly at their own persons. Performing contadino qualities is not enough to become part of a community when you have to work to be recognized as human at all, a task that is more exhausting than any day of digging up potatoes or weeding vineyards. Even the media promoting initiatives like that of Maramao use language that acknowledges the fundamental Otherness of these workers. “To create value, you have to leave room for *contaminzaioni* (contaminations, fusion),” claim the organizers of Bee My Job, who train refugees as beekeepers in a neighboring province, words rarely used for the other populations of foreigners who have sustained Italian agriculture in this region.[78] The authors and their audience agree that the mere presence of these men in Italian fields and orchards contaminates a (constructed) racial and cultural homogeneity, one that phrases like this try to cast in a more positive light.

Some of the more progressive Canellesi I asked about these barriers to recognition were indignant at the state of affairs, but resigned to a process they had seen before, one that would take time and work, but only on the part of the immigrants. Giulia, another SPRAR employee, was exasperated with what she sees happening again and again in her community: “It’s this ridiculous cycle in which whenever someone new shows up—the southerners, the Moroccans, the Macedonians—at first it’s all *they’re dirty, they steal, they’re bad, watch out*—and then within a generation they all have jobs, they work hard, their kids do well in

[78] BeeMyJob, https://www.beemyjob.it/

school, and then it becomes *No, but they're good people, I have friends that are Macedonian*—meanwhile they are spitting in the face of whomever is the next to show up. And it never occurs to them to reflect a bit!" Despite the successful integration of previous ethnically marked Others into the community over the past century, Giulia insisted, whomever arrived next had to undergo the same trial of proving themselves worthy of acceptance through both physical and emotional labor.

Analyses of immigration to Europe highlights how the capacity and desire to assimilate is placed entirely on immigrants, and not the community in which they live (Chambers 2007, Hall 2000, Mandel 2008). In Italy, publications and programs aimed at educating immigrants of their rights and responsibilities do not address the role of Italians in the process of integration, or *intercultura*, the term that came into vogue as policy makers rejected the feasibility of integration at all. As Sayyid describes, it is assumed that the fundamental distinction between Europeans and immigrants will gradually dissolve as the host consumes the immigrant via food, dance, and festivals while extracting value from their underpaid labor (2017). But this is always an event that is to take place in the future, in the next generation (or two), and not something that is the host community's responsibility to realize immediately.

My neighbors and friends in Canelli shared this timeline. Unlike the almost white *meridionali* or *macedoni*, however, they assumed that Black *rifugiati* would need to work harder and longer to become an accepted part of the community. "It won't be this generation. Maybe the next, or even the third." Ilaria replied quickly to my question about the integration of Africans like the *meridionali* and Macedonians

before them, but she paused for a moment before elaborating on her forecast. "It's going to be more difficult for them, but if the children grow up together, then I can see things changing." Adult Canellesi were unlikely to change their perspectives, my informants agreed, especially when their elected officials made no attempt to disguise their contempt for refugees' presence in town. As Davide recounted, when Mayor Gabusi was summoned to the opening of the accommodation center for minors, he made it clear that the operation would only be tolerated if participants maintained flawless behavior, warning that "at the first sign of trouble, one wrong step, this is finished."

The possibility of a multiracial community of Canellesi that Ilaria posited will depend on future generations, a society in which the children of Italians and resettled refugees will share classrooms, soccer fields, cafés, and perhaps friendships. It is not without reason: the children of southern Italians, Albanians, and Macedonians have by now blended seamlessly into the groups of young people that loiter outside the *gelateria* on a summer night or fill the school buses shuttling back and forth between small rural towns and the high schools in Asti. Activism by and research with the Afro-Italian community coming of age in Italy today suggests that the process will not, however, be smooth or easy (Hawthorne 2017). Imagining a multiracial community in Canelli is also bound up in the diversity of other aspects of life here: what will be the basis of the economy here, how will people engage with the land, and who will remain in these hills to do the work?

