

Resilience as an ethnographic object in Cinque Terre, Italy.  
A multisited ethnography in conversation with  
the environmental humanities

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines resilience in Cinque Terre: a major Italian tourist attraction comprised of five coastal villages set in a picturesque terraced landscape. The thesis positions resilience as an object of ethnographic inquiry, which allows participants to describe resilience as *they* understand it. The thesis also sets up a conversation between anthropology and the interdisciplinary environmental humanities to ask fundamental questions about the nature of resilience in a multispecies world. Adopting a multisited approach, the thesis explores three different perspectives on resilience in/of Cinque Terre. Each of these perspectives combines the trajectory of the ethnographer - from tourist to migrant to (semi) insider - with the views of participants in stage of the ethnographic research journey. Along with empirical ethnographic data from humans and nonhumans alike, the thesis draws on literary texts, visual data, historiographies and other tools to show how resilience has been imagined by tourists, how it has been used by migrants who moved to Cinque Terre for love, and how it has been enacted by the region's famous drystone vineyard terraces and their caretakers.

The resulting insights suggest that resilience does not have to be out of the ordinary, nor does it have to occur only after an extraordinary event. Indeed, this thesis argues that resilience is embedded in the everyday with a substance of its own, entangled yet distinct from any event or process that precedes it. It also reveals that resilience is imagined to be heroic yet other factors more likely have influence than heroism, that it is used to create legitimacy and belonging, and that it is enacted over various temporalities, often with cyclical effects. This thesis is, moreover, an example of the creative capacity of single-authored interdisciplinary work where disciplines and fields are merged to co-create in engaging ways.

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## Introduction

### Cinque Terre

Vernazza, Cinque Terre: October 2019

It's a misty October morning in Vernazza, the second of the famous five villages that compose the Cinque Terre UNESCO world heritage site in northwest Italy. The annual autumn rains have begun. Everything looks and feels fatigued. The sea has turned blue grey instead of its brilliant summer turquoise. The pastel pink and yellow houses look dull, weathered, and in need of new paint. Through the mist, the vibrant green hues of vineyard terraces above Vernazza look brown. Locals wrapped in thin puffy jackets amble by our spot on a stone stoop, stopping to say "*ciao*" if they so desire. Not everyone so desires. Understandable. It's the end of the tourist season. Millions of tourists have visited. People have worked hard; they've been on their feet, sometimes every day, since April. They're tired, grumpy even. Soon many businesses will close. Seasonal workers will return home or

go on holiday. Vernazza will be able to breathe. And then, in the spring, all will seem bright and sparkling once again.



Fig. 1. Vernazza. View of the town and the terraces. Photograph by Margherita Ermirio.

A cruise ship tour group of about fifty people rushes past. Their tour guide carries a large red branded umbrella, stabbing the air with it as she talks into her microphone. Her group listens to the guide through headphones, looking around as they march forward. One of them tramps on my foot. I almost spill my cappuccino. No apology. “*No worries,*” I think, “*we’re part of the furniture.*”

My host, Margherita, and I are awaiting a film crew. As a local drystone wall mason, she is to be interviewed about “saving” Cinque Terre by building terrace walls without mortar, “*just like her ancestors did.*” She is to be featured on *Antichi Lavori* (Old Jobs), an Italian television show that focuses on occupations that are in decline or “dying out.” Past episodes were filmed with pasta makers and marble cutters. When she first invited me to join the filming, she commented that although she thought the ancestor comparison was tenuous, she would take any publicity that she could get, “*for the walls.*” My role is to build a wall in the background of the interview and look suitably scholarly.

The crew soon calls Margherita to let us know they will be late. It always takes longer than anticipated to drive from the city to any of the Cinque Terre towns; *always*. Cinque

Terre's tiny roads wind through the mountainous seaside terrain like snakes, leaving passengers dizzy and motion-sick by the time they reach their destination. In contrast to the crew, most tourists wisely come by train or by ferry. After what seems like an eternity, the crew finally arrive.

Maria, the presenter, introduces herself. "*Buongiorno! Oh, you're both so young and female! And you're so pale!*" Although Margherita's family has been in Vernazza since at least the fourteenth century, her pale features are a contrast to Italian stereotypes, which, as social scientists have long taught us, shape material realities.<sup>1</sup> In this particular case, Maria is clearly expecting the drystone terrace wall builder and the researcher to be older and male. Apparently the film scout hadn't told Maria that Margherita is the drystone mason. Maria is expecting her to be the contact. Our attire of jeans and t-shirts also surprises her. It's as if she is expecting us to walk out of a vintage postcard of early twentieth century agricultural workers. Margherita seems undaunted, even pleased by gender-bending expectations and replies simply, "*Yes, we're women - I used the feminine to describe us on the phone.*" When I respond to her in my heavily American-accented Italian, she is positively thrilled. "*A pale Italian and an American working in Cinque Terre? This is such a great story!*"

The host seems overjoyed to have met us. "*It's so good to see young people working the land in the old ways. What's your motivation? How did you come to be here?*"

Margherita suggests we leave the busy street, which is overflowing with tourist foot-traffic, and head to the terraces. We don't walk far. We do, however, walk up.

By the time we reach the bottom of the terraces, we have been climbing for about five minutes. Both Maria and her cameraman are out of breath: they aren't used to walking up stairs. Below us are increasingly loud, insistently angry waves. It's going to rain soon. "*Is it safe if it rains?*" Maria wonders. "*You know, because of flooding.*" "*It will be fine,*"

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<sup>1</sup> Herzfeld, "The Hypocrisy of European."

Margherita assures her, “*the big floods only happen every fifty years or so. We had ours in the past decade.*” Margherita is referring to the 25 October 2011 flood that struck the region, including Vernazza, leaving mud and destruction in its wake. “*That’s what I’m worried about,*” Maria replies.

Filming begins. Margherita points out the differences in construction techniques, distinguishing between traditional drystone walls and those made with mortar. Mortar walls tend to appear more orderly, conforming to modern expectations, but, as Margherita tells Maria: “*appearances are deceiving.*” The cement will soon crumble. It will be unable to weather the rains, earthquakes, and salt that are constantly shaping and re-shaping this delicate and dynamic region. In contrast, the drystone walls, which may appear to be disorderly or even primitive, will survive. It is the drystone walls that make Cinque Terre, Margherita tells Maria, and it is the effects of gravity, climate change, and too many tourists on the terraces that threaten Cinque Terre’s continued existence. Despite these threats, Cinque Terre is resilient.



Fig. 2. Vernazza. Margherita, the film crew and a drystone terrace wall. Photograph by author.

As Margherita is being filmed, I reflect on comments I have received from people about Cinque Terre. Many of them have asked: Does Cinque Terre actually have it so bad as to warrant a national television show episode on its traditional decline? Aren’t there other, more

deserving, places? From a marketing point of view, the resilient drystone mason fighting to keep ancient knowledge alive is a heart-warming story. And although drystone terrace walls are a feature across most of the Mediterranean countries, the people of Cinque Terre have built the region's well known reputation on its dramatic coastal terraced landscape. That the Cinque Terre landscape is as seemingly resilient as the people that live there is part of the general "feel good" narrative. Yet, in addition to its fame and narrative attraction, Cinque Terre is also emblematic of the many small agricultural European regions that have leveraged tourism as economic survival strategy. For Cinque Terre's overall economy, this strategy has worked well. It is this success that makes it an ideal case study, for both national television and for research.

Once the episode goes on air, Maria is quick to remind viewers that Cinque Terre is comprised of both terraces and people. She says the two have had to work together in innovative and resilient ways to maintain unity over millennia. She emphasizes the effort required to re/build the terrace walls without mortar. She also praises the wine made from grapes grown on the terraces while lamenting the loss of the "old ways." Finally, though Margherita had done her best to correct her, Maria proceeds to explain the 25 October 2011 flood as a cautionary tale. If the drystone terraces aren't maintained with traditional practices, she says, then the walls collapse, causing floods and the loss of a valuable region. (Ironically, the episode doesn't show the drystone walls that were actually filmed, featuring instead ones built with cement.)

After the segment is televised, I wonder about Cinque Terre's paradoxical representation as simultaneously fragile and eternal, with terraces and people working in concert, yet each bringing about the other's demise. In the show, flooding is presented as the result of human neglect and the loss of the "old ways." It seems obvious that flooding and the walls are interrelated. But this isn't a relationship of causality, rather one of correlation:

abandoned drystone terrace walls didn't cause the 2011 flood, but the abandoned terraces certainly made the flooding worse. As Margherita cautioned Maria during the interview, floods were a regular occurrence in Cinque Terre's history and, as such, were not really a pressing concern. Her main concern, instead, was the drystone walls and the consequences to lives and livelihoods if they were ruined. For her, it wasn't the flood in itself that was destructive, but the combined effects of gravity, climate change, and mass tourism. Despite their differences, Maria and Margherita both presented Cinque Terre as "resilient." How might we disentangle such resilience stories? And what, in the Cinque Terre context, might resilience mean?

## Resilience re-imagined

Resilience stories are everywhere. From overcoming the odds to fighting to keep traditional knowledge alive, resilience narratives pervade much of contemporary discourse. There seems to be an assumption that resilience is a given concept, objectively “there,” but is it? What does resilience actually mean and to whom or what does it apply?



*Fig. 3. Cinque Terre. A broken drystone terrace wall. Photograph by author.*

Resilience has been defined in the psychological sciences as that “ordinary magic” which translates threats into good outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Others describe it as a “slippery concept,”<sup>3</sup> a “notoriously elastic term”<sup>4</sup> that escapes precise definition, but also conveys a sense of self-regulation<sup>5</sup> and adaptability.<sup>6</sup> Still others assert that resilience should be understood as a revolutionary act of resistance<sup>7</sup> that makes “good use of ruins.”<sup>8</sup> Research on resilience in any university database reveals tens of thousands of results; Google Scholar yields millions.

In policy circles and academic scholarship alike, there are increasing calls for the study of so-called “resilient” populations as well as resilient environments, which are hoped to

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<sup>2</sup> Masten, “Ordinary Magic.”

<sup>3</sup> Emmett and Nye, *The Environmental Humanities*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt, “The Empirical Falsity,” 175.

<sup>5</sup> Manyena, “The Concept of Resilience.”

<sup>6</sup> Pelling, O’Brien, and Matyas, “Adaptation and Transformation.”

<sup>7</sup> Amorim, “Resettlement of Communities.”

<sup>8</sup> Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*, Ch 3.



carry the potential to withstand and respond to social, political, and environmental changes and disasters.<sup>9</sup> On both individual and community levels, academic studies have documented resilience discourse,<sup>10</sup> public policies have attempted to reform environments to be resilient to stressors,<sup>11</sup> and professions have sought to facilitate resilience after setbacks.<sup>12</sup> The global media have reported on commitments to climate resilience and disaster preparedness. Many of these parties ask: how can we build resilience? How can we be ready for “nature” when it strikes? In much of the discourse on resilience, the focus is on *before* resilience happens. Yet, what is the nature of resilience itself? Is it possible to imagine resilience without centering on a single preceding phenomenon, as a practice emerging out of the everyday necessity to carry on with being? What of the doing of resilience, what does it involve? What motivates resilience? Who or what does resilience involve? Often lived experience is not considered nor are the multiple possible instances and temporalities when resilience might be needed beyond disastrous or policy contexts. What might such resilience look like? My thesis aims to address these questions by investigating how resilience is understood, used and enacted in Cinque Terre, Italy. Primarily using ethnographic storytelling triangulated with tools from the environmental humanities, this thesis argues that resilience can be found and practiced in the everyday by a variety of entities in various ways.

There is increasing recognition, particularly within the environmentally focused social sciences and humanities, that attending to the current planetary crisis, increasingly theorized under the rubric of the “Anthropocene,”<sup>13</sup> demands a re-imagination of the relations between

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<sup>9</sup> For a diverse sampling of scholarship, see Aldunce et al., “Framing Disaster Resilience;” Asprone and Manfredi, “Linking Disaster Resilience;” Eriksen, Nightingale, and Eakin, “Reframing Adaptation;” Saavedra and Budd, “Climate Change and Environmental.”

<sup>10</sup> For examples, see Middleton, “Nothing Lasts Forever;” McGreavy, “Resilience as Discourse;” Neocleous, “Don’t Be Scared’.”

<sup>11</sup> For examples, see European Union, “Resilience;” UNISDR, “UN System Task Team.”

<sup>12</sup> For examples, see Britt et al., “How Much;” Tedeschi and Kilmer, “Assessing Strengths.”

<sup>13</sup> The term was first used by chemist Paul Crutzen and the late biologist Eugene Stoermer to describe the current planetary epoch in which human beings drive the Earth’s processes. Although “Anthropocene” has become increasingly accepted as a description, its definition and existence continue to be widely debated. For the original paper see Crutzen and Stoermer, “The Anthropocene.” For Anthropocene position papers within

humans and nonhumans, whether the latter are plants, animals, or inanimate entities. Such a re-imagination, it is hoped, will break down the Cartesian divide separating Nature from Culture, allowing us to think about collaborative human and nonhuman projects in the context of a more-than-human world. This thesis presents one such project in the context of Cinque Terre, a place whose terraced landscapes are a hybrid amalgam of human and nonhuman elements, including a large tourist and a small resident population. In contrast to the majority of studies that seek to define, build, or examine resilience in a single population or against a particular phenomenon, I seek to explore it as an ethnographic object with an “ethnographic eye”<sup>14</sup> from three distinct lived perspectives: tourists to Cinque Terre, migrants who moved to Cinque Terre for love, and the terraced vineyards of Cinque Terre and their caretakers. Taking concepts seriously as ethnographic objects means “resisting the urge to reconstruct, systematize or complete knowledge that is presented in a fragmented or contradictory way.”<sup>15</sup> In practice, it means ethnographically describing the object according to participants know and understand it. This means asking questions about the nature of a concept for particular people in a specific time, place and space. An ethnographic object approach is done without presupposing a singular understanding of the concept and instead allows understandings of it to emerge through ethnographic data and storytelling. This ethnographic data is triangulated with tools from the environmental humanities in order to center Cinque Terre as both a place and a participant in its own story. The three main questions I ask are: How is resilience *imagined* in Cinque Terre? How is it *used* in Cinque Terre? And how is it *enacted* in Cinque Terre? By asking such questions, the substance of the object as it is currently understood in Cinque Terre is revealed through ethnographic stories. My main arguments are threefold. Resilience in Cinque Terre is imagined to be heroic and

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Anthropology and the Environmental Humanities, see Chakrabarty, “Anthropocene Time;” Haraway et al., “Anthropologists Are Talking;” Moore, “Anthropocene Anthropology.”

<sup>14</sup> Mair, Kelly, and High, “Introduction: Making Ignorance,” 3.

<sup>15</sup> Mair, Kelly, and High, “Introduction: Making Ignorance,” 22.

isolated, yet other factors beyond independent heroism are likely to impact positive outcomes after disastrous happenings. Resilience is used to provide legitimacy and belonging; such resilience looks more everyday than grandiose. Resilience is enacted over various temporalities, by both humans and nonhumans, and consequently can be slow, evolving and even circular. My main contentions are that resilience is not only a response to disaster, that it is influenced by emotion and that it is enacted by the more-than-human. In essence, I demonstrate that resilience can be found and enacted in the everyday.

### Resilience with and without disaster

Initially, I started fieldwork in the region with intentions that were similar to those of the film crew in my opening vignette. I was looking, that is, for an inspirational story - a story of resilience in the wake of the 25 October 2011 flood in the Cinque Terre region and beyond which caused millions of euros in damages and ended up costing eleven regional people their lives. In the years after the flood, Cinque Terre was frequently represented in print and social media as a resilient place that had recovered from the flood quickly and that was soon “back in business,” mainly for tourism, in the wake of the flood. Cinque Terre is representative of many small rural regions in Europe in that it has a singular economy, low population density, and significant evidence of environmental degradation.<sup>16</sup> Unlike many of these regions, however, Cinque Terre is a top Italian and European tourist destination. Because of its fame coupled with a resilient post-flood narrative, Cinque Terre appeared to be an ideal location to investigate post-flood resilience. However, my fieldwork there would soon reveal the opposite of what I had anticipated.<sup>17</sup> While the standard “flood narrative” featured in many of the promotional materials about Cinque Terre that I read, I was surprised to discover that

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<sup>16</sup> Pinilla, Ayuda, and Sáez, “Rural Depopulation.”