Canelli past, present, and future

Claudia remembers the store on the corner that sold household goods and hardware, the one that was the first on the block to have a telephone. When her aunt called from Turin the shopkeeper would walk down the street to knock on their door. *Canelli vecchio*—old Canelli—the heart of what was once a bustling town, is an assemblage of remolded or restored buildings, crumbling and deserted homes, spaces transformed into garages or condos, stray cats and cobbles covered with pigeon droppings and feathers. As we walk its winding streets, Claudia points out the church where she was married, the school that was close enough to her house to run quickly over for a snack, and the door that her father disappeared behind each day as he went to work at the Contratto winery. *Canelli used to have so many more shops*, she tells me. *Small ones, but everything you needed. That one there, it was someone's fathers'. That one there used to be two different stores. Everyone worked so much and there was a good economy, but today there are only the supermarkets*. She is painting this past world for me, of rivers of people coming out of the industrial wineries at noon for lunch, of children clustering outside the school doors, of shops where everyone was on a first name basis, of unlocked doors and dead people she misses and something that is gone.

Despite the associations of wine with luxury and wealth, life in Canelli is not as economically robust as it once may have been. Local specialty products include the most expensive hazelnuts on the market, white truffles that command thousands of euros per kilo, and Moscato d'Asti, the wine of holidays and indulgence. Until 2016,

Canelli hosted the *Assedio di Canelli*, a renaissance recreation of sorts, and a weekend of festivities titled *Canelli: City of Wine*. Both had been cancelled by 2018, citing a lack of funding and insufficient revenues from visitors. The gourmet products, specialty events, or the beauty of the hillsides and woods are enough to attract the kind of tourism that can take the place of the manufacturing economy that once sustained this town. Newspaper headlines in August of 2015 manifested an anxiety that permeated all social classes: *Asti among the poorest provinces in the region, Canelli: Financial inspectors raid for caporalato, Loans with 300 percent interest, Woman attacked by migrant in carpark.* CARITAS data show an increase from families requesting support (in food, utilities, rent payments) from 1,081 people in 2013 to 2,472 in 2014.[79] One third of the applicants were Italian, the other two-thirds were mostly Albanian or Moroccan. New categories of poverty are appearing in the area include divorced parents, the elderly, and immigrant families, often with young children. No one leaves their doors unlocked anymore, and the new owner of the Contratto winery will not park her flashy car on the street for fear that it will be defaced.

Life in the Astigiano has a long history of precarity—subsistence farming, sharecropping, industrial oppressors—but this most recent crisis feels, to the people living through it, like a promise broken. Hawthorne captures it precisely in her summation of the state of affairs in Italy: "A profound sense of gloom permeates Italy

[79] This trend is not isolated to Canelli, and represents the long-term effects of economic austerity in Italy, where many regions and sectors across the peninsula have experienced little economic growth for a decade.

today—from the withering welfare state to the explosion of virulent far-right racisms, from unemployment and the increasing flexibilization of labor to the horror of unrelenting migrant deaths at sea. There is a palpable sense of being in the midst of Gramsci's 'time of monsters,' when an old world is crumbling but a new one has yet to be realized" (2017: 167). The men and women who grow grapes today have crop insurance, heated homes, and credit cards, but they also have mounting debt and surplus wine, erratic weather that spells trouble, and a sense of the imminent end of an era as the last of the *contadini veri* appear in the death announcements plastered to boards in the piazza.

The world Claudia is bringing to life for me is gone, but there is new life coming to this place too. We turn the corner, and it is the hour of the *passeggiata*, when families, couples, and teenagers take slow laps around the heart of town, stopping in small groups to chat or have a drink at the corner bar. This evening there are few walkers, apart from the blonde tourists clustered outside the *pasticierria*. The shadows are long, the heat is shoving off as the breeze picks up, and the Eritrean family of four curly-haired kids whom I have seen running amok in the piazza is coming down the street. A Nigerian man carrying a case of water on his shoulder and a shopping bag in the other hand is walking up sidewalk opposite. The butcher shop that recently reopened advertises *cibi arabi* (arab foods) and halal meats.