<sup>17</sup> The hallmark of anthropological work is long-term qualitative fieldwork. During fieldwork, the object of study is expected - to quote anthropologist John van Maanen’s treatise on fieldwork - to “keep bewildering [you] by failing to act in the ways they are supposed to act according to sound sociological theory” (van Maanen, 35). That was certainly the case here.

most of my local participants did not want to talk about the flood or the post-flood recovery. At first, I thought that this hesitancy was born out of the difficulty of recounting a traumatic event - as indeed it was. But even after I had established rapport, my participants insisted that while the flood was a flashpoint of sorts (albeit neither unique to the region nor a one-time occurrence), it was a secondary concern compared to ongoing environmental degradation and structural issues, such as the lack of essential services. The “real” disaster, it seemed, was a flood of a different kind: the ever increasing flood of tourist arrivals in Cinque Terre. Furthermore, many of the residents I talked to maintained that they were indeed resilient, but their resilience lay more in everyday life against the challenges of being in Cinque Terre, to be managed and overcome on a daily basis, rather than against a temporally brief, if undoubtedly spectacular, flood. This resilience-as-everyday-life sentiment was also true for tourists that I encountered, many of whom had personal resilience stories they shared with me that did not match a linear disaster-to-resilience path found in wider resilience narratives. To add to the unexpected outcome, many local participants saw the terraces of Cinque Terre as both the heart of the region and as taking an active part in their own resilience. Rather than dismiss these views as naive or ill-informed, I acknowledged participants’ lived experience about resilience as valid, based on the anthropological and feminist assumption that people are experts on their own lives. This assumption became the analytical foundation for an exploration of resilience different to the hegemonic disaster-to-resilience narratives that I had originally anticipated. In essence, believing the lived experience of participants became an opportunity to explore resilience differently.

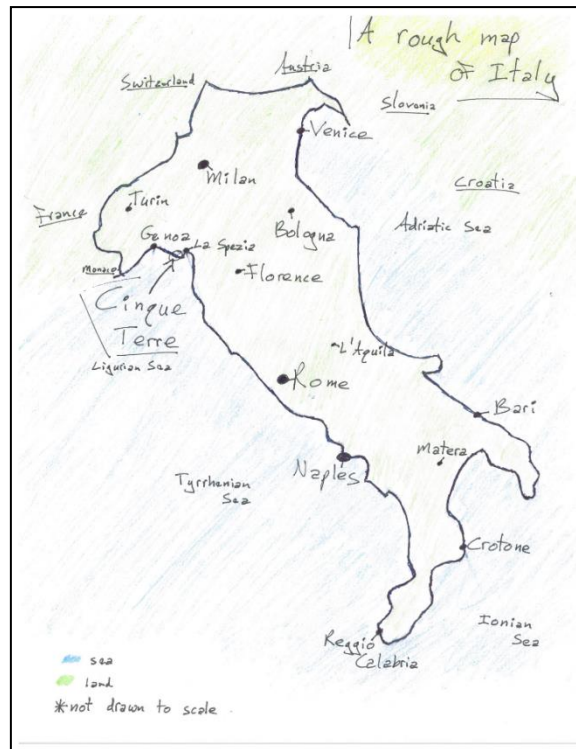


Fig. 4. A rough map of Italy, showing Cinque Terre's location. Drawing by j.e. yoho.

By attending to the unexpected<sup>18</sup> in my ethnographic fieldwork, I pivoted from post-flood resilience to how resilience was explained to me by participants. In the data that I gathered, I noted that those looking *at* Cinque Terre had different perspectives on resilience in the villages than those connected *to* Cinque Terre. My observation followed cultural geographer Edward Relph's theory of place and placelessness<sup>19</sup> where differences were constructed, at least in part, according to whether people saw themselves (or each other) as "insiders" or "outsiders" to Cinque Terre.<sup>20</sup> Those who were outsiders to Cinque Terre seemed to easily accept and apply resilient post-flood narratives in Cinque Terre (although as highlighted above, they didn't necessarily apply the same resilience narrative to their own resilience experiences), the same narratives that had originally drawn me to the Famous Five.<sup>21</sup> Such post-flood resilience stories were often reshaped by tour operators and

<sup>18</sup> This notion follows the anthropologist John Comaroff's notion of "critical practice," which investigates those forms of meaning and lived experience that map "processes of being-and-becoming" and which deploys nodes of "rupture, contradiction, and the counterintuitive" in "spatiotemporalization and grounded theory."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>19</sup> As cited in: Broto et al., "Stigma and Attachment," 954.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of insider and outsider perspective theory, see Merton, "Insiders and Outsiders."

<sup>21</sup> This is another name for Cinque Terre used mainly by English language tour operators.

guidebook authors, including American guidebook author Rick Steves whose published work appears in Chapter one, as an interesting story that added to the region's touristic appeal. In contrast, those who were insiders in Cinque Terre rejected the flood-to-resilience narrative. Insiders saw resilience as something more dispersed and with a longer history than solely related to post-flood reconstruction. Although Relph's theory explains why there was a difference in perspectives, that relation to place creates different imaginations and understandings, it did not explain participants' different understandings of resilience that contrasted to more dominant definitions of resilience. Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to how resilience is understood or carried out other than as a response to a grand event. Indeed, there are increasing calls for scholars to engage with how resilience is understood, used and enacted in social and environmental spaces.

My decision to focus on perspectives of resilience emerged organically through attention to and belief in participants' lived experience. Using the feminist and anthropological assumption that participants are the authority in their own experiences as a guide,<sup>22</sup> I asked "if this is not post-disaster resilience, then what is it?" I triangulated participants' experiences with my own experience as a researcher anticipating a post-flood resilience case study when conceiving the project, that is looking *at* Cinque Terre, to an ethnographer embedded *in* Cinque Terre whose findings did not align with her original expectations. This thesis consequently cleaves to the data I collected, the voices I recorded, and the various relationships I developed through ethnographic research. The thesis also recognizes that people and their environment have relational impacts on each other. Therefore it attempts to account for that relationality by including the *terra* of Cinque Terre as a perspective.

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<sup>22</sup> See Astuti, "Taking People Seriously;" Harding and Norberg, "New Feminist Approaches;" Mulinari and Sandell, "Exploring the Notion."

Exploring resilience differently however, also came to mean viewing the “before” of resilience differently. Although my research came to support a non-linear view of resilience, resilience seems never totally free of what necessitates it. Here, my insights echoed those of the environmental anthropologist Frida Hastrup, who, in describing post-tsunami recovery in Tamil Nadu after the 2004 Asian tsunami, asserts that disaster becomes entangled with the everyday to such an extent that it becomes composited in memory and everyday life *as* context.<sup>23</sup> Hastrup argues that while the tsunami was undoubtedly a singular event, it was one of *many* events that give general context to everyday life.<sup>24</sup> Other anthropologists have argued similarly that recovery should be seen in *the context* of everyday life rather than as a response to a single “temporally limited aberration” such as a flood or an earthquake.<sup>25</sup>

With Hastrup’s argument in mind, I began to understand that my participants’ lived experience, along with their refusal to engage with specific notions of post-flood resilience, placed *both* disaster *and* resilience within the ongoing context of their everyday lives. Instead of focusing on a single flashpoint, they were attuned to the difficulties, and triumphs, of their everyday existences. For instance, they routinely recognized that structural issues, such as codified land use practices or patriarchal gender norms, were catalysts for the 2011 flood as well as numerous other disastrous flashpoints, and they accordingly focused their lives on mitigating the effects of these issues. Resilience was about rebuilding vineyard terraces; about reforming local tourism practices; about simply getting up each morning in order to try again. Participants were, to use Hastrup’s phrase, “weathering the world.”<sup>26</sup> As one participant put it, “*We’re not thinking about the flood much, but instead on the daily hell of our lives – fighting against crazy tourism and environmental decline.*”

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<sup>23</sup> Hastrup, *Weathering the World*, 12 -13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 133. Also, see Scheper-Hughes, “A Talent for Life;” Vigh, “Crisis and Chronicity.”

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

When participants indicated that “crazy” tourism was one of the disasters of their world, does that mean we should identify tourism, or indeed any of the major issues that participants presented, as “disasters” in our turn? I believe it does, but to do so we first need to broaden our understanding of what a disaster is. As noted above, established ways of thinking about resilience tend to take disaster, or disastrous phenomena, as their primary object and to see resilience as something that comes afterwards. This leads to thinking of resilience only in relation to preceding phenomena, rather than examining resilience itself. Examples here include resilience to natural disasters such as flood, resilience to psychological trauma such as war, or resilience to ecological stressors such as toxic waste dumping. In each of these examples, there is a flashpoint that necessitates resilience. Consequently resilience theories, with their typical cause-and-effect framings and quantifications, have offered me little explanation for how resilience might be conceived except as the result of a singular, eventful phenomenon.

In contrast to resilience theories, I have found anthropology of disaster theories useful to understand how resilience can be claimed *without* attributing a particular catalyst. Disaster anthropologists have theorized disasters as a process and an array of concatenated events. These theories expand the category of disaster to include any sort of phenomenon that negatively impacts a population, including mass tourism.<sup>27</sup> Negative impacts can also be a more slow and attritional, such as consequences of climate change or outcomes of agricultural policy. In extrapolating from such theories of disaster, the “after” of disaster becomes equally dispersed. How should we approach and analyze resilience in these terms?

Recognizing resilience as a set of interwoven processes and array of events means acknowledging it as a substantive phenomenon with its own history, knowledge, politics, emotions and social relations. Scholars have theorized a range of concepts that have similar

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<sup>27</sup> Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, *The Angry Earth*.



entanglements with phenomena that occur “before,” including hope,<sup>28</sup> snap,<sup>29</sup> and suffering.<sup>30</sup> These studies focus on the relevant concept’s function in everyday life with its uses, representations and effects; in essence, they engage with the concept as one might analytically engage with a found material object in an archeological dig, such as a cup or saucer. In anthropology, examining a concept as though it were an object with ethnographic curiosity is called an ethnographic object approach.<sup>31</sup>

An ethnographic object approach does not assume a hegemonic or singular narrative or interpretation. Instead the object is situated with the context of a particular time, place and space in order to reveal its uses, interpretations and connection to the world around it. In the archeological found object analogy, when an object is unearthed at an archeological dig the team investigates the context of the object to learn more about it. Perhaps what appears to be a cup used for drinking was actually used as decoration for ceremonial wear and was thought to represent fertility. Between the initial and subsequent work with the object, the thing has the same shape but how people interact with and think about it are different. It is the same with exploring a concept as an ethnographic object. The concept retains its “shape” but its details and understandings are dependent on context as excavated through ethnographic research. Consequently it allows for diversity in perspectives. Recent anthropological work engaging with ethnographic objects includes Marshall Sahlins’ analysis on the tenacity of culture as an object,<sup>32</sup> Timothy Carroll’s exploration of Eastern Christian theology as an object,<sup>33</sup> and Casey High *et al.*’s edited volume on ignorance as an ethnographic object.<sup>34</sup> For a polysemic concept like resilience, this approach is powerful because it allows multiple

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<sup>28</sup> See Appadurai, *The Future*; Mauch, “Slow Hope.”

<sup>29</sup> See Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*.

<sup>30</sup> See Cassell, “The Nature of Suffering,” Wilkinson and Kleinman, *A Passion for Society*.

<sup>31</sup> An ethnographic object is akin to a scientific object. It is not to be confused with object-oriented ontology, a series of concepts and categories associated with Graham Harman and Timothy Morton. For an explanation of scientific objects, see Daston, “Introduction.”

<sup>32</sup> Sahlins, “Sentimental Pessimism.”

<sup>33</sup> Carroll, “Theology as an Ethnographic.”

<sup>34</sup> High, Kelly, and Mair, *The Anthropology of Ignorance*.

definitions and understandings to co-exist and mingle. Furthermore, it allows participants to reveal what resilience means to them as well as to detail how they understand, use and apply resilience in their lives in a particular place, at a particular time during a particular social, cultural, environmental and/or political space.

## Introducing Cinque Terre

Cinque Terre is a terraced landscape and a series of five (cinque) rural villages (terre) located on the northwest coast of Italy. The region is known for its picture-perfect scenery of pastel-colored houses nestled on a craggy coastline situated below steep verdant mountains and above inviting turquoise waters. Cinque Terre's fifteen kilometers of coastline and hinterland is both a UNESCO world heritage site<sup>35</sup> and an Italian national park. It is one of the few national parks where people actually live year round, making Cinque Terre both a landscape and a neighborhood. Its villages and vineyard terraces are among the most iconic images of modern Italy as a tourist destination. Unsurprisingly, its main industry is tourism.

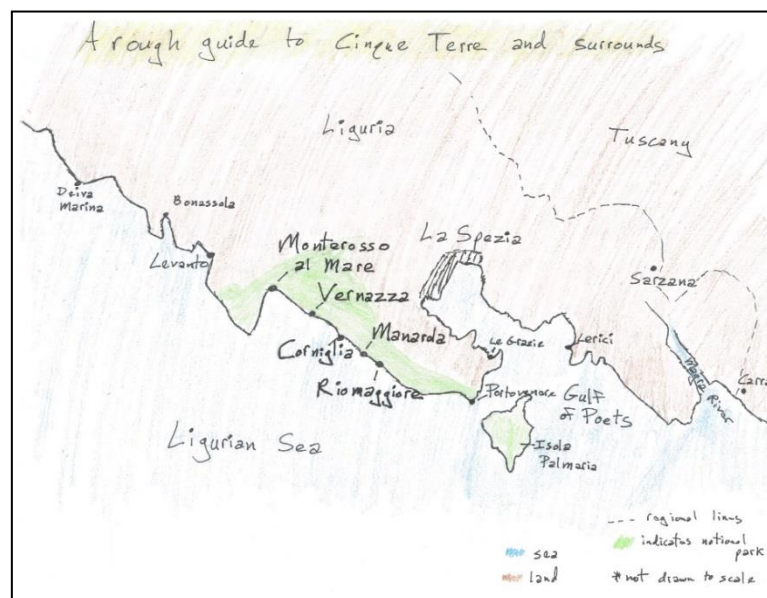


Fig. 5. Cinque Terre's towns. Drawing by j.e. yoho.

<sup>35</sup> Cinque Terre was designated a UNESCO world heritage site in 1997. Officially, it was nominated for this status because of its "harmonious interaction between people and nature to produce a landscape of exceptional scenic quality." See UNESCO, "Portovenere, Cinque Terre."

From north to south, the towns are:

Monterosso al Mare: With a social-media-worthy seaside promenade and sandy beaches, Monterosso al Mare feels more like a resort town than a small village. It has housed villas of the rich and famous since the turn of the twentieth century, including the family *pied-à-terre* of poet and Nobel Laureate Eugenio Montale. The town is divided into two sections, a new town (Fegina) and an old town (Centro storico), with a narrow road and winding trails that connect the two parts. It dates from about 600CE and is famous for its lemons and its anchovies.

Vernazza: Considered by some to be the “jewel” of Cinque Terre, Vernazza was founded by the Romans (although there may have been older settlements) and is the oldest of the five villages. It is built along a creek bed that flows to the sea and has since been diverted. It has been known for its wine since antiquity, with ancient Vernazza wine jars reportedly found preserved in Pompeii. Vernazza’s wine and vineyards feature in Chapter three. It belonged to the kingdom of Genoa from the medieval period onward, and has a ruined fortress that bears testament to those days. It is probably the most photographed of the five towns.

Corniglia: There are 382 steps from the Corniglia train station to the tiny village itself, making it the only Cinque Terre town that is not located beside the sea. Instead it is etched into perilous high cliffs that give it stunning coastal views. Its Saint Peter’s church was built in 1334 with white Carrara marble (the same marble quarry that sculptor Michelangelo used for his Renaissance masterpiece, David) on a pagan site. It is known for its *gelato* (similar to ice cream but made without egg yolk and less cream) and for being the quietest of the five villages.

Manarola: The town fills a river ravine that flows to the sea. The mills that were once situated in the ravine gave Manarola its name, which means “big wheel” in the local dialect.

Its tiny harbor has large rocks that are popular for sunbathing and rock jumping into the deep water. Manarola hosts the offices of the *Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre* (Cinque Terre National Park) and a giant yearly Christmas Nativity tableau set amongst the terraced vineyards.

Riomaggiore: Like Manarola, Riomaggiore is functionally named: its name means “big river.” The town features colorful murals, painted by Argentinean artist Silvio Benedetto, that celebrate drystone wall building and *la vendemmia* (grape harvest) by depicting past residents going about their work.

Each Cinque Terre village is home to populations that range from a few hundred to over one thousand officially declared residents.<sup>36</sup> Defining who lives in Cinque Terre is more difficult. In addition to longstanding resident families, Cinque Terre also houses seasonal workers, migrants, weekenders from nearby La Spezia, Milan, Turin, or Genoa with second properties in Cinque Terre, and, of course, tourists. The towns feature numerous restaurants and bars (these serve breakfast, lunch and snacks as well as alcohol and sometimes other amenities such as mobile phone vouchers and cigarettes), a pharmacy, a church (different from a sanctuary), a train station, and numerous tourist room rentals. There are preschool and elementary school options in Cinque Terre, but high school students must commute to larger towns for education. Because the roads to most of Cinque Terre, built in the 1970s, are long, winding, and narrow, many residents prefer to use trains for trips to town for work or pleasure. During the school year (September-May), early morning trains are filled with teenagers and college students commuting to school in one direction and Cinque Terre service workers and tourists coming in the other.

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<sup>36</sup> This means that they have declared their official place of residence in these towns. This does not necessarily mean that they live there.



Fig. 6. Corniglia. Sentiero. Photograph by author.

Between each Cinque Terre village is a network of *sentieri* (paths) that crisscross the terraces and extend to the hamlets and towns beyond the five coastal towns. Most of the *sentieri* are free to access and use. One of these paths, *la via dei Santuari* (Sanctuary Way), connects to the Roman Catholic sanctuary churches that guard each town from the mountains above. Parts of *la via dei Santuari* are often walked by locals, either for pleasure or work, or as part of Catholic feast days when processions with religious relics traverse the *sentieri* to the churches above. Asparagus, herbs, and mushrooms, among other plant life, grow along these *sentieri* and it is not uncommon to meet someone with a bushel of foraged produce as you walk by. Another path, *il sentiero azzurro* (blue path), connects each town by a coastal route (although at the time of writing, about half of it is closed due to landslides). The *sentiero azzurro* is the most popular path for tourists as it features stunning views of the sea and the villages. This particular *sentiero* is ticketed during the tourist season (April - October) and in the off-season is typically closed for maintenance.

Cinque Terre is positioned between the coastal cities of La Spezia, ten minutes by train to the south, and Genoa, about forty-five minutes by train to the north. Cinque Terre, La Spezia, and Genoa are all part of the small Italian region of Liguria. Liguria is situated between the principality of Monaco and the French Riviera to the west, the “Italian foodie”

regions of Piedmonte and Emilia Romagna to the north and northeast, and Tuscany, the famous Italian wine-producing region, to the east. Liguria is known for its pesto and its perhaps most famous son, Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus).

Like most of Liguria, Cinque Terre is mountainous and much of its cultivated land lies upon terraced plots. These terraces are commonly stabilized by retaining walls constructed of drystone. Drystone construction means that no mortar is used; instead, stones are stacked in carefully managed patterns, often with overlapping columns, which are robust and flexible, ideally suited to the local conditions. In Cinque Terre alone, there are a reported 6,729 kilometers (4,181 miles) of drystone walls.<sup>37</sup> Although a robust drystone wall can last for well over a century, the walls do require maintenance. Drystone masonry, however, is considered by many to be a dying art, and it is not uncommon to see walls repaired with cement or wire fencing. The material of the new masonry and lack of repair has been largely blamed for the region's increasing vulnerability to flooding and landslides. Despite substantial land abandonment throughout the twentieth century, the landscape of Cinque Terre continues to be dominated by drystone terraces. The terraces are primarily cultivated with lemon trees, olive groves, and grapevines, the products of which are sold locally.

Contrary to many popular descriptions of Cinque Terre (see also Chapter one), it has never been completely isolated from the world. Liguria was considered to be a strategic region for Roman expansion into Gaul and Spain. During this time, wine from the Cinque Terre region was transported to the Roman capital. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the region was dominated by the powerful city-state of Genoa, which exerted a strong naval trade influence over Europe. Histories of this period describe Cinque Terre as important for Genovese Kingdom because of its timber, shipbuilding and agriculture.<sup>38</sup> It was around the

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<sup>37</sup> Allegri and Garbarino, *Vernazza*.

<sup>38</sup> See Allegri and Garbarino, *Vernazza*; Iacoponi, "Popolazione e paesaggio."

end of the Napoleonic Wars that coastal Liguria became a favored destination for British gentry and writers. Charles Dickens described Liguria as a “sequestered spot,” where one could write and relax surrounded by “harsh beauty.”<sup>39</sup> Artists and creators Lord Byron, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Shelley (who died in La Spezia), Charles Dickens, Richard Wagner, George Sand, D.H. Lawrence, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernest Hemingway, Dylan Thomas and Eugenio Montale all spent time at various locations on the eastern Ligurian coast, particularly locations near Cinque Terre, such as La Spezia and Lerici, but also in Cinque Terre itself.

Despite Liguria’s fame as a destination for artists from the early part of the nineteenth century, Cinque Terre remained relatively isolated from large numbers of sightseeing visitors until railway lines connected it to La Spezia and Genoa in the late part of the century. By then, La Spezia had become an active seaport and industrial center, connecting the region as a whole to the wider world. It was from this time that parts of Cinque Terre, Monterosso al Mare in particular, gained popularity as holiday destinations for the wealthy and notable. For example, in the 1920s and early 1930s, Guglielmo Giovanni Maria Marconi, fascist and the inventor of the radio, perfected the short wave radio from Monterosso. During the Second World War, La Spezia’s railways and naval arsenal were considered strategically important to the Axis war effort; consequently, the region was heavily bombed during the war. By the second half of the war, La Spezia and Cinque Terre were occupied by the Nazis, who fortified the region with bunkers and landmines, some of which remain in Cinque Terre today.<sup>40</sup> The naval arsenal in La Spezia also remains. It is the second largest naval base in Italy, hosts NATO operations, and is one of the region’s main employers after tourism and oceanic shipping.

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<sup>39</sup> Kolb, *Azure Spell of Liguria*, 47.

<sup>40</sup> For example, on the eastern side of the national park, between La Spezia and Portovenere, is a relatively large fenced area with signs indicating that the enclosed region is landmined. Bunkers, on the other hand, are more numerous and visible. There is a large bunker on the beach in Monterosso al Mare.

## A disastrous context: Overtourism and environmental change

Despite the region's long literary, scientific and military history, Cinque Terre's rise as a global "must-see" destination from the 1990s onward remains the event against which time is measured: before and after mass tourism; when there was "no one," and when there was the world. Although numerous scholars have demonstrated that the phenomenon of mass tourism is not a singular event,<sup>41</sup> popular perception continues to hark back to a more "authentic" time before the tourists arrived.<sup>42</sup> For example, the American travel guidebook author Rick Steves, later featured in Chapter one, nostalgically remembers Cinque Terre in the 1980s as charming, quaint, and sparsely populated by "enthusiastic locals."<sup>43</sup> Today anyone looking for the quaint towns described by Steves is likely to be disappointed.

Between April and October every year, Cinque Terre is inundated with tourists from all corners of the world. The most commonly cited figures suggest 2.5 million tourists annually, but I estimate the number is much higher.<sup>44</sup> This estimate is influenced in part by a newly added cruise-ship dock in La Spezia, which allows the port to accommodate two cruise ships at a time. Day-trippers from cruise ships, as well as from Genoa and Florence, take the short train journey to Cinque Terre for walking tours. Tourists who are not part of large tours typically also arrive by train and stay in Cinque Terre, La Spezia, or nearby Levanto. On most nights, there are more tourists sleeping in Cinque Terre than local residents. Prices for food, housing and amenities are high. Despite the high prices, restaurants and tourist accommodation are usually fully booked. Most people looking to rent or buy full-time accommodation in Cinque Terre either have a large private fortune or are forced to move on to La Spezia. For a small rural location, with very limited space and only a few thousand

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<sup>41</sup> For examples, see Cohen and Cohen, "Current Sociological Theories;" MacCannell, *The Tourist*; Urry, *Consuming Places*.

<sup>42</sup> See Khanom et al., "Host–Guest Authentication;" MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity;" Smith, *Hosts and Guests*.

<sup>43</sup> Steves, Rick Steves Presents.

<sup>44</sup> The 2.5 million tourist arrivals number has been cited in tourism materials since at least 2010.



inhabitants, accommodating millions of tourists every year is no small feat. However, tourist arrival numbers alone fail to account for the qualitative dimensions of what many of my participants called “tourist hell.”



Fig. 7. Riomaggiore. Tourists waiting to board a ferry. Photograph by author.

*Overtourism* can be defined as “an excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment.”<sup>45</sup> Despite the rapidly growing number of tourists worldwide, it is easy to rebuff concerns about tourism’s destructive force as an exaggeration. On the contrary, tourism is often promoted as an economic miracle. Many communities and regions hope to harness tourism in order to boost their respective economies,<sup>46</sup> viewing regions with thriving tourist economies as fortunate. People living and working outside Cinque Terre often conveyed similar sentiments to me. As one tourist derisively stated, “*At least Cinque Terre has money. There are people that have nothing but cancer to show for their problems.*” Linking tourism to negative outcomes is hardly new.<sup>47</sup> Negative effects such as increased waste, loss of amenities for residents, and erosion of local identity have all been regular subjects of conversation for decades in Cinque Terre. What *is* new, however, is

<sup>45</sup> Koens, Postma, and Papp, “Is Overtourism Overused?” 2.

<sup>46</sup> For scholarship on the expectation that tourism will increase local GDP, see Hall, *Tourism Planning*.

<sup>47</sup> For examples from diverse disciplines, see Capocchi et al., “Overtourism;” Duffy, *A Trip Too Far*; Griffin, “Trouble in Paradise;” Hall, “Degrowing Tourism;” Stonich, “Political Ecology of Tourism.”

increasing awareness of the damaging environmental effects of uninhibited mass tourism,<sup>48</sup> as well as increasing anti-tourist sentiment.<sup>49</sup> The sudden explosion of tourist numbers without additional infrastructural investments has been a particular cause for concern.

Although there are no specific studies to date on the effects of overtourism in the Cinque Terre region, Italian-based studies have demonstrated that the "effects on a population predominantly made up of [tourist] renters has been nothing short of catastrophic."<sup>50</sup> The most visible effects of overtourism in Cinque Terre are (a) the rising costs of living and housing and real estate speculation, leading to a lack of affordable housing;<sup>51</sup> (b) a deterioration of local residents' identification with place;<sup>52</sup> (c) the loss of a destination's "character;"<sup>53</sup> (d) harm to its cultural or physical environment (excessive waste generation, water problems, air pollution);<sup>54</sup> and (e) the privatization of public space.<sup>55</sup> That many of the effects of overtourism are similar to those associated with neoliberal economies,<sup>56</sup> such as disenfranchisement and environmental degradation, is not often considered when discussing overtourism or tourism more generally.<sup>57</sup> Rejoinders that tourist economies like Cinque Terre "have it good" therefore deserve reconsideration because such effects have calamitous and far-reaching consequences for both people and environments.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, the tourism scholars Ko Koens *et al.* argue that overtourism should be considered a *social*, rather than a quantitative or an economic issue.<sup>59</sup> This is certainly the case in Cinque Terre where the

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<sup>48</sup> See Benner, "From Overtourism to Sustainability;" Capocchi et al., "Overtourism."

<sup>49</sup> Alexis, "Over-Tourism and Anti-Tourist Sentiment." Also, see Burgen, "'Tourists Go Home.'"

<sup>50</sup> Herzfeld, "Engagement, Gentrification, and Neoliberal."

<sup>51</sup> Herzfeld, "Engagement, Gentrification, and Neoliberal;" Oskam and Boswijk, "Airbnb."

<sup>52</sup> Benner, "From Overtourism to Sustainability."

<sup>53</sup> Capocchi et al., "Overtourism."

<sup>54</sup> Koens, Postma, and Papp, "Is Overtourism Overused?"

<sup>55</sup> Benner, "From Overtourism to Sustainability."

<sup>56</sup> For examples of these effects, see Piketty, *Capital*; Tsing, *Friction*.

<sup>57</sup> C.f. Tzanelli, *Cinematic Tourist Mobilities*.

<sup>58</sup> Nixon, "Neoliberalism, Slow Violence."

<sup>59</sup> Koens, Postma, and Papp, "Is Overtourism Overused?," 9,10. Despite acknowledgment that overtourism is both social and economic, some use overtourism's social character to assert that problems of overtourism are merely planning issues rather than issues of tourism itself. Whether the root of overtourism issues is tourism or poor planning is still a point of debate. See Cheer, Milano, and Novelli, "Tourism and Community Resilience."

social effects of overtourism, such as loss of character, seem to matter just as much as, if not more, than economic ones, such as the loss of affordable housing. As one resident mused, *“how do you measure that sinking in your stomach feeling when navigating a street full of tourists? It’s not like UNESCO cares about our feelings. Someday those feelings are gonna give me a heart attack.”* To be clear, this example is not to argue that overtourism causes heart attacks; rather it is an indication that the social can have effects on the body and the environment.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to overtourism, Cinque Terre has also recently been facing significant environmental change. Although environmental change is often synonymously used with climate change, at its most fundamental level it refers to any change or alteration to the environment or environmental system.<sup>61</sup> In Cinque Terre, the environmental changes that are most often discussed by residents are the changes to the region’s drystone terraces.

These terraces once covered the expanse from the sea to the top of the mountains above the villages. Vintage photos show the terraces looking like mammoth vertical venetian blinds towering above tiny seaside houses. Historically, terraces have been central to Cinque Terre since the Roman era as they have allowed agricultural cultivation on steep terrain and, consequently, agricultural settlement. The terraces have held vineyards and olive groves, vegetable gardens and tiny bungalows. Geologically, the terraces have been important topographical features of Cinque Terre because they facilitate water drainage, prevent rockslides and soil erosion, and offer flexible support structures. When it rains or there is an earthquake, the walls are able to shift with water or earth and stay intact.

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<sup>60</sup> For examples of this argument, see Chuengsatiansup, “Sense, Symbol, and Soma;” Scheper-Hughes and Lock, “The Mindful Body;” Spangler, “To Open Oneself.”

<sup>61</sup> Park and Allaby, “Environmental Change.”



Fig. 8. Vernazza. Graffiti that reads “shame on the mayor’s office.” Photograph by author.

Socially and economically, these expansive terraces have been integral, both to the region’s identity and to its commercial value as a so-called “cultural landscape.” Cinque Terre’s “cultural landscape” designation is laid out in the 1997 UNESCO world heritage status rationale:

“The eastern Ligurian Riviera between Cinque Terre and Portovenere is a cultural site of outstanding value that illustrates a traditional way of life that has existed for a thousand years and continues to play an important socio-economic role in the life of the community.”<sup>62</sup>

Such statements about the terraces are rife in discourses on Cinque Terre, yet now only about twenty percent of the terraces remain. There is a clear disjunction between UNESCO’s reported value and the practical state of the terraces. One reason for the changes to the terraces involves the histories of the World Wars and the Italian “economic miracle,”<sup>63</sup> when able-bodied people were either taken by force or left of their own volition, for war or work in

<sup>62</sup> UNESCO, “Portovenere, Cinque Terre,” np.