The people selling cheap plastic toys and kitchen wares in the piazza earlier that day are named Omar, Ahmed, and Jazmina, with addresses in Asti on the small receipts they hand back with your change. By midmorning, both of the churches that

sit just above the CARITAS dormitory are at the height of Sunday mass, with hymns and choruses pouring out from the doors left ajar. One swell of voices I recognize as Italian, with Latin prayers punctuating the music, while the members of the church opposite, reconsecrated for the Macedonian Orthodox Church in 2015, sing in something Slavic and liturgical I cannot pin down. Squinting into the dark interior of the Macedonian church, I can just make out a candelabra and richly colored tapestries inside, but my view is obstructed by the cluster of children and teenagers outside the doors, leaning on railings and playing on the stairs. The two sets of voices rise and fall, one louder and then the other, making a music all their own that fills this corner of town and drifts down the alleyways that radiate out from it.

High above Canelli, nestled between other people's homes and vineyards, places that were once orchards or fields are slowly turning back into cultivated rows and neatly pruned branches in the hands of refugees. Their tightly bunched cauliflowers and spinach flecked with bits of soil sell quickly at the Wednesday morning market—by now everyone knows their produce is *di buon qualità.* The members of Maramao work six days a week, but on Sundays they are more likely to be found playing soccer or cooking dishes of beef or lamb that need to simmer for a long time in the tomatoes they grew and canned last summer. The soil they tend yields apricots, farro, tomatoes, and bell peppers, small patches of color and food floating in a sea of grapevines.

The vines planted in the boom years—now at least sixty years old—are giving fewer grapes each year, which may be a good thing for an oversaturated market,

though not for the growers whose yields diminish. In the meantime, other forms of life are taking root. The established cooperatives that supply Balkan viticultural workers year-round have their calendar booked with growers who want to convert their vineyards to organic standards, perhaps replacing rows of moscato with autochthonous varietals that are gaining traction among discerning drinkers. At the offices of the local branch of Coldiretti, Italy's national farmers' association, a young man carefully measures the width and weight of various hazelnuts, calculating the total nut product for a new contract with Novi, one of Italy's top chocolate firms. An hour or two down the road, a cheesemaking cooperative celebrates its fifteenth anniversary of keeping a small herd of goats to make *robbiola di roccaverano*, a regional specialty, using only goats milk, rennet, heat, and salt. In neighboring Cuneo, a cooperative trains refugees to perform beekeeping work that is critical to sustaining agriculture of all kinds here.

In all of these signs of life and agricultural endeavors, immigrants have been essential. Immigrant families that have more children than their Italian counterparts keep the schools open, bring empty churches back into use, peddle goods in the piazza on weekends, and bring business to small shopkeepers who supply their pantries. Italian farmers in videos, articles, conventions, and conversations agree: *without immigration, our agriculture would already be dead*, and *without the foreigners, we wouldn't have picked a single grape*.[80] Nonetheless, attitudes toward the most recent group of immigrants to the area have been less than enthusiastic, if

[80] For examples, see BeeMyJob.it and Stagliano 2010.

not outright hostile. Lacking the social capital, kinship networks, and language skills that other immigrant groups commanded upon arrival, the refugee members of Maramao remain categorically and socially excluded from putting down real roots. In the Belbo Valley, contadini were the past, and immigrants are the present, but the identity of the future remains to be seen.

Whose territorio?

What will become of this place? It is a question hashed out in small talk between seasoned growers over coffees or beers, one debated in polemics published in industry journals and newspaper op-eds, and a topic that elicits impassioned arguments on online forums. "Is a *territorio* densely cultivated with vines a limit or a resource?" asks the author of an essay, arguing that monocultures and biodiversity are mutually exclusive realities (Montarino 2015:13). With proper techniques and balances, the author suggests, perhaps both environmentalists and viticulturalists can agree on a vision for the future, and the acreage under organic cultivation in Italy has increased by 16 percent overall in the last year, up to 50 percent in some regions (*Green Report* 2017). Others are less optimistic, taking the 2014 flooding in Treviso as evidence that unchecked viticulture will destroy, quite literally, their hillsides (Pasqualetto 2014).

Canelli's mayor is spearheading efforts to curate the city into a more tourist-friendly place, with ample hospitality, shopping, and dining available to wealthy visitors. Not everyone would like to see Canelli as a tourist hub, however, and Mara

points out that unlike the Tuscan communities that keep businesses open on Sundays and through the lunch hour to court visitors, here in Canelli people can retain some of the rhythms that prioritize time with family and friends. Meanwhile, the men and women of Maramao and other small farms that produce vegetables, cheeses, and honey continue to look for new ways to keep old practices profitable.

A multi-stakeholder study conducted by University of Turin scholars in 2013 laid out various possible futures for the landscapes of the Monferrato Astigiano: intensive winegrowing, multifunctional agriculture, and housing sprawl. Conferring with mayors, tourism offices, wine cooperatives, farmers' unions, and cultural heritage representatives, the researchers asked participants to consider the driving forces at work on the landscapes and potential outcomes. Driving forces included new technologies, agricultural policies, markets, generational trends, and immigrant influx. At the center of these discussions, a group of doctored images of a real hillside offered three different visions of the future. The first shows the place as it currently exists, a mixture of vines, homes, trees, and empty fields. The second is covered in tightly spaced rows of vines, the third a mixture of vines, hazelnut trees, pasture for horses, and forest, and the last has reduced agricultural space to accommodate additional housing.

These visions and the lifeworlds that each represents are a stark break from the glossy coffee table books that feature dreamy panoramas of vines and castles, titled "A Territory All for Drinking" or "Eternal Landscapes." They acknowledge the uncertain future of the territory and imagine ecologies and economies beyond the

monoculture of *vitis vinifera*. People do not appear in any of the frames, but evidence of their labor does: carefully tended vines, brushed and watered horses, neatly spaced trees, and well-kept homes all attest to a way of being in a place. These hypothetical workers are made and remade through daily chores and long-term relationships with plants and animals, tasks and collaborations from which people derive a sense of self and Others.

Each vision of the landscape then is also a vision of the population and the community. Will it be a smattering of large landowners who operate vast estates of mechanized viticulture? A tightly knit group of small farmers who cultivate a more diverse economy and ecology? A collection of holiday homes to rent to northern Europeans that sit empty for most of the year? A global community of entrepreneurs and farmers who combine old and new ways of working the land to make a life here?

Each of these possibilities entails a different landscape, lifestyle, and population. Organic viticulture might enable a more environmentally friendly form of farming and better prices, but it also requires more labor to take the place of agrochemicals (*Rete Rurale Nazionale* 2012)—labor that Italians have not been willing to do for twenty years. Mechanized viticulture is well established and even celebrated here, but may not be sustainable in terms of erosion, pathogens, and chemical degradation of the soil (Prosdocimi et al 2016). It will also likely lead to long-term consolidation of land by corporate producers and the demise of the small winegrower. Tourism could temper dependency on the export market (and provide

much needed marketing), but turning home and work into a spectacle to consume also compromises the textures and rhythms of daily life (MacCanell 1976).

Each of the conversations about these possibilities—academic studies, journalism, casual exchanges, and municipal policies—engages with the question of immigration, at times directly and at others implicitly. Immigration is listed as a "driving force" in the landscape study, one that severs the transmission of information from generation to generation, as the immigrants receive the accumulated cultural knowledge instead (Larcher et al 2013: 721). In my interviews with winegrowers and in the media that they frequent, however, immigration is accepted as a vital resource (Vallibbt 2011). Canelli's administration and citizens acknowledge immigrants (if at times grudgingly) as a core element of their town's sustainability: whether employing cooperative members to convert their vines to organic grapes, buying fresh organic vegetables from refugees, or leaving their elderly parents in the care of immigrant women, Canelli is deeply dependent on immigrant labor of all kinds.

This is part of why a 2018 newspaper headline alerted readers that *Foreigners flee the Belbo Valley*, citing the Italian death rates that outnumber births by a factor of ten in some communities, and the diminishing number of immigrants who choose to remain when better opportunities for work or social services beckon elsewhere. If the region cannot retain immigrants, the article makes clear, there will be few people of working age left here at all. It is one article among thousands on the presence of immigrants in Italian communities, but it marks a monumental shift in attitudes toward these "useful invaders." Perhaps, theses dire statistics suggest, we should be

grateful for people who are willing to make lives here. Perhaps we need them more than they need us.