<sup>63</sup> Agnoletti, “Italian Historical Rural Landscapes.”

the cities, and never returned.<sup>64</sup> Another reason is connected to invasive species, such as phylloxera, which arrived from the Americas in the mid-nineteenth century and decimated indigenous flora and fauna<sup>65</sup> (see also Chapter three). There are also modern problems of erosion from increased foot traffic along the popular *sentiero azzurro*. In spite of the degradation of the drystone terraces, and the many reasons for their decline, they continue to dominate perceptions of what Cinque Terre *is* and what it means to people. In essence, Cinque Terre would not be what it is today without the drystone walls. Any change to them directly influences Cinque Terre's identity as a place.

In addition to changes to the terrace walls, Cinque Terre has also experienced weather-related environmental changes. As previously mentioned, one of the most recent weather events happened on 25 October 2011. On this particular day, after hours of torrential rain, floods and mudslides enveloped Cinque Terre. Vernazza and Monterosso al Mare were among several Ligurian and Tuscan towns that sustained heavy damage. Footage from the day shows torrents of muddy water flowing down the main streets, carrying cars, trees, rocks, grapevines, and debris out to sea. In the aftermath of the disaster, Monterosso al Mare and Vernazza were buried under several meters of mud. Several residents were caught in the flood; their bodies were found days later, washed ashore in France. Initial reports attributed the mudslides to heavy rains that had caused exposed soil on the hills above the town to turn into heavy mud, which in turn slid down ravines, carrying off anything unfixated in its path. One journalist described the mudslides as a mass of "mud, vines and boulders that powered through every house and business along the main street. Medieval cobbles were ripped up, parts of the centuries-old vineyards and olive groves were devoured, the town's utilities were cut off; roads, bridges and railways were blocked."<sup>66</sup> The incumbent Italian President Giorgio

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<sup>64</sup> Armiero, *A Rugged Nation*.

<sup>65</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*.

<sup>66</sup> Bennett, "Cinque Terre."

Napolitano declared on television that climate change was at the heart of the disaster,<sup>67</sup> while other contemporaneous news sources mentioned environmental degradation and precarious building practices as its most likely direct cause.<sup>68</sup> In the years following the 2011 flood, the cost of reconstruction is reported to have come to over eight million euros.<sup>69</sup>

In the weeks following the October 2011 flood, there were other, smaller floods, an early snowstorm and an earthquake. In the following years, residents noted early grape harvests, followed by late ones. Unusually inclement weather froze tree and grape buds late one spring, resulting in an extremely low lemon and grape yield. Historically, floods have been relatively regular occurrences in the region. There was a large regional flood in 1982 and another, more extensive one in 1966, which also covered some of the Cinque Terre in mud. The 2011 flood thus fits a pattern, and unsurprisingly weather patterns continue to be a favorite topic of discussion in Cinque Terre.



*Fig. 9. Vernazza. Sign in memory of the 25 October 2011 flood. Photograph by author.*

How do overtourism and environmental change threaten Cinque Terre, and what can be learnt from studying this place in particular? Unlike many tourist destinations,<sup>70</sup> Cinque Terre

<sup>67</sup> Povoledo, “Mudslides and Flooding Ravage.”

<sup>68</sup> Squires, “Villages All but Wiped.”

<sup>69</sup> Bennett, “Cinque Terre.”

<sup>70</sup> Carrigan, Postcolonial Tourism.

is not under imminent threat from sea-level rise, nor is it facing the decimation of its single economy. Some scholars have theorized these phenomena as impacts of Westernization, in which a perceived excess of visitors and the fear of environmental change are twin manifestations of the neoliberal, globalized market.<sup>71</sup> Others have suggested they represent social vulnerabilities in a “risk society” in which disasters, risks, and vulnerability are effectively co-produced, looming large in everyday life.<sup>72</sup> My focus here, to borrow the classic anthropological trope, is to “make the familiar strange” by giving attention to the lifeworlds of people on the ground and taking their concerns seriously. As will become evident in this thesis, overtourism and environmental change are two phenomena that my participants were only too aware of as having a negative impact on their daily lives. They were also the phenomena against which participants professed to enact their own resilience. This leads to the question of whether the impacts associated with environmental change and overtourism can be considered “disastrous.”

The disaster anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith conceives of disasters as a web of relations that link society, environment and culture to create negative outcomes.<sup>73</sup> Drawing on Oliver-Smith’s work and that of his co-researcher Suzanna Hoffman, anthropologists (among other social scientists) have demonstrated that disasters are not extreme events disturbing an inherently stable social or ecological structure, but rather processes that reveal and exploit already existing vulnerabilities.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, disasters, “natural” or otherwise, are calamitous for a variety of social, cultural and political reasons, and operate on many different levels of vulnerability over an equally wide variety of time scales.<sup>75</sup> This suggests

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<sup>71</sup> See Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life*; Tzanelli, *Cinematic Tourist Mobilities*.

<sup>72</sup> Beck, *World at Risk*. Also, see Wisner et al., *At Risk*.

<sup>73</sup> Oliver-Smith, “What Is a Disaster,” 28-29.

<sup>74</sup> Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, *The Angry Earth*. Although largely outside of the scope of this thesis, the concept of vulnerability in relation to disaster and resilience has been well theorized. For a recent work on this triad, see Bolin and Bolton, *Race, Religion, and Ethnicity*; Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life*; Vardy and Smith, “Resilience.”

<sup>75</sup> Oliver-Smith, “What Is a Disaster.” Also, see Hastrup, *Weathering the World*; Mauelshagen, “Disaster and Political Culture.”

that disasters, of whatever category, are largely social constructions. Because of this, Oliver-Smith contends, disasters should be seen as an intricate web or tapestry that entwines the environmental with the social and the cultural.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, just as perceptions of reality are constructed discursively and are continuously shaped by how people relate to them,<sup>77</sup> disaster, too, is constituted primarily based on how it is experienced, explained and perceived. Using these broad social constructivist definitions, it is possible to understand overtourism and environmental change in Cinque Terre as complex and interconnected *disasters*.

Following on from this, one of the threads of contention in this thesis is to challenge the “ontological stability of concepts in the context of transnational phenomena that ‘frustrate isolable, eventist models of disaster.’”<sup>78</sup> Scholars working on political ecology and degrowth are increasingly applying broad definitions of disaster to overtourism and environmental change.<sup>79</sup> Other scholars have extrapolated from social constructivist definitions to show how disasters can include slow or temporally dispersed phenomena, such as those associated with climate change, violence, or structural, political, social or economic crisis.<sup>80</sup> A leading example, is the literary scholar Rob Nixon who has coined the term “slow violence,” to account for a violence of attrition that evolves from a variety of disastrous occurrences ranging from the personal (e.g. domestic abuse) to the environmental (e.g. toxic waste contamination).<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, in medical anthropology, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Paul Farmer have applied an equally slow-paced and dispersed concept of “structural violence” to

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<sup>76</sup> Oliver-Smith, “What Is a Disaster.”

<sup>77</sup> Cameron and Panovic, *Working with Written Discourse*; Schieffelin, “Performance and the Cultural;” White, “The Value of Narrativity.”

<sup>78</sup> Carrigan, “Postcolonial Disaster, Pacific Nuclearization,” 270.

<sup>79</sup> For examples, see Bourdeau and Berthelot, “Tourisme et Décroissance;” Norum et al., “Conclusion;” Hall, “Degrowing Tourism.”

<sup>80</sup> For further theorization, see Wilson, *Community Resilience*.

<sup>81</sup> Nixon, *Slow Violence*.



the social structures which inflict physical or other forms of violence on human and nonhuman bodies alike.<sup>82</sup>

While the nomenclature varies, these theories share the broad social constructivist view that very different phenomena, over different times and in different places, can have disastrous outcomes (As anthropologist Edward Simpson asserts, perhaps a better term for the study of disaster should be the study of “aftermath,” because so often the focus is on the material effects, such as a ruined house or depressed economy, rather than on the disaster itself.).<sup>83</sup> My thesis adopts this social constructivist approach, in its turn, using it to define overtourism and environmental change in terms of a “disaster” that is neither a single event nor temporally restricted, and which results in a complex web of impacts that are both socially constructed and socially understood. Rather than enumerating further aspects of disaster here, the ethnographic data on which my thesis builds will subsequently reveal what is perceived to be disastrous by *participants*. To repeat my earlier point, disaster appears in Cinque Terre *as context*, composited with multiple other happenings, events and entities in everyday life.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*; Schepher-Hughes, “A Talent for Life.”

<sup>83</sup> Simpson, “The Anthropology of Disaster.”

<sup>84</sup> For arguments for configuring catalysts *as context* rather than in context, see Hastrup, *Weathering the World*; Schepher-Hughes, “A Talent for Life;” Vigh, “Crisis and Chronicity.”



Fig. 10. Vernazza. A poster advertising a community event on “storms.” Photograph by author.

Having begun to discuss the Cinque Terre context, we now need to consider how to define Cinque Terre *as a place*. How might we delimit Cinque Terre given that most of the region’s beds are occupied by tourists, and given that many of its workers and landowners live outside the bounds of the National Park? If we want to define Cinque Terre by its people rather than as an inert territory (*eg.* as a peopled community) then we need to acknowledge that communities are never static. Instead, they are in a perpetual state of emergence and transformation and are entangled in social, political and environmental relationships of different kinds.<sup>85</sup> Even communities that are often described as “unchanged” or “traditional” are shown in the scientific literature to be quite contemporary; formed in relation to long histories of mobility and nation-building,<sup>86</sup> they are the products of relationships between people, institutions, and nature across various spaces, places and times.<sup>87</sup> However, these widened definitions of community tend to focus narrowly on the human, with only peripheral

<sup>85</sup> For examples, see Barrios, “Here, I’m Not;” Malenfant, “The Limits;” Peacock and Ragsdale, “Social Systems, Ecological Networks.”

<sup>86</sup> Giovine, “Rethinking Development;” Mulligan et al., “Keywords in Planning.”

<sup>87</sup> Tobin and Whiteford, “Community Resilience and Volcano.”

attention paid to landscapes, plants, and animal life. I therefore want to expand the definition of Cinque Terre beyond that of either a delimited physical place or a shifting human community.

Instead, I want to see Cinque Terre as *both a natural and a cultural landscape*. Cinque Terre, as subsequent chapters will show, is a place configured by the natural world and cultural understandings of that world, a place where human and nonhumans cohabit and mingle. In Cinque Terre on any given day there might be encounters between day-trippers, invasive plants, monthly tourists, absentee landowners, olive groves, seasonal workers, non-resident shopkeepers, refugees, love migrants, drystone terraces, domestic animals, medical locums, and elderly residents who rarely leave their village. In exploring the rich interactions of Cinque Terre, my thesis focuses on three main groups that I encountered during my fieldwork. These groups are tourists, “love migrants,” and the famous vineyard terraces and their human caretakers. Their respective ethnographies form the main part of this thesis as it proceeds.

Now that the “who” in Cinque Terre has been established, let us return to a variant of a question posed in the opening vignette. Does Cinque Terre actually have it so bad as to warrant a full-length academic study of resilience? The scholars who have provided me with definitions of disaster, risk, recovery, slow violence and the like have tended to focus on the poor in the so-called developing world, not on the inhabitants of a sought-after tourist destination. Some scholars have recently argued that restricting attention to only certain segments of society risks producing a kind of “misery fetishization,” that creates or widens divisions instead of highlighting nodes of convergence.<sup>88</sup> The anthropologist Laura Nader proposes “studying up” as one possible solution to this problem.<sup>89</sup> Nader argues that attention

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<sup>88</sup> Ortner, “Dark Anthropology.”

<sup>89</sup> Nader, “Up the Anthropologist.”

to all segments of society is necessary in order to engage fully and appropriately with the world. Situating a study in Cinque Terre, where participants have a great deal of social, cultural, and political capital,<sup>90</sup> provisionally answers this call to “study up.” After all, as the disaster scholar Shinya Uekusa asserts, the availability of capital does not prevent disaster or obviate the need for resilience; capital just makes the experience different.<sup>91</sup>

### Cinque Terre in this thesis

This thesis conceptualizes Cinque Terre as both a landscape and a particular configuration of humans and nonhumans. As a landscape, Cinque Terre is both a material entity and a symbolic representation of place.<sup>92</sup> Its landscape is thus both natural and cultural. My participants, however, often referred to Cinque Terre as, *inter alia*, a landscape, an environment, a paradise, a wild nook, or an overrated Disneyland.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, at times there seemed to be a disjuncture between scholarly meaning and quotidian meaning. Rather than attempt to account for every instance of definitional misalignment, I have interpreted these many ways to describe Cinque Terre as an indication of its multispecies character, and have adopted an approach that applies these different perspectives. In this and other respects, the thesis sits with the complexity of who and what Cinque Terre means across both time and space.

Tourist regions such as Cinque Terre are “fluid social formations through which geographically mobile, capital, tourists, migrants and workers move and articulate with local and regional formations.”<sup>94</sup> In the chapters of this thesis, I configure Cinque Terre as composed of tourists, love migrants, and vineyard terrace caretakers, plus drystone vineyard

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<sup>90</sup> For theory on capitals, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

<sup>91</sup> Uekusa, “Rethinking Resilience.”

<sup>92</sup> For examples of landscape theorizations, see Gaggio, *The Shaping of Tuscany*; Setten, “Landscapes of Gaze.”

<sup>93</sup> These are all English-language descriptors. In Italian there were also a range of words used to describe Cinque Terre, for example *ambiente* (roughly meaning environment or surrounds) or *borghi* (villages).

<sup>94</sup> Duncan, Scott, and Baum, “Mobilities of Hospitality Work,” 12.

terraces and their constituent parts: rocks and grapevines. This configuration does not exclude other membership combinations; rather, it adheres to the empirical configurations that I encountered in the field. Definitions and theorizations of these groups feature in the substantive body of this thesis.

While the towns of Cinque Terre are geographically and culturally distinct, they are also commonly bound into one single entity, notably by the National Park, the region's UNESCO designation (which also includes towns not in Cinque Terre, such as Portovenere), and tourism literature. Because of this, I often also merge the five towns into one entity when describing Cinque Terre. In doing this, I acknowledge that nuances of place are lost.

## Defining resilience

Although it has been suggested by some scholars that resilience is little more than a metaphor,<sup>95</sup> the popularity of the term in the scientific literature demonstrates the power it holds. On the one hand, scholars have criticized the way that resilience is used as a tool of neoliberalism and individualization, putting the onus on people to find their own solutions to the agencies of the world at large.<sup>96</sup> The political theorists Brad Evan and Julian Reid, for example, have argued that because people are naturally resourceful and resilient creatures, neoliberal discourses have co-opted that resilience to control and police the population by making them susceptible to risks to which they then, whether individually or collectively, adapt.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, critics have suggested that resilience has been overused to the point that the term is all but vacuous: conceptually inappropriate, imprecise, an empty vessel to be filled according to its articulator's whim.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, some scholars have noted how

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<sup>95</sup> For examples, see Carpenter et al., "From Metaphor to Measurement;" Norris et al., "Community Resilience."

<sup>96</sup> For examples, see Joseph, "Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism;" Walker and Cooper, "Genealogies of Resilience;" Zebrowski, "The Nature of Resilience."

<sup>97</sup> Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life*.

<sup>98</sup> For examples, see Davoudi et al., "Resilience;" Norris et al., "Community Resilience;" Vale, "The Politics of Resilient."