The journalist who researched and composed the article frequently covers issues of immigration and labor, and her perspective does not necessarily represent the majority of readers. All the same, the picture she presents is a far cry from the whispers of *marmao in the piazza* and eyes that choose not to see the men sleeping on bits of cardboard by the train station. In considering what their home might become, some citizens of Canelli have begun to imagine a world in which there is more than one way to work the land, a rich diversity of plants and animals to tend, and an eclectic mix of people engaged in sustaining the traditions that give life flavor and meaning here.

Conclusion: Moscato Africano?

Il prezzo non è nel vino, è nelle persone. / The price is not in the wine, it is in the people.

Gian Mario Cerruti, Coppo

The fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future.

Svetlana Boym (2007:08)

The University of Turin extension in Asti offered a new program in 2015: become a *Maestro di territorio*, expert in creative management of hillside patrimony. "Organize and innovate, from local and global," the poster advertising the program proclaimed in bold letters, over a brief description which employed the usual smattering of terms—*environment, tourism, sustainable, community patrimony, development*, *landscapes*—that prevail in rural development policy, on winery websites, and in city hall debates in the Astigiano. In order to become a good custodian of the *territorio*, the program description claimed, one needed formal training in sustainable tourism development, heritage management, and marketing—in short, how to sell products and place, and not ruin everything in the process.

This is a stark break from the transmission of knowledge that characterized the previous managers of these hillsides. Rather than learning about the characteristics of this place, the behaviors of certain vines, and the techniques that transform grapes into bottles of wine—becoming, that is, a vignaiolo—a *maestro* of the territory needs to think bigger, to engage with what global experts have to say about attracting tourists or finding new markets for their wines. The poster also

emphasized that the program would not pigeonhole students in their home communities, that these were skills they might use to build a career beyond Asti, or outside of Italy.

What I find most interesting is the idea that the territory needs a *maestro*, or dozens of them, at all. The development of an entire master's program to oversee the trajectory of a place and the *beni comuni*—goods, riches, assets held in common by a group—that it comprises implies that the territorio is currently without those who know what to do with it. It insists that key choices need to be made in order to maintain what has been inherited, and admits that it is not clear how agriculture, tourism, conservation, and preservation might work together. Rather than learning through labor—tending vines, minding fermenting tanks, coming to recognize patterns that emerge through relations between weather, plants, and pests—the program relocates the crucial know-how to the realm of lectures, readings, and group projects, with the occasional fieldtrip.

The course description does not belittle or delegitimize what *contadini* know or what *vignaioli* do, but it makes no provision for how these other, older forms of expertise might be communicated to the next generation. But these are the very *beni comuni* that allow for this place to exist in the first place, and the assets the multi-stakeholder study discussed in the previous chapter identified as most at risk. The authors cite the "loss of traditions and local knowledge, loss of cultural landscape" as a negative consequence of a "driving force" that the participants collectively identified (Larcher et al 2013:719). Of the various forces singled out—EU and local

policies, new technologies and markets, the demands of younger generations—the blame for losing traditions and knowledge was attributed to the "influx of foreign immigrants employed in agriculture (farmers and, principally, workhands)."

This accusation took me a minute to sort out. Immigrants in the Belbo Valley are not running off with traditional knowledges, allowing them to lapse between generations, or preventing Italian elders from teaching their grandchildren *dialetto*. From my own time spent in the region, it was abundantly clear that immigrants were the actors most involved in learning and practicing these *beni comuni*, a situation that their employers and neighbors did not hesitate to affirm when I asked. So how is it that a group of experts and elected officials collectively decided that immigrants were responsible for the "loss" of traditions, knowledges, and landscapes?