“resilience” has replaced “sustainability” as the new programmatic and policy term *du jour* in which “building resilience” on individual, community and environmental levels is imagined as a panacea to individual, social, or environmental ills.<sup>99</sup> The term’s contentiousness aside, scholars have sought to quantify resilience through standardized measurements, leading some to view resilience in terms of a physical transformation that can be predicted and managed, possibly even mastered.<sup>100</sup> Disagreements about resilience likewise devolve into debates about categorization and politically motivated assessments, such as determining who and what has enough resilience, and who and what needs more. For example, the geographer Kevin Grove’s case study of a post-earthquake Jamaican community demonstrates that community members were forced to quantify their suffering and their capacity for resilience, in a sort of Olympics Games of suffering, in order to be considered “worthy” of assistance.<sup>101</sup>

These categories can be seen as part of a larger project of the “sciencification” of knowledge,<sup>102</sup> through which certain, purportedly “objective” forms of knowledge are viewed as being superior to qualitative epistemologies. Such emphasis on quantification risks stripping resilience of its cultural anchors, ideological meanings, and everyday actions. Furthermore, as many feminist, decolonial, and science and technology studies scholars assert, quantification at the expense of other forms of knowledge inherently ignores the perspectives of those other than the (mostly white male) quantifier, namely women, Indigenous peoples, and people of color.<sup>103</sup> Hegemonic concepts arbitrarily separate the social from the environmental, to the detriment of practical knowledge about how resilience

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<sup>99</sup> For examples, see Berkes and Ross, “Community Resilience;” Davoudi et al., “Resilience.”

<sup>100</sup> For examples, see Kammouh, Dervishaj, and Cimellaro, “Quantitative Framework to Assess;” Luthe and Wyss, “Community Resilience to Climate;” Steiner, Woolvin, and Skerratt, “Measuring Community Resilience.”

<sup>101</sup> Grove, “Adaptation Machines.”

<sup>102</sup> The term “sciencification of knowledge” is often attributed to philosopher Bruno Latour, however some of the earliest social construction of scientific knowledge can be traced to sociologist David Bloor. See Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. For additional foundational work on social construction of knowledge, see Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*; Knorr-Cetina, *The Manufacture of Knowledge*.

<sup>103</sup> For examples, see Longino, *The Fate of Knowledge*; Perez, *Invisible Women*. Todd, “An Indigenous Feminist’s.”

is actually performed.<sup>104</sup> Academics from the social and ecological sciences may have invented categorical definitions for resilience, but such framings have lost, and perhaps ignored, what resilience *means* to people, and how they *enact* it in specific places at specific times.



Fig. 11. A view of all Cinque Terre towns. Photograph by author.

Although the term resilience has roots in material sciences,<sup>105</sup> it has also been taken up in the psychological,<sup>106</sup> ecological,<sup>107</sup> and social sciences.<sup>108</sup> Resilience can thus be used to refer to the physical world, as well as to the inner life of individual humans and communities. In addition to describing physical realities, resilience has an imaginative quality in so far as it is constructed with meaning and value through practice. Physical and social conceptualizations of resilience alike are underpinned by the idea of change, along with stressors and threats such as natural disasters, trauma, violence, or terrorism. Thus, ideas of

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<sup>104</sup> For substantive theories on the dualism between the social and the environmental, see Latour, *We Have Never Been*; Plumwood, *Environmental Culture*.

<sup>105</sup> See Young, *A Course of Lectures*, 110. The word resilience can be traced to scientist Thomas Young's lectures on natural philosophy - similar to today's natural sciences rather than environmental philosophy - and mechanical arts. Young defined resilience of a material as the material's ability to resist breaking and maintains its composition.

<sup>106</sup> See Fu, Leoutsakos, and Underwood, "An Examination of Resilience;" Rutter, "Psychosocial Resilience and Protective;" O'Dowd et al., "Stress, Coping, and Psychological."

<sup>107</sup> See Cote and Nightingale, "Resilience Thinking Meets Social;" Holling, "Resilience and Stability;" Stormer and McGreavy, "Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric's."

<sup>108</sup> See Cowen, "Ethics in Community Mental;" Mulligan et al., "Keywords in Planning;" Meerow and Newell, "Urban Resilience for Whom."

stress and subsequent resilience are inextricably connected. In nearly all of these formulations, resilience is accorded a positive connotation.<sup>109</sup>

Based on my review of the large body of scientific literature on resilience, I have identified four overarching definitions of resilience. The first defines resilience as *adaptation* or adaptive capacity. This dates back to the ecologist Crawford Stanley Holling's 1973 seminal work, which defines resilience as the "measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables."<sup>110</sup> The second definition envisions resilience as the ability to *bounce back* after adversity. This idea is rooted in the oldest definitions of resilience, in terms of which resilience is understood as a physical material's strength and elasticity before breaking.<sup>111</sup> Adherents of this definition can be found in diverse fields such as disaster studies,<sup>112</sup> urban and landscape planning,<sup>113</sup> and the medical sciences.<sup>114</sup> The third definition views resilience as a form of *sustainability*. Sustainability is itself a contested term, and some scholars have advanced resilience as an alternative and more robust concept.<sup>115</sup> Resilience is defined here as the "ability of a system to sustain itself through change via adaptation and occasional transformation,"<sup>116</sup> or a "boundary concept to integrate the social and natural dimensions of sustainability."<sup>117</sup> The fourth definition views resilience as

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<sup>109</sup> Cowen, "Ethics in Community Mental."

<sup>110</sup> Holling, "Resilience and Stability." Holling drew on complexity science to argue that ecological resilience is not an exact "bounce back" to a previous state, but about adapting to maintain relationships between populations or variables. In the decades after Holling's publication, resilience as adaptive capacity became increasingly applied to environmental systems and human systems (but not necessarily the two together), along the lines that as long as systems are adaptive, then the stability of the system is assured. This led to resilience becoming one of the goals of a new discipline, nature resource management. Due to the development of this discipline, resilience as adaptation has become dominant in discourses that seek to manage the Earth's natural resources for today and the future.

<sup>111</sup> Young, *A Course of Lectures*. By the twentieth century, evidence points to resilience as elasticity having become standard vocabulary.

<sup>112</sup> For examples, see Aldunce et al., "Framing Disaster Resilience;" Fu, Leoutsakos, and Underwood, "An Examination of Resilience;" Manyena et al., "Disaster Resilience."

<sup>113</sup> Mulligan et al., "Keywords in Planning."

<sup>114</sup> Silverman et al., "Bouncing Back Again;" Smith et al., "Resilience as the Ability."

<sup>115</sup> Emmett and Nye, *The Environmental Humanities*, 20.

<sup>116</sup> Magis, "Community Resilience," 401.

<sup>117</sup> Olsson et al., "Why Resilience Is Unappealing," 1.



*resistance* to oppression.<sup>118</sup> The political scientist Caitlin Ryan, for example, uses this definition to demonstrate how groups act with adaptability and flexibility to chronic adversity and unstable conditions by employing collective strategies.<sup>119</sup>

What are the theoretical consequences of taking these diverse definitions and dimensions of resilience seriously rather than try to impose definitional order on them? The geographer Kevin Grove has recently attempted to address this question by discussing what the concept of resilience *does*.<sup>120</sup> Instead of focusing on definitions of what resilience is, Grove traces how the concept of resilience, in all of its various definitions, has been used to reconfigure human/environment relations in ways that tinker with or recombine elements of how neoliberalism functions. He argues that given the pervasiveness of the term at all levels of society, scholars should engage with resilience as it is *used* and *enacted* in the social and ecological realms.<sup>121</sup> Such attention, Grove argues, would allow scholars to explore ways that resilience is being creatively and collaboratively used.

### Resilience in anthropology

In anthropology, two trajectories align productively with resilience.<sup>122</sup> The first is the anthropologist Anthony Wallace's now classic theory of mazeways and cultural revitalization, first published in 1956.<sup>123</sup> Wallace's model examines a mazeway as the attempt to get one's bearings in the "maze" of confusion after disaster. Likewise, revitalization is a movement (a series of organized activities) that generates "culture change" via the "deliberate, organized efforts by members of a [given] society to construct a more satisfying culture."<sup>124</sup> In this

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<sup>118</sup> For examples, see Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*; Amorim, "Resettlement of Communities;" Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*.

<sup>119</sup> Ryan, "Everyday Resilience as Resistance."

<sup>120</sup> Grove, *Resilience*.

<sup>121</sup> Grove, *Resilience*, conclusion.

<sup>122</sup> Of note also is Anna Tsing's ethnography *Friction* (2004). I do not list it here because her use of resistance as resilience can be categorized as such in my own working definition that includes resilience as resistance.

<sup>123</sup> Wallace, *Revitalizations and Mazeways*.

<sup>124</sup> Wallace, *Revitalizations and Mazeways*, 164.

movement, individuals or groups regard their culture as a system that was once functional, but is now no longer so. For Wallace, revitalization is not linear but cyclical: one's culture can sprout and grow, then become sick or die, only to become reanimated by society's desire to have functioning culture. The cycle never ends, however differently individuals might deal with the cycle. Some might be advocates for reanimation, while others become apathetic and still others grow disillusioned or die. Wallace's notion of individualized reaction, both positive and negative, is a significant departure from the exclusively positive connotations that many definitions of resilience supply. According to these definitions, those considered to have "negative" reactions are not considered resilient. According to Wallace's theory, however, *all* responses are part of revitalization because each of them contributes to the task of making society functional.

While Wallace's work considers revitalization as a specific response to natural disasters in postcolonial Native American reservations, some contemporary applications of his theory have pitted it against disastrous phenomena in human history at large.<sup>125</sup> In recent decades, theories such as those associated with the sociologist Ulrich Beck's "risk *society*"<sup>126</sup> and Susanna Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith's above-mentioned work in "disaster anthropology"<sup>127</sup> have outlined what may be generally considered to be disastrous and risky phenomena, but corresponding considerations of responses to these phenomena have been somewhat limited. This leads me to the second anthropological discussion that relates to resilience: *recovery*.

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<sup>125</sup> Harkin, Reassessing Revitalization Movements.

<sup>126</sup> Beck, Risk Society; Beck, World at Risk.

<sup>127</sup> Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, *The Angry Earth*.



Fig. 12. Vernazza. An image of the village from the 1950s, when all land was terraced.  
 Reproduced by author, used with permission.

In recent years, along with the increasing focus on disaster from anthropologists, and the concomitant rise of resilience theory in wider scholarship, ethnographies of post-disaster recovery have begun to increase. Two of such ethnographies, Frida Hastrup's *Weathering the World*<sup>128</sup> and Katherine E Browne's *Standing in the Need*,<sup>129</sup> allow participants to dictate what recovery means to them, rather than subscribing to positivist notions of what recovery means after disaster. Hastrup and Browne both assert that recovery becomes composited in the everyday, urging for the analysis of recovery in terms of organic, lived processes. Investigating resilience as a process akin to recovery means attending to the overarching dynamics that necessitate a resilient response, both the sudden, catastrophic ones and the more gradual ones, and *then* looking at the responses themselves. Hastrup is particularly incisive in arguing that anthropologists need to display a

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<sup>128</sup> Hastrup, *Weathering the World*.

<sup>129</sup> Browne, *Standing in the Need*.

readiness to shift between seeing disasters as singular, decisive events in the lives of the affected and, alternatively, letting them fade from view, in accordance with grounded field experiences and local theorizing. The field - even in analysis based on fieldwork in post-disaster settings - must be understood as a composite and emergent site of human action, rather than as a backdrop that disasters can colonize to varying degrees or on which they spill over into issues of economy, politics, social relations and the like.<sup>130</sup>

Linking broad notions resilience and disaster allows for the two to exist simultaneously in a variety of combinations rather than in simple terms of cause and effect. It also allows participants to conceive of resilience as *they themselves* understand it, and to let other issues fade from focus if required. In recent years, scholars have increasingly followed this advice. On the resilience side, the Italian anthropologist Silvia Pitzalis has recast resilience as “exilience” which means both “being in the world” and affirming one’s presence in the face of continuous disaster.<sup>131</sup> On the disaster side, another Italian anthropologist, Elisabetta Dall’Ò, has demonstrated that disaster in the Italian Alps is now increasingly thought of as the environmental “curse of the times” rather than as a specific phenomenon.<sup>132</sup>

Calls to re-conceptualize resilience have also come from within the growing field of environmental humanities. For example, Stacy Alaimo argues for attention to resilience as the “mundane revolutionary practices that foster[s] intersubjective well-being through a million minute attempts to foster the resilience of ecosystems, the survival of species, the just distribution of health, wealth and opportunity, and the desire to more generally ‘unfuck the world.’”<sup>133</sup> In less provocative language, Mark Vardy and Mick Smith call for multispecies theorizations of resilience that go beyond an idea of “adaptive fitness” that tends to turn

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<sup>130</sup> Hastrup, *Weathering the World*, 12.

<sup>131</sup> Pitzalis, “Positioning as a Method,” 33.

<sup>132</sup> Dall’Ò, “I Draghi Delle Alpi,” np

<sup>133</sup> Alaimo, “Bring Your Shovel!”

biosocial communities into a rigid apparatus.<sup>134</sup> Finally, the editors of the journal *Resilience*, Stephanie LeMenager and Stephanie Foote, call for scholars to “squat” on neoliberal claims on resilience through heterogeneous storytelling, the rhythms of lived experience, and interdisciplinary practice.<sup>135</sup>

At the outset of this introductory chapter, I asked what resilience means, to whom or what it is applied, and what it might respond to. I then positioned the place, people and landscape of Cinque Terre as central to my particular investigation of resilience. I followed my positioning of Cinque Terre by adopting a broad view of resilience. I have shown how opening up the idea of disaster/disastrous phenomena to encompass a more diffuse set of processes makes the case for a resilience that is complex, multifaceted, and enacted by many different kinds of people in many different ways. I have attempted to transcend the perpetual tension between resilience and disaster, taking my cue here from my fieldwork participants, who steered away from telling resilience stories that focused on the outcome of a singular disaster. In doing the above, I have set the stage for exploring resilience as participants described it: as sometimes fast, often slow, sometimes circular, found in the everyday, and enacted by humans and nonhumans alike.

### Positionality, data collection, methods and (inter)disciplinary assumptions

The research on which this thesis is based reflects my own interpretation and the way of seeing the world that emerged interactively with my fieldwork. I am keenly interested in how people and natural environments adapt, my background in Australian medical anthropology having prepared me for work that is located at intersection of human and multispecies relations (see especially Chapter three). This thesis is unabashedly interdisciplinary<sup>136</sup>,

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<sup>134</sup> Vardy and Smith, “Resilience.”

<sup>135</sup> LeMenager and Foote, “Editors’ Column,” np.

<sup>136</sup> For the educational theorist Moti Nissani, interdisciplinarity is “bringing together in some fashion distinctive components of two or more disciplines” (Nissani, 122). Nissani argues that interdisciplinarity has four different domains within scholarship: interdisciplinary knowledge, interdisciplinary research, interdisciplinary education

incorporating theory, methods and analysis from anthropology, but also incorporating these in conversation with the environmental humanities. This is an important corrective because, although textual analysis and environmental history have been central to the environmental humanities field, the incorporation of qualitative fieldwork research remains underdeveloped.<sup>137</sup> Consequently the thesis draws on tools of the environmental humanities, namely environmental history, textual analysis and multispecies studies as well as its style of creatively approaching research outputs and puts these tools in dialogue with anthropological data collection and outputs.

The thesis rests on the assumption that women's voices matter and should be taken seriously. It also operates on the premise that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between the researcher and the people and places she comes to know. My prolonged experience in Cinque Terre also revealed it to be a more-than-human place, comprised of human and nonhuman elements that are entangled with each other. Both the humans and the nonhumans have individual and collective agencies.<sup>138</sup> My interpretations and analysis began in the field and were first formulated alongside my fieldwork companions.<sup>139</sup> Thus this thesis has been foremost written for and with participants. It was also written for anthropology and environmental humanities audiences in order to demonstrate productive conversations between them.

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and interdisciplinary theory. This thesis embraces interdisciplinarity in all four of these domains as its knowledges, approaches and theories are all derived from different disciplines. Although it is a single-authored work rather than a collaborative endeavor, my thesis is nonetheless born of interdisciplinary reading and reflection.

<sup>137</sup> CF Lagier, "Constructing Legitimacy?"

<sup>138</sup> There is long running debate between the use of the term "agency," particularly between anthropologists and sociologists (see Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology."). Various definitions include bringing about change (see Laidlaw, "Agency and Responsibility."), the capacity of certain events to fit into a chain of cause and effect ( Mills, "The Opposite of Witchcraft.") or action (see Brown and Westaway, "Agency, Capacity, and Resilience."). Here I use the term agency to mean force or creative capacity, which follows anthropologist Hugo Reinert's use of the term (see Reinert, "About a Stone.>").