It comes down to a question of ownership: to whom can these traditions belong? If ways of knowing and doing are being handed over to immigrants, the researchers and community leaders see those knowledges as "lost" by the Italian members of the community. In the past, newcomers from the South, *meridionali* but still Italians, could become part of the existing community thanks to social and legal privileges conferred by citizenship or intermarriage. Today Italian citizenship laws designed to exclude immigrants from legal belonging reinforce racial prejudices and access to the means of production. The exclusion of ethnic others from *inheriting* what Italians consider their *patrimony* has old roots. "Heritage" and "patrimony" derive, etymologically, from systems of transmitting wealth and power through bloodlines with clear insiders and outsiders (Handler 1988). Endeavoring to keep

those *beni* in the family, or in this case the imagined community of an ethnically Italian population, ensures the fortunes of future generations.

When non-Italian immigrants take up these roles, the authors of the article imply, those traditions will not be acquired by Italian children, who by blood inherit more rights than any amount of working the soil will ever earn. The group of stakeholders was invited to envision various polycultural landscapes, but the idea of a multiethnic community of winegrowers and vinters was not on the table.

In these chapters, I have worked to open up that imaginary. Not by appealing to anti-racist appeals or entirely economic imperatives (of which there are plenty), but by considering how the narratives of ownership that guided the thinking in that room of stakeholders are predicated on silences and erasures, of edits that leave no room for Others among Us and Our Territory. *Beni comuni* do not yet extend to all members of the community. One or more generations of hard work are necessary in order to earn a piece of its past, depending on how different or foreign one is perceived to be. But the community does not have time for two or three generations of immigrants to slowly meld into the scenery, as there are very few Italian youth stepping up to fill those shoes in the meantime.

The community of winegrowers that keep Canelli's hillsides planted with patrimony identified a few key threats to their futures and that of their home: the bureaucratic limitations of DOC and EU regulations, the impacts of climate change, and the volatility of export markets. I name another: the racism that is buried within the rhetoric of wine trademark law, Italian citizenship policies, marketing campaigns,

and heritage preservation initiatives, a mentality that endangers the future of the know-how, the soul, the rural patrimony of these places when it categorically denies immigrants the possibility of inheritance.

Change has been the only constant in Canelli, no less so now than in the past. While the idea of African contadini or Romanian-owned wineries might seem like an invasion or a loss to some Canellesi, it offers a kind of future that mechanized corporate vineyards or a disneylandification of the territorio do not. Rather than flattening, homogenizing, or commodifying the forms of labor and the relationships to place that give life texture, flavor, and meaning in Canelli, the incorporation of immigrants adds new vitality to traditions that would have otherwise perished long ago. That things will be different in the future is a given, but on whose terms and in whose hands remains to be seen.

The fruits of one's labors

When I first delved into "the literature" for my proposed field site, it became clear that immigration to Italy and to Europe had received plentiful coverage well before the term *migrant crisis* was part of European parlance. Scholars have written volumes about failed integration policies, deep-seated discrimination, and institutional structures that perpetuate inequalities for generations of children born to settled immigrant families. Within the anthropology of Italy, ethnographies published after 2000 often included a last chapter or series of footnotes on immigrants as they became ubiquitous in outdoor markets, elder care, decrepit housing, or industrial

labor. Woven through these texts, however, were assumptions that reflected popular media representations of immigrants from beyond the edges of the EU: the newness of foreigners in Italian communities, or immigrants' peripheral status in the activities that made Italy *Italian*, with immigrants most often depicted as relatively unskilled workers in fields, factories, private homes, or street corners.

In the Astigiano, however, I found that immigrants play a very different role in reproducing Italian life. In these hills, Italian ideas about personhood rooted in an agricultural past and the forms of labor that tie people to the land allow for foreigners to become the current incarnation of the contadino, that crucial link between landscape, cuisine, and community. Unlike the thankless labor of harvesting tomatoes or cleaning rice fields that thousands of immigrants perform each year in Italy, the expertise and apprenticeships that vineyard care requires has fostered a different set of roles and relationships between Italians and immigrants. This labor articulates with an idealized peasant past and a story that sells wine, and it brings outsiders into tradition rather than excluding them categorically from it.