<sup>139</sup> See Crang and Cook, *Doing Ethnographies*, 131, for a foundational overview.

## Positionality



*Fig. 13. Vernazza. Self-portrait during a drystone wall building session. Photograph by author.*

As a white, Anglophone female who traveled alone and was quite often seen as looking “too young” to be a researcher, I confronted particular challenges. At times, it seemed that everything, from finding a place to live to collecting data, was colored by my age, gender, and nationality. It took six months to obtain a research visa because, as I later found out, the university administrator in charge of my paperwork thought that Americans didn’t need visas for Italy. Finding an apartment was easy enough, but only at the “tourist rate,” which, at two thousand euros a month, was clearly beyond my means. I eventually found housing, albeit with great difficulty, in La Spezia, just ten minutes from Cinque Terre. Potential landlords often speculated that I was a prostitute. Speculations about my employment and purposes of living in La Spezia long-term gave me some interesting insights into local gender norms: for example I often heard, “what kind of foreign woman would come to a port city to conduct research by herself?” These comments seemed strange at first, but I soon grew accustomed to them. It took weeks to find anyone willing to rent a place to me, aside from the rough boarding houses that cater to (male) sailors. I was eventually successful only through the kindness of Michela, an Italian friend from Bologna, who called real estate agencies on my behalf. When she presented herself as the “assistant to an important academic from the

European Union,” she finally began to receive positive responses. I am further indebted to her, for looking at apartments with me and negotiating on my behalf. Even after securing the apartment, my landlords were suspicious of my profession and insisted that an Italian male co-sign the lease for security reasons. In total, they asked for six months of rent in advance of moving in. This wasn’t standard practice and I felt ashamed and angered once I realized that I had been misled. A research participant, however, reminded me that I was privileged. “*After all,*” she said, “*If you were brown, no one would have rented to you at all.*” She was correct. When I moved out, the landlord refused to rent the apartment to a North African family, although they had been living in the community for a decade. They were trying to swap their moldy apartment for something better, but although they had excellent character references and more than enough money to cover costs, my landlords flat-out refused to consider them as prospective tenants because of the color of their skin. Liguria (like several other places in the EU) has recently become a hotbed for xenophobic, anti-immigrant sentiment.

Even after securing accommodation, my age, gender and nationality continued to influence the people and places I came to know. At first, most people imagined I must be another travel blogger or a carbon-copy single American woman looking for romance abroad.<sup>140</sup> As a result, when I first arrived in Cinque Terre, I spent most of my time with tourists. I was largely alienated from locals, except those who were seeking “adventure” themselves. After an unwelcome and frankly harrowing encounter with a local man who was acting as an initial “gatekeeper,” I started to wear a traditional southern Italian engagement ring. I added my then Italian partner’s name to everything, and constantly mentioned him in conversation, to make sure everyone knew that I was there for research, not pleasure. His family was well known in the shipping industry, and I hid behind his name as much as

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<sup>140</sup> I believe this perception is in part based on the numerous blogs and travel stories about foreigners either documenting their travels or seeking love in Italy. For an example, see: <https://www.questadolcevita.com/blog/category/love-stories>



possible. Even after our relationship ended, I continued to do so for safety purposes. My ex-partner shaped this research in formative ways as he initially served as a cultural gatekeeper. He was also a key part of my legitimacy, as I used his identity to legitimate my own. Navigating being young and female in a tourist space was not exclusively an “Italian” issue, as I also encountered similar stereotyping from tourists, regardless of nationality. Many tourists were wary of a lone female in a “romantic” destination like Cinque Terre. It seemed that everyone had romantic love on their mind, from couples on their honeymoon to groups of young people looking for holiday romance because, as one twenty-something told me, “*Instagram makes it seem like Cinque Terre should be the place for romance.*”

Despite the challenges described above, my positionality also opened doors to me. My experiential and emotional affinities with the people I came to know, along with my own evolving feelings and thoughts, shaped my research trajectory in serendipitous ways. During the initial stages of my fieldwork, I found that tourist women who had also traveled on their own understood both my research objectives and my aloneness. To them, I was conducting research and just *living* as any man of a similar age, background and research objective would live; they talked to me without hesitation and encouraged their compatriots to do the same. Later, as I spent more time in Cinque Terre, my own experience as a “love migrant” to Australia in 2009 as well as my later long-term relationship with an Italian man allowed me to build rapport with many other *straniere* (foreign women) in the region. Our shared experiences of moving for love and cross-cultural relationships facilitated introductions and conversations about transnational mobility, along with our feelings about the same. In short, these women were willing to discuss their experiences and perceptions intimately because they felt I too was “one of them,” even though I had migrated for love to a different country. My precarious position as a migratory early career researcher<sup>141</sup> also elicited empathy from

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<sup>141</sup> Lempiäinen, “Precariousness in Academia.”

female research participants (both love migrants and Italians) who also relied on contract work and had to navigate immigration and/or other bureaucracy. Among the things we discussed were potential career trajectories (or a lack thereof) and the difficulties of planning for the future given job insecurity and/or migratory instability. My relationships with Cinque Terre *straniere* allowed me to meet other residents: the vineyard terrace caretakers, including vintners and drystone masons, many of them also female. These points of connection, mutual recognition and intersubjectivity were important parts of this project. Although I didn't intend to nigh-on exclusively study women's lives, concerns, and trajectories, the gendered nature of Cinque Terre (and coastal-rural Italy) necessitated it. Consequently, my inquiry is heavily influenced by feminist practice and politics, particularly my fundamental assumption: believe women.

The notion that women, and indeed all participants, are the authority on their own lived experience is not new, yet in contemporary Western politics and culture as well as academic study it remains a difficult practice.<sup>142</sup> This assumption was crucial when the data from participants did not match anticipated findings because I had to make a choice: believe or discount that participants understood and used resilience outside of an eventist context. I decided that participants had entrusted me with their stories and that I must remain faithful to their trust. Believing participants ultimately would mean that the outcome of my work would be different to what I had been engaged to do (study post-flood resilience). Thus I took a resilience road less traveled; one that has increasingly been pointed to by scholars yet one without much of a road map. Approaching resilience differently has not been without its challenges, but this fundamental assumption, born out of my commitment to participants, has been my guiding light. Above all, I have found that my approach has allowed me to connect

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<sup>142</sup> For an exploration of lived experience, subjectivities and feminist theory, see Mulinari and Sandell, "Exploring the Notion."

the storytelling of anthropology with the creative play encouraged by the environmental humanities, all while also attending to the voices of participants. A more thorough explanation of methods is found in the next section.

Even though this thesis is focuses on Italy, the lens through which I examine Cinque Terre shaped by my own American background, and includes the voices and perspectives of many (though not exclusively) American females, namely tourists<sup>143</sup> and love migrants. Although I have lived abroad for more than a decade, I grew up in the United States and my worldview is still very much informed by my home country. Thus, my positionality wears a gendered and nationalized cloak.

## Data collection

Ethnography as a method involves a co-constitutive relationship between the ethnographer and the people and places that she studies. In the following, I outline how I conducted the ethnographic research upon which this thesis rests.

I held a European Union funded doctoral fellowship to study post-flood resilience in Cinque Terre. The intension was to take this top-down directive and build a case study from the bottom-up, letting grounded theory approaches and long-term ethnographic fieldwork be my guide. In preparation for long term fieldwork, I conducted two brief scoping trips to Cinque Terre, for a total of seventeen days, in 2016. Due to visa delays, I could not begin fieldwork until late the following summer. Between August 2017 and February 2019, I lived in nearby La Spezia and commuted to Cinque Terre nearly every day. In early 2019, I lived in Vernazza for two months. The opening vignette of the thesis occurs in October 2019, when I was invited to return to Vernazza for a series of television interview projects on drystone walls. During my time in the field, I focused on the villages of Vernazza and Monterosso al

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<sup>143</sup> According to the Italian Bureau of Statistics, Americans are one of the dominant tourist groups in Italy, behind Germany, France and the UK. For further information, see ISTAT, “Movimento turistico in Italia.”

Mare, initially because the 2011 flood had hit the hardest there, and then because I came to establish connections in these places. Because each village is unique, with its own dialect, traditions, and history, a wider angle would have been difficult. Despite my focus on the two towns, I triangulated my experience by participating in English- and Italian- language tours and community events as well as community meetings in each of the Cinque Terre towns. Most attendees on Italian-language tours or at Italian-language events were Italian nationals, whereas a range of nationalities was represented at English-language events and on English-language tours. The nationalities I encountered most in English-language settings were American, Canadian, Australian, British, French, German, Chinese and, surprisingly, Italian. Not so surprisingly, many of these nationalities are among those with the highest number of visitors coming to Italy, with Germany accounting for twenty-seven percent of arrivals from abroad in 2018.<sup>144</sup>

During the first stages of my research, I was an “ethnographic tourist,”<sup>145</sup> traveling together with tourists and informally interviewing them both on site and afterwards through correspondence. While I found that tourists on holiday were not especially keen to devote their leisure time to interviews, most people were happy to chat in situ. As previously mentioned, many of the tourists with whom I interacted were women, most them from university-educated middle-class backgrounds. As some tourists to Cinque Terre visit annually, I was also able to have five conversations with repeat tourists. I also assessed English-, French- and Italian-language travel blogs, English- and Italian-language guidebooks, English-language travel writing, and travel archives. This stage would establish the first perspective and Chapter one of this thesis.

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<sup>144</sup> ISTAT, “Movimento turistico in Italia.”

<sup>145</sup> Graburn, “The Ethnographic Tourist.”



Fig. 14. La Spezia. Waiting for the train to Cinque Terre. Photograph by author.

During the second and third stages of my research, I volunteered my labor in Riomaggiore and Vernazza for drystone wall building, *la vendemmia*, and wine making. I harvested in the 2017 and 2018 vendemmia and helped with wine making in 2017 and 2018. I spent the majority of spring, summer and autumn 2018 building walls. Through snowball sampling, I was gradually introduced into Cinque Terre family life, first with love migrants and then with locally born residents. I formally interviewed thirteen residents, most of whom I also interacted with in everyday settings, particularly on walks and hikes, and during food related events: two favorite activities for residents in mountainous Cinque Terre. Completing formal interviews, with its required ethics paperwork, did not happen easily. The small rural communities of Cinque Terre are extremely insular and many were not keen to be on record with a foreign researcher lest a quote was taken out of context or used against them. There was also a sense of hospitality fatigue among locals, with many having lost the capacity to give their time without getting something in return; the promise of a thesis in a few years' time often did not attract interest. Conversely, having someone to hike with did attract interest and was easily done, albeit without recording devices. Furthermore, although Italian

is the primary language of the region, English is arguably the secondary language. There were thus concerns that anything written in English, however well-intentioned or scholarly, could have negative consequences. As one participant comically put it: *“You have to be very careful about what you say and who you say it to. Something as nonchalant as, especially everyone here is family, so if you say like “oh my God, who’s that guy with the weird mustache?” He’s going to hear that you think his mustache is weird.”* Another participant succinctly said: *“You get to leave after you’re finished, we stay here.”* Those who did agree to formal interviews were commonly those who felt that they had “nothing to lose” and did not care about potential stigma or other negatives outcomes that might arise from being identified.<sup>146</sup> In keeping with lessons learned from Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ career-long reflections on balancing the ethics and micropolitics of ethnography with honest and vivid accounts,<sup>147</sup> I decided to merge the majority of my female, Cinque Terre-based participants into one persona, named Sisu. In order to further mitigate identification, any quotes attributed to Sisu come from one of the thirteen participants who agreed to formal interviews. The notable exception to this merging of identity is a local drystone mason-cum-activist, who has featured several times in international media. I use her first name with her full permission. During my volunteer work, vineyard terraces, grapevines and drystone walls were prominent in Cinque Terre life. As landscape features and as entities, they were granted (not least by Cinque Terre residents) with their own agency. The terraces were participants in my work in that they were always there, giving a place to do and be while also demanding care and attention. These stages and participants would establish the second and third perspectives and Chapters two and three.

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<sup>146</sup> For a deeper understanding of the stakes of being identified, see Goffman, *Stigma*.

<sup>147</sup> Scheper-Hughes, “Ire in Ireland.”

Because the numbers of formal interviews were scant, the most important sources of information for this thesis were ongoing informal conversations that emerged in daily life. I took notes on over two hundred informal conversations and recorded many more observations. With tourists, I met many on tours or in bars. I always stated my research project upfront and asked if I could chat with them about their trip, Cinque Terre, and whatever else interested them. I routinely gave tourists my business card in case they had any questions. Throughout the first stage of my research, I spoke with tourist participants about my investigation on post-flood resilience in Cinque Terre, consequently priming them to speak about resilience. Many shared their own resilience stories or spoke with reference to learning about the 2011 flood on a tour or in a guidebook. Through tourists, I learned about American guidebook author Rick Steves whose writing (featured in Chapter one) about the 2011 flood followed the post-flood resilience narrative that I had anticipated to find. I also spoke with tour operators and hosts about the 2011 flood and post-flood resilience, again often priming the conversation. Tour operators and hosts would talk about the flood and the immediate aftermath in heroic terms during tours or food experiences, but upon closer acquaintance they would move the conversation elsewhere. They did not often use the term resilience, either in English or Italian, although they would acknowledge that resilient in English was used to describe Cinque Terre. It was these redirected interactions that first directed my attention to an understanding of resilience that was different to the one I had presupposed.

Local research participants were mainly recruited through snowball sampling techniques. During the second stage, I introduced myself to some of the Cinque Terre love migrants through their personal blogs and through them made the majority of my local connections. I also established connections with some local tour guides and vintners, although these relationships took longer to transform from a host-guest link to anything else.

I am lucky that many of my participants are now dear friends, without whom this thesis would not be possible.

My introduction to locally-based people was often as a researcher studying resilience after the 2011 flood, which primed conversations of flood and resilience. It was in these more personal interactions, where I was not a paying guest on a tour, that I was routinely informed that flood was not the disaster that most worried them. Conversations on resilience were less predictable, although Italians would often educate me on the differences between resilience in Italian compared to English. *La resiliènza* is more commonly used to indicate taking a resistant stance to something.<sup>148</sup> It is also an antonym to fragility,<sup>149</sup> although in Italian scientific literature it has begun to take on a more Anglophone meaning (explored in previous sections). In general, Italians speaking Italian wouldn't use *la resiliènza*. They would, however, use the term heroic (*eroico*) or necessary (*necessario*) to describe their actions in Cinque Terre followed by descriptions and personal stories for why this was the case. Conversations in English about resilience would often start with the term resilience, and then, like with Italian conversations, move into description of how they were resilient. It was in these initial conversations that I realized that there was a disconnect between the post-flood resilience discourse that had brought me to Cinque Terre and the how resilience and resilient actions were perceived, used and enacted on the ground. Relationships, and accordingly ethnographic data, developed after these introductions became more in-depth and nuanced over time, but they were undoubtedly predicated on the fact that I was in Cinque Terre to study resilience.

Through volunteering in the vineyards, I was introduced to the terraces. This was the third stage of my work, when I transitioned from developing relationships to actively taking

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<sup>148</sup> See "Resiliènza in Vocabolario."

<sup>149</sup> See "Resiliènza in Vocabolario."



part in life in Cinque Terre. In the final nine months of fieldwork, I spent considerable time in the vineyard terraces tending to walls. I literally got my hands dirty with the *terra* of Cinque Terre. I helped to build ten different walls over various periods. I also participated in land clearing and fruit harvesting. It was working with the terraces that I became viscerally aware of the relationality between human participants and the nonhuman parts of the terraces, especially grapevines and rocks. It was also during this time that I participated in part of the resilient story that participants had continually spoke to: resilience was found in working the terraces.