This dissertation and the years of research that went into its production challenge the narratives that relegate immigrants to the margins of Italian life or measure their contributions to it in purely economic terms, recasting immigrants as an indispensable part of keeping Italy's most valued heritage alive in plants, landscapes, tastes, and crafts. In these vineyards and beyond, immigrants are not a threat to Made in Italy or *italianità*—they are the people with whom these forms of value have a future.

Figure 47: The sun sets early in December, and the chill descends swiftly as you walk back down into the valley (photo by author).

In these pages, I have uprooted the vineyards and cellars that put Canelli on the map, turning the inward-looking histories of wine and heritage that structure terroir inside out. I have highlighted the transnational networks that have contoured Canelli's patrimony into its current forms, or made it possible at all. I have traced the comings and goings of communities who have left the Belbo Valley behind or made it home, movements of people that created an export empire and produced the goods to satisfy it. I have excavated the various economies and ecologies that have textured daily life here and tied people to the land and to one another, unearthing a past that allows for imagining a wider diversity of possible landscapes in the future. In doing so, I aim to redefine the decisions the community faces now as the most recent

transformation in a much longer book of metamorphoses, choices that require both creativity and collaboration across social borders.

By paying attention to the textures and dynamics of working with plants in Piedmont's wine country, I have focused on the transformative power of that labor as it reshapes the values that adhere to various ethnicities in a diversifying community of farmers. In vineyards and dynastic cellars, the very spaces where Italians are assumed to be the most tightly tied to place, outsiders have also managed to put down roots. It is precisely because of Italy's agricultural history and the ideas about autochthony deriving from working the land that plants and landscapes offer immigrants a way in, one that circumvents the boundaries of blood that police legal recognition as part of the national community.

What is happening in Canelli's vineyards and cellars crystalizes a set of pressures and transitions remaking Italy today. On the one hand, Italian industries and traditions of all kinds under threat from global industrial capitalism, climate change, and a state that is neither solvent nor fully sovereign (given the rapid turnover between governments and the impacts of EU integration). The institutions, vistas, and textures of daily life—the family-owned grocery, heritage landscapes, handmade foods, and leisurely lunches—are no longer a certain fixture of the future. In the meantime, each of these elements of Italy and Italianness have become increasingly dependent on immigrants as consumers, workers, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs. Despite political figures and social media rants that decry the "contamination" or "invasion" of Italian worlds by immigrants, *extracommunitari* are anything but

peripheral or antithetical to Italian traditions. Upon closer inspection, immigrants are the ones who make many of the things *come erano* (as they were) possible today.

This contradictory state of affairs cannot continue forever. Casting immigrants as part of the problem or even as a temporary fix denies the statistics and quotidian experiences that suggest that a multiethnic and transnational future is not a possibility for Italy so much as a certainty. A nation whose diaspora infused the communities and cuisines of settler colonies around the world remains in stubborn denial about its current role as a recipient of vital skills, youth, creativity, and work ethics. In the meantime, ways of knowing, of doing, of being in the world are indeed slipping away forever, especially if the men and women who carry them out today remain categorically excluded from claiming ownership thereof.

Change will, inevitably, be slow. Currently, the brunt of this task falls to immigrants to perform. Not only the dirty, dangerous, or undesirable jobs that Italians shun, but also the emotional labor of proving oneself to be intelligent, trustworthy, creative, and valuable. The community of scholars who think and write about Italy and Europe has a role to play as well: asking different questions and delegating responsibility to a wider set of actors will be crucial to imagining different futures for Italy. The ideas and claims in this dissertation were built upon the shoulders of many other scholars, writers, and activists, and it is my hope that my own labor may generate new directions of inquiry and action.

Within the body of work on immigration to Italy and Europe, scholarship that focuses on the most miserable and desperate aspects of the migrant crisis—though

immensely important and timely—can also inadvertently reinforce the image of the ill-fated migrant who cannot thrive or ever really be at home in their host country (even when a close reading reveals ingenuity, grit, kindness, and hope in the lives of those it chronicles). While less eye-catching or heart-wrenching, there are many other stories to tell: stories that help to refocus attention on all of the ways that immigrants have made successful lives in Italy and actually stabilized their host communities, and stories that take the time to ask how they have managed to do so.