*Fig. 15. Vernazza. A local photographer shooting for a community project. Photograph by author.*

A surprising amount of the terrace work was filmed or photographed, often for social media or promotional materials. This meant that I had a digital trace of much of my participation with the terrace components of Cinque Terre. It also meant that many conversations and events were captured in photos or on film. These were not official interviews, nevertheless they were influential in data collection. Near the end of fieldwork, I drew on visual data as a valuable way to give texture to my research, to visually demonstrate

what I had observed. During this time, I recorded two 360-degree films and one standard film: one 360 video is currently online and forms part of this thesis in my multispecies site (Chapter three). In order to convey a sense of place in this thesis, I have included photographs taken by either myself or my participants.

### Methods and (inter)disciplinary assumptions

Up to this point, I have highlighted that the top-down directive to study post-flood resilience in Cinque Terre contrasted with bottom-up findings that necessitated a pivot in research focus from post-flood resilience to the nature of resilience itself in Cinque Terre. This pivot was the result of a feminist and anthropological assumption that people, particularly women, are experts in their own lived experience. Thus when participants regularly told me that they had resilience or had resilient stories beyond or outside post-flood recovery, I believed them. Additionally I outlined how, after establishing participants' lived experience as valid, I noted that perspectives on resilience in Cinque Terre were connected to the place of Cinque Terre through insider/outsider status; those looking *at* Cinque Terre had a different perspective than those *in* Cinque Terre. These perspectives allowed me to attend to resilience differently. I then troubled the connection between disaster and resilience, widening the conception of both in order to allow for a concept of resilience that was not necessarily directly tied a flood or grand event. After uncoupling resilience from disaster, I outlined how an ethnographic object approach can reveal how resilience can be understood by itself, as an object is situated with the context of a particular time, place and space. I then gave a brief history of Cinque Terre and detailed its current socio-environmental and economic context, including the current pressing disastrous issues of overtourism and environmental change. I followed with an exploration of how resilience is defined in academic literature and contrasted its abundance in other disciplines with its lacuna in anthropology. I also highlighted calls for approaching resilience in novel ways.

Negotiating the design of this thesis has been a challenge: notably because it has been an iterative process that sought to fulfill a top-down directive with bottom-up data collection and analytical approaches. This thesis is the product of a European Union Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska Curie Innovative Training Network, entitled ENHANCE, which aimed to define the burgeoning field of environmental humanities through interdisciplinary research. The network brought together three universities in three different European countries with three times as many disciplinary backgrounds, each with its own sub-disciplines and contexts. While such collaborations can produce novel methods and insights, they also pose institutional, intellectual and disciplinary challenges. Additionally, one of the greatest practical challenges for this thesis is that it is impossible to feature an extensive literature and method review of each field of scholarship featured. Similarly, locating each chapter's perspective within its requisite scholarly context is also limited by space. In the following I address these challenges by bringing together the iterative pieces that form the methodological foundation for the remaining chapters of the thesis. Literatures pertaining to a particular perspective are found in the chapters.

I went Cinque Terre in order to conduct an ethnography of post-flood resilience rooted in the anthropological tradition that would be triangulated with interdisciplinary environmental humanities tools applicable to the ethnographic findings. Ethnography is both a method and an output. Ethnography as method is the vivid description of “the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience.”<sup>150</sup> While ethnographies are typically written in

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<sup>150</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*, 229. Also, see van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 153. Van Maanen writes: “Choices of topics, frameworks, and substantive domains emerge only after considerable thought and experimentation. Analysis never ends. And all writing is of course rewriting and rewriting and rewriting. In short, learning in and out of the field is uneven, usually unforeseen, and rests more on a logic of discovery and happenstance than a logic of verification and plan. It is anything but predictable or linear. The unbearable slowness of ethnography—from “getting in” to “getting out” to “writing it up” -is thus an enduring feature of the work.”

descriptive form in order to capture the time, place and space of participants,<sup>151</sup> they can also include visual forms of data such as photographs and film,<sup>152</sup> both of which are included in this thesis. The hallmark of anthropological ethnography fieldwork. Remaining open to results from ethnographic fieldwork has been distinctly useful to me, providing openings that in turn reveal innovative perspectives. As mentioned in previous sections, from the earliest stages of my fieldwork, participants kept insisting that they had resilience, but did not necessarily see the 2011 flood as a catalyst for their resilience. They also did not have linear disaster-to-resilience stories except those stories found in guidebooks or guided tours. This was also true for tourists, many of whom had resilience stories they shared with me that did not match a linear disaster-to-resilience path.

Additionally, there were two other findings that also did not align with the anticipated resilience discourse. The first additional finding was related to the connection to Cinque Terre. As outlined above, perspectives about resilience in Cinque Terre aligned with an insider/outsider status. Many of the participants whom I met in the second stage of research were outsiders-turned-insiders. Not only were they adamant that they were resilient, but their stories of their resilience was entangled with love of place. The second additional finding was also related to perspective. Many locally-born and/or raised participants as well as some outsiders-turned-insiders treated the landscape of Cinque Terre as taking an active part in resilience. In essence, the results from fieldwork surprised me. Furthermore, the results did not align with the majority of narratives or theories of resilience in circulation.

Somewhat ironically, however, I have found anthropology of disaster theories useful to understand how resilience can be claimed *without* disaster or a disastrous event. Indeed, there is significant debate (as noted above) about what constitutes a disaster and whether to include

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<sup>151</sup> Berger, "Inside Out."

<sup>152</sup> Pink, *Doing Digital Ethnography*.

phenomena where there is no telltale physical destruction or delimited time period, but still considerable disruption, as is the case for example with slow violence or toxic waste. One of the founders of disaster anthropology, Anthony Oliver-Smith, conceptualizes disaster as a wide array of physical and social events and processes<sup>153</sup> rather than as a set of bounded phenomena to be strictly defined.”<sup>154</sup> Oliver-Smith cautions that a risk of this theory is that its broad rubric may end up obscuring distinctions amongst phenomena. However, since I am attempting to uncouple (yet not totally sever) the disaster to resilience connection in order to investigate resilience on its own, obscuring distinctions between disasters or disastrous happenings does not affect the components of resilience. This rubric of disaster has been useful to my work in prompting me to consider resilience in broad social and cultural as well as environmental terms. As mentioned earlier, this reconfiguration aligns with anthropological theories of embodiment<sup>155</sup> and violence, which argue that disaster and resilience can be seen as contexts for everyday life and that the experiences of disaster and resilience can be embodied. While this explained how resilience might be considered as equally as dispersed, broad and embodied as disaster, it did not explain participants’ conceptualization of resilience itself. Moreover disaster anthropology did not venture a reason for why the voices I gathered might be different to many established narratives. When I considered my own positionality and that of the majority of my participants, the answer for the difference was obvious: we are women.

As women, our lived experience and thus ways of seeing and interacting with the world often conflict with dominant narratives and the production of knowledge. Within anthropological and feminist theories of the last decades, there has been the call to treat lived

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<sup>153</sup> Process here is not just socially, but also historically, materially and discursively constructed. For an overview of the array of disaster processes, see Barrios, “What Does Catastrophe Reveal.”

<sup>154</sup> Oliver-Smith, “What Is a Disaster,” 21.

<sup>155</sup> For work on embodied responses to disaster, see Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural;” Samuels, “Embodied Narratives of Disaster;” Scheper-Hughes and Lock, “The Mindful Body.”

experience as a way to recover what had been omitted or distorted in academic knowledge about women and/or marginalized voices in the construction of knowledge.<sup>156</sup> In ethnographic practice, these means taking what participants reveal in the course of data collection seriously followed by a triangulation of the gathered ethnographic data with other data. Consequently, when participants said that they had resilience, I took them seriously. When participants said that they moved for love of place and that that love of Cinque Terre kept them in place, I took them seriously. When participants claimed a relationality between an active Cinque Terre landscape and resilience, I took them seriously. This praxis, this way of doing data collection, laid bare the disconnect between established knowledges of resilience and those of my participants. Indeed, in literatures on resilience, the majority perpetuate the four definitions (bounceback, adaptability, resistance and sustainability) of resilience through male and Western dominated lens that ignore the knowledge production of lived experience in general and the views of women in particular.<sup>157</sup> This lacuna in resilience scholarship has been recently recognized by scholars however, especially by geographer Kevin Grove.

In his study of what resilience *does* in governmental policy, Grove advocates for and uses an object approach to resilience in order to look beyond conventional definitions to the distinct processes, experiences and becomings involved in the practice of resilience. He writes that scholars should study resilience as “an object of study itself, whose modes of truth-telling about the world and prescriptions for how to live within and manage this world need to be unpacked and analyzed, rather than take for granted as the starting-point of analysis.”<sup>158</sup> He continues by arguing that approaching resilience simply as discourse, policy

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<sup>156</sup> For examples, see Fonow and Cook, “Feminist Methodology;” Harding and Norberg, “New Feminist Approaches;” van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*.

<sup>157</sup> CF Grove, “Adaptation Machines;” Ryan, “Everyday Resilience as Resistance;” Samuels, “Embodied Narratives of Disaster.”

<sup>158</sup> Grove, *Resilience*, Chapter one.

or ideology, as most studies do, that we miss the opportunity to see the present outside of what it is assumed it to be. He asserts that there is greater value in embracing the complexity of resilience than in attempting to impose categorical order upon it. Grove's approach is particularly useful because it sees resilience as dynamic, slowly transforming and being transformed by thought and practice in ways that often fly under the radar of conventional forms of analysis. While his object approach is not explicitly tied to feminist nor anthropological tenets, it does allow for alternative and/or marginalized perspectives and practices to emerge.



*Fig. 16. Monterosso al Mare. A vineyard terrace fieldwork site. Photograph by author.*

Inspired by Grove's advocacy for an object approach to resilience and the ability of an object approach to allow the unexpected to emerge, I looked to anthropological object approaches. I found that an ethnographic object approach allows a concept to be described ethnographically, through the lives of participants. In this thesis, I present three stories of resilience in Cinque Terre. Using this approach means that the characteristics of the object are configured by participants rather than by imposed definitions. Reiterating the previous unearthed cup in the archeological dig analogy, using an ethnographic object approach for resilience would be as though the "object" of resilience were found in a dig. The overarching defining characteristics of the object, what the object *is*, would likely be known: for a cup,

these characteristics could be that it is a blue color, it is five inches high and it feels made of clay. For resilience, its overarching characteristics are that it is defined as bouncebackability, sustainability, resistance and/or adaptability. The object's essence, such as how it is used, how it is perceived, its histories, and its philosophies, is to be described ethnographically based on a specific time, place and space. Unlike in an archeological dig, however, the ethnographic data is from modern participants. For this study, the specific time, place and space is contemporary, in Cinque Terre and through the lens of women. The ethnographic descriptions are stories of resilience, thick with context and characters and replete with the messiness of life. In sum, an ethnographic object approach ethnographically describes what resilience is according to participants. Accordingly, each chapter of this thesis describes resilience from a different perspective in/of Cinque Terre.

The applied implications of using an ethnographic object approach in this thesis are twofold. The first implication is that the ethnographic object stories are told with little justification as to why object is the object for the participant. Just as a storyteller or protagonist in a love story commonly does not justify the meaning of love, so too does the resilience storyteller or protagonist assume that their usage of resilience needs no (or little) explanation. This is because the object is detailed from the participant's lived experience, which according to my feminist and anthropological assumptions should be taken as valid experience. This also means that the term "resilience" does not often appear in dialogues because participants are describing their resilience and their resilient experiences rather than describing resilience *to* an explicit something. This is in contrast to studies that begin with a singular definition of resilience into which the data conforms. In such cases, the researcher takes care to ensure that the presented data fits the definitional confines. Here, however, care is taken to ensure that the data demonstrates resilience as the participants presented and used it.



The second implication is related to the first. Because an ethnographic object approach allows for resilience stories to be told from the view of participants, definitions within the ethnography are fluid. This allows for different ways of knowing to emerge from the data. For example, if a participant used resilience in a “wrong” way according to the current codified definitions of resilience, their use of resilience would be nevertheless worth noting because it demonstrates another usage. This also allows marginalized, othered or alternative voices to emerge from the data because definitions are not presupposed. The approach also has the further advantage that it avoids quantifications or value judgments such as whether participants are “resilient enough” or whether their experiences qualify them as “having resilience.” Such discussions are problematic, verging on quantifying inner personal worlds and emotion against outward appearance. Indeed, the potential for problematic quantifications from other disciplines is why anthropologist Roberto E. Barrios hypothesizes that anthropology has neglected resilience as a concept.<sup>159</sup>

These two applied implications of an ethnographic object approach speak to the tensions that arise from attempting to engage a slippery yet widely used concept differently. The feminist and anthropological praxis that an ethnographic object approach is based upon, including the seemingly straightforward act of believing participants, contributes to the study of and discourses about resilience by disrupting what is standard and expected. It is not merely the way the resilience stories are told here that is different, but also the context of the stories. While many qualitative resilience studies occur in post-disaster, preventative or governance contexts, that is not the case here. The rationale for not including such contexts is simply because the ethnographic data did not support them. Indeed, participants used their everyday lives and the terraced landscape, outside of disaster or governance contexts, to

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<sup>159</sup> Barrios, “Resilience.”

explain resilience. Consequently resilience here is expressed in the everyday with the landscape.

A critique of the ethnographic object approach could be that if resilience is no longer attached to expected definitional confines nor contexts, then it could be found anywhere which in turn could dilute the concept's efficacy. Instead thinking of this as a critique, I take the ability to ethnographically demonstrate how a concept can appear in unexpected places as the point of an ethnographic approach. Rather than dilute the concept, the details of the unexpected add analytical complexity and depth. One must first notice the unexpected, however, before one can analyze it.

It is the "art of noticing"<sup>160</sup> that inspired the chapters of this thesis and their resilience stories from different perspectives. Had I not progressed from an ethnographic tourist to an embedded ethnographer, this thesis would likely be about post-flood resilience rather than the concept of resilience in Cinque Terre. Instead, as my participants and thus their perspective in and relation to Cinque Terre changed, so did my understanding of resilience. The chapters follow my change in understanding. Each chapter also represents each research stage in the sequence that I passed through it. Within each research stage is a different perspective in/on Cinque Terre. This methodological maneuvering is called multisited ethnography.

Anthropologist George Marcus first popularized this maneuver in anthropology in the 1990s.<sup>161</sup> For Marcus, the various sites through which the researcher moves are constructed through both planned and serendipitous activities. Proponents of multisited ethnography suggest that analyzing material or concepts as they move provides fresh insights into how things impact on the world around us.<sup>162</sup> Here, instead of changing location as is often done, it is the perspective on resilience that changes.

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<sup>160</sup> The phrase "art of noticing" comes from anthropologist Anna Tsing's *The Mushroom at the end of the world*.

<sup>161</sup> Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World."

<sup>162</sup> For examples, see Appadurai, *The Social Life Of. Falzon, Multi-Sited Ethnography*; Fortun, "Ethnography In/Of/As Open Systems."

I do not argue that one perspective is preferable to another. Instead, each perspective provides insights into understandings and descriptions of resilience while also offering new knowledge of the perspective situated in/of one place. The first perspective is that of tourists looking *at* Cinque Terre. As mentioned previously, tourists gave brief accounts of their own interpretations on resilience. Many also indicated being influenced by Rick Steves, a guidebook author and frequent traveler to Cinque Terre who wrote about Cinque Terre's resilience. Much of this perspective is composed of Rick Steves' writing about Cinque Terre. Because Steves' writing aligns more with standard conceptions of resilience, Steves' perspective serves as a foil to the subsequent perspectives. The second perspective is that of women who moved to Cinque Terre for love. These participants were among the first who rejected the post-flood resilience narrative found in Rick Steves' or other narratives. They were adamant that they were resilient but their resilience was in their staying in place. The third perspective is the Cinque Terre drystone terraces and their caretakers. The caretakers also rejected the post-flood narrative and instead focused on the Cinque Terre landscape. The drystone terraces were often credited by human participants in the second and third research stages with having an active part in resilience in Cinque Terre. This perspective demonstrates the resilience of the drystone terraces as told by their caretakers.

Each perspective gives us a new application of resilience. Together, the perspective of the chapters demonstrate a secondary argument: that place and connection to place influences and is influenced by resilience. As noted above, my ethnographic research took place with three different groups that played a part in considering Cinque Terre as a place, namely tourists, love migrants, and the vineyard drystone terraces and their caretakers. My journey through these perspectives echoed my own trajectory as a researcher in the region. As I gradually moved from "mere" tourist to researcher-in-residence, my interactions and questions inevitably changed. At first, I mainly interacted with tourists and tourism providers

who communicated an “outsider” (etic) perspective on the region. Thereafter, I came to develop relationships with love migrants, foreign women who had moved to the region for love of land and/or a person. These women occupied a liminal, “insider/outsider” perspective as they straddled two worlds: their home country and Cinque Terre. After establishing rapport in Cinque Terre, I was increasingly welcomed into local life, for example, as a volunteer drystone wall mason. My immersion into terrace construction helped me notice a multispecies perspective, as my “participants” in this context were both human and nonhuman.

Within the body of the thesis, each perspective is first situated within scholarship before continuing with the perspective’s description of resilience. Because each perspective is different, the scholarly context of each is distinct. Chapter one situates Rick Steves’ guidebooks within scholarship on guidebooks and travel writing. Chapter two situates love migrants as a category within scholarship on mobility, migration, sex tourism and love. Chapter three features four characters who compose the perspective: drystone terraces, rocks, grapevines and terrace caretakers. Scholarship on geology and architecture situates drystone terraces. Scholarship on geology and environmental philosophy situates rocks. Grapevines are contextualized by botany and viticulture studies. The caretakers are contextualized by environmental and food anthropology. The necessity of aligning each perspective with various scholarly literatures adds to the already interdisciplinary nature of the thesis, further demonstrating productive outcomes of interdisciplinary work.

I triangulated the three perspectives on resilience with tools from the environmental humanities, namely literary analysis, environmental history, and multispecies studies. The emerging field<sup>163</sup> of environmental humanities fosters innovative forms of interdisciplinary

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<sup>163</sup> The environmental humanities are not evenly institutionalized across the globe, which has led to them being described in terms of both a field and a discipline. For additional descriptions, see DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan, “Introduction;” Emmett and Nye, *The Environmental Humanities*; Oppermann and Iovino, *Environmental Humanities*.

research on the environment. Proponents of the environmental humanities imagine the field as distinct from other environmentally oriented subject areas such as ecocriticism or environmental studies.<sup>164</sup> The environmental humanities acknowledge that environmental problems, including the demand for resilience, are made up of biological, social and cultural issues and therefore demand solutions on many different levels. Furthermore, the primary task of the environmental humanities is to unsettle dominant narratives and help shape better futures while also attending to human and nature entanglements.<sup>165</sup> Consequently the environmental humanities align with an ethnographic object approach rooted in anthropological and feminist assumptions, all of which seek to unsettle dominant narratives by allowing different voices to have a place in constructing realities.

The work of philosopher Serenella Iovino on Italy and the environmental humanities has been foundational to this thesis.<sup>166</sup> Iovino argues that it is difficult to “locate” environmental and conceptual phenomena, such as resilience, in any one place because there is always something more, something beyond our grasp.<sup>167</sup> To mitigate this, she suggests that Italy (or any other country) should be read as stories “of resistance and creativity that transcend their local reality”<sup>168</sup> - stories in which bodies, whether human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, operate as nodes of “ecological dynamics, political actions, and worldviews.”<sup>169</sup> Iovino’s work expands multispecies theories to fully include inanimate matter, such as rocks, as part of the storytelling. Iovino’s work cements on my choice of centering the three perspectives of resilience in Cinque Terre because, through ethnographic storytelling of/in Cinque Terre, it reveals nodes of ecological dynamics. Revealing these

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<sup>164</sup> See Bergthaller et al., “Mapping Common Ground,” 273; Rose et al., “Thinking through the Environment,” 5; Heise, Christensen, and Niemann, *The Routledge Companion*, 1.

<sup>165</sup> Rose et al., “Thinking through the Environment,” 1.

<sup>166</sup> See Oppermann and Iovino, *Environmental Humanities*; Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*.

<sup>167</sup> Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*. Also, see Iovino, *Filosofie Dell’ambiente*.

<sup>168</sup> Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*, Introduction.

<sup>169</sup> Iovino, Cesaretti, and Past, “Introduction,” 8.

dynamics is important because Cinque Terre is a vibrant, living landscape that is involved in its own resilience as much as it is a location where resilience stories take place. These dynamics are also important to feminist and anthropological practice which seek to unearth connections that have been hidden and ignored.

Because the first perspective is centered on guidebooks written by a repeat tourist to Cinque Terre, the environmental humanities tool of literary analysis was relevant to unpack the contributions of the written text. This unpacking is necessary to indicate how hegemonic narratives are produced and reproduced. The narrative of the text is then troubled with ethnographic work. In Chapter two, the environmental humanities notion of “becoming with” gives life to participants’ assertion that they love a landscape and are motivated by that love to become a local together with landscape. Validating that a landscape can be loved and can create, or at least contribute to, a transformation of the self is necessary to give credence to their claim. In Chapter three, the environmental humanities tools of environmental history and multispecies studies are used to situate the ethnographic data in larger historical and philosophical contexts. These tools are necessary in order to understand the stories of an entangled and long history of human and nonhuman relations. A more detailed explanation of these tools is found in the relevant chapters. Other concepts relating to specific perspective will be briefly discussed in the relevant chapters. Resilience, the primary concept used in this thesis, has already been discussed above and will be described primarily through participants lived experience in the body of the thesis.

Due to my positionality as well as my feminist and anthropological assumptions to believe lived experience, it seemed that I had no way of escaping myself. My own lived experience was triangulated with participants’ lives. Therefore I have written each chapter’s perspective with an autoethnographic writing style,<sup>170</sup> where I as the researcher am present in

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<sup>170</sup> For examples of this style, see Berger, “Inside Out;” Crang and Cook, *Doing Ethnographies*.

the text. This was a conscious decision on my part because as the vast majority of my participants, at all stages of my research journey, shared my background: Western, white, middle-class, university-educated, multilingual, in an international partnership and, above all, female. Although tourism anthropologist Nelson Graburn cautions that autoethnography in tourism settings risks turning into an uncritical travelogue, he concedes that it can be an advantage if participants are of the same social background (nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, education, etc.) as the researcher.<sup>171</sup> Thus, my aim in writing has been to employ a form of reflexivity to make sense of my experience as well as to use myself as a resource for triangulating the experience of others.<sup>172</sup> Here I have been heavily influenced by anthropologist Carolyn Ellis<sup>173</sup> and researcher and writer Rebecca Solnit<sup>174</sup> who both place themselves as a resource within their work by using an “ethnographic I.” My choice was also influenced by the fact that women’s voices have been largely absent from resilience discourse. Since doing resilience differently meant attending seriously to women’s lived experience, I wanted to highlight the importance of the voices that expressed that lived experience. Consequently, I mix my own voice with that of participants using direct speech in the chapter ethnographies. The direct speech adds validity to my argument that participants understood resilience differently because it highlights their voices as they actually spoke. As most of the speech included here was in English, there is no translation. In addition to the inclusion of an autoethnographic style and direct speech, I have also made an effort to include both the discipline and full name of all scholars cited in the text. This is to represent gender within citational practice. These practices are all derived from feminist theories that seek to represent voices that have been ignored or marginalized.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Graburn, “The Ethnographic Tourist,” 26.

<sup>172</sup> Galani-Moutafi, “The Self and The.”

<sup>173</sup> Ellis, Carolyn, “Heartful Autoethnography.”

<sup>174</sup> Solnit, *Wanderlust*.

<sup>175</sup> For examples, see Fonow and Cook, “Feminist Methodology;” Harding and Norberg, “New Feminist Approaches;” Presser, “Negotiating Power.”

As I mentioned previously, many conversations and events were captured on film or in photographs. These were often not official interviews, but they have served as data that I've included here. In the love migrant chapter, I took care to anonymize participants by creating a persona. The photographs throughout the thesis and the video in Chapter three further serve as data points, albeit creative ones. As I have indicated above, environmental humanities especially values the knowledge that can be gleaned from creative data.



*Fig. 17. Liguria. My interdisciplinary collaborations owe much to this 360 degree camera.  
Photograph by author.*

Because it was working with the terraces that brought participants' resilience stories of multispecies entanglements to life for me, I decided to include a 360 video of drystone wall building as a piece of ethnographic visual data for the third chapter which is from the perspective of the terraces and their caretakers. I created this film in collaboration with participants while rebuilding a drystone terrace wall.<sup>176</sup> A link to the film can be found here: <https://youtu.be/IoY2AjzEix0>. A 360 degree film is one that can be viewed in all directions

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<sup>176</sup> The film was shown as part of the final ENHANCE ITN exhibition at the *Deutsches Museum* in Munich, Germany in October 2018. It now belongs to the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society Portal's Virtual Exhibition, which can be found here: <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/360o-visual-journey/building-cinque-terre-grapevine-viewpoint-italy>.



from a central viewing point, similar to a visually capable person viewing the world around them by turning their head. The main aim of filming was to decenter the human perspective on Cinque Terre by demonstrating a grapevine's point of view of the vineyard terraces near the town of Vernazza. We accomplished this perspective by filming from the grapevine trunk as we reconstructed the wall. In this thesis, the aim of including ethnographic data (vignettes) from the video is to establish the multispecies character of Cinque Terre. The film also serves as justification for considering rocks and grapevines as multispecies players in the resilience perspective.

Methodologically, multispecies approaches experiment with “novel assemblages of form, bodies and technique,”<sup>177</sup> such as the walking and ethnographic film methodologies used here, to generate new forms of knowledge. Although critics of multispecies approaches caution that they sometimes risk flirting with vitalism or myth, proponents argue that, when pursued with due attention to modes of triangulation (the validation of data through cross verification) they can produce thought-provoking insights into our current Anthropocene times.<sup>178</sup> Although rocks are not traditionally characterized as species in biology or geology, rocks have lives, that is they evolve, act and are acted upon, within an environmental humanities multispecies framing. Grapevines, with their plant lifecycles, are likely imagined to fit more easily into multispecies frames.

The methods and assumptions described above follow the iterative processes that I took to create this thesis. To summarize, this thesis is built on the feminist and anthropological assumption that participants, especially, women should be believed. Each chapter of the thesis presents a different perspective about resilience as an object to be described. These chapters follow the sequence of participants that I encountered in the field, which

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<sup>177</sup> Reinert, “About a Stone,” 106.

<sup>178</sup> Watson, “On Multispecies Mythology.”

demonstrates that perspective and relation to place matters for understandings of resilience. These chapters use a variety of disciplines to situate and analyze the stories of resilience. The disciplines are primarily within the realm of anthropology and the environmental humanities. Here both anthropology and the environmental humanities are needed fully engage seriously yet creatively with the complex landscapes and lived experiences in and of Cinque Terre.

### Research questions and thesis structure

This thesis asks three questions. The questions are: How is resilience *imagined* in Cinque Terre? How is it *used* in Cinque Terre? And how is it *enacted* in Cinque Terre?

The intention of each question is to examine what resilience is and how it is understood in Cinque Terre. The answers to these questions are revealed through ethnographic stories. My main arguments are threefold. Resilience in Cinque Terre is imagined to be heroic and isolated, yet other factors beyond independent heroism are likely to impact positive outcomes after disastrous happenings. Resilience is used to provide legitimacy and belonging. Resilience here looks more everyday than grandiose. Resilience is enacted over various temporalities by both humans and nonhumans. Resilience here can be slow, evolving and even circular. My main contentions are that resilience is not only a response to disaster, that it is influenced by emotion, and that it is enacted by both humans and the more-than-human. Furthermore, I contend that resilience can be found and enacted in the everyday and that it is influenced by place.

The thesis is divided into three empirical chapters, each of which I will outline below. These brief overviews are intended to give context to the “who or what” of each perspective. As such, they are by no means intended to be exhaustive, but rather to shine a light on how different histories, representations, and theories outlined above combine with the ethnographic stories to come. Each chapter uses anthropological methods and tools, namely ethnography and the assumption that participants are experts in their own lived experience, as

its base. Each chapter is also largely experimental and aimed at demonstrating a productive conversation between anthropology and the environmental humanities.

#### Perspective one: Tourists

How is resilience *imagined* in Cinque Terre by tourists looking *at* Cinque Terre? By juxtaposing insights developed through ethnographic participation observation with detailed textual analysis of a popular English-language Cinque Terre guidebook, this chapter provides a tourist perspective on resilience. The aim of this chapter is to trouble hegemonic notions of resilience. The chapter begins with a vignette that introduces Rick Steves and then situates Steves' guidebooks within scholarship on guidebooks and travel writing. Although literature and literary studies have contributed much to environmental humanities, particularly by "harnessing [its] focus on textuality within an interdisciplinary framework"<sup>179</sup> within environmental and disaster writing, the field's links to anthropology are less developed. Using insights from a close reading of Steves' guidebook through the lens of environmental and disaster literary studies, this chapter demonstrates that when resilience in Cinque Terre is considered by tourists, it is through a hegemonic resilience discourse that privileges tenacious individualism in the face of natural disaster. When triangulated with ethnographic data, however, the hegemonic discourse is revealed to be shallow. Furthermore, it is revealed that the writer of the hegemonic discourse was actually involved in creating the positive outcomes that he attributes to the resilient people of Cinque Terre. Overall, the chapter demonstrates that resilience in Cinque Terre is imagined to be heroic and individualistic, yet other factors beyond independent heroism are likely to impact positive outcomes after disastrous happenings. By linking environmental humanities-centered literary studies with anthropology, this chapter illuminates the useful collaborations of interdisciplinary work.

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<sup>179</sup> Higgins, *British Romanticism*, 5. For other examples of textual analysis in Environmental Humanities, see: Cohen, *Stone*; Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism*.

Using one without the other would not have demonstrated narrow resilience discourse nor the contrast between resilience discourse and actions. Since the chapter is focused on troubling hegemonic discourse, this chapter presents a foil to the remaining two chapters which explore resilience in the everyday. In addition to the main argument, the main contention of this chapter is that resilience is not only in response to disaster.

#### Perspective two: Love migrants

This chapter asks how resilience is *used* by “love migrants,” a term I coined to explain migrants who move for love rather than family or work. In Cinque Terre, love migrants are mainly women who have established themselves *in* Cinque Terre because of love of place and/or a person. As participants, they formed the second stage of my ethnographic research. Their insistence that they were resilient, not against a flood, but in their everyday lives, comprised the aforementioned pivot in my research focus. The chapter begins by situating love migrants as a category within scholarship on mobility, migration, sex tourism and love. The chapter follows love migrant trajectories from visitor (tourist) to resident, showing how they have mobilized resilience as a way to legitimate their claims of belonging. As they legitimate their belonging, the emotion and action of love is at the core of their rationale for moving and for staying in place. Although there is a wealth of scholarship about mobility and belonging, there have been few serious explorations of emotive rationales for doing so, particularly from a female point of view. Studies that do exist tend to conflate love with sex. There is also extremely limited scholarship on the emotional components of resilience. Their lived experience of loving a place and using resilience to belong is one of the core reasons for the feminist and anthropological assumption of “believe women” that pervades this thesis. Because resilience and mobility literatures fail to account their experiences, feminist and anthropological assumptions and anthropological and environmental humanities tools fill the gap. The anthropological tool used here is ethnographic storytelling centered on an

ethnographic object of resilience. This reveals how resilience is used. The environmental humanities tool used here is the notion of “becoming with.” This legitimates love migrant’s claim that a landscape can be loved and that the landscape can influence and be influenced by those that love it. It also implicitly establishes the multispecies character of Cinque Terre that is used in Chapter three because it opens the possibility of a dynamic natural world with agency. The overall argument of the chapter is that resilience is used in Cinque Terre to provide legitimacy and belonging; such resilience looks more everyday than grandiose. The main contention of this chapter is that love, and emotion more broadly, influences resilience.



Fig. 18. Vernazza. A multispecies encounter between a tourist, a cat, a drystone wall and some invasive plants.  
 Photograph by author.

### Perspective three: Drystone