Many of these stories currently appear as quotas in economic or sociological research that turns workers into nameless numbers and statistics with no skills or faces. These publications attest to the prevalence of immigrant labor, but can also support the idea that an immigrant's worth is measured in their economic productivity (or reproductive capacity), which legitimates practices of exploitation. When Italian employers and media outlets keep immigrants invisible (segregating them to "backstage" spaces, out of promotional materials and the public eye) or deem their labor disposable (one farmworker or line cook is understood to be exchangeable for another), immigrants' presence in Italian industries does not challenge ownership of the "value added," which remains in Italian hands. Rather than cooperate with this project, insisting on the specificities and testimonies of individuals sheds a different light on how it is that immigrants have become such an indispensable part of Italy. Ethnography offers a powerful tool for reinterpreting statistics, and for reassigning obligations or dependencies between immigrants and Italians.

These approaches to research and public engagement lay a foundation for a project that, in some ways, will prove more difficult: taking the racism and hierarchies embedded in Italian and European discourses of cultural purity and heritage, and turning them on their heads by uncovering the otherness and hybridity that has been whitewashed out of "tradition." Rethinking what it means to be Piedmontese, Italian, or European from beyond the usual boundaries of those concepts is a historical and cultural endeavor, and one that will be central to creating a more dynamic vision of "preserving" heritage by allowing it to breathe.

As winemakers will readily attest, current conventions of heritage management often fail the people and places they are meant to protect by insisting on an audit culture of bureaucratic red tape, organizing regulations around profitability, or "the museological clamp of heritage"—all of which become impediments to keeping these practices alive.[81] These approaches imply certain continuities—a homogenous population, bounded place, and consistent product—while ignoring other transformations—demographic, technological, or economic. As the result, they have little room for initiatives like that of Maramao or other "*contaminazioni*" in the territory. Rather than fixate on trying to embalm the past, what more flexible and inclusive approaches to intangible patrimony and heritage landscapes might give these practices and places a better chance of survival?

[81] See Michael Herzfeld's work on heritage classification and preservation (1991, 1997, 2014), in particular the conflict between the people who live within it and the vision of preservation, promotion, and gentrification that official policies push upon them.

*   *   *

At Canelli's annual *festa di San Martino*, a marching band outfitted in blue suits and caps plays regional folk songs as it processes between the stalls selling gastronomic treats, candies, wine, and prepared dishes. It is a crisp day in early autumn, with golden sunlight and air redolent of roasted chestnuts, salted fish, fried dough, and steaming vats of melted gorgonzola. The tables include a Nigerian woman selling organic honey and a Tunisian family proffering Sicilian marzipan, cannoli, and hard cheeses. Across the row of trumpeters, I spot three young men at the Maramao booth, all dressed in brightly colored knit caps and sweatshirts against the chill. Everyone in the crowd knows the words to the songs, mouthing them quietly, but the African men are the only people dancing, their movements exuberant behind the display of wine, vegetables, and hazelnuts they are selling today.

The bottles of wine—Barbera, Dolcetto, Cortese, and Moscato—that Maramao offers do not look like those found on enoteca shelves here. Instead of curling leaves, ancient mosaics, or illustrations of rustic farmsteads, they feature a highly stylized black female figure dancing, bordered by generic African prints in vivid colors. Instead of trying to blend in, Maramao's packaging flaunts their Otherness, using familiar tropes of Africanness to set their goods apart as "solidarity products"—foods with a good story behind them.

Figures 48 and 49: Maramao's wine label features decidedly African decoration, and rather than descriptions of the grapes or location on the back, it informs the drinker that the bottle was made through fair relations and recommends drinking it in company, without caporali (photos by author).

Whereas the other bottles for sale in Canelli conceal the hybridized plants and export empire that compose their vineyards and dictate the taste of place, these labels do the opposite. They emphasize that the origins of the men who cared for the vines and designed the labels is not authochtonous or even Italian, but something new and different that could become a part of here.

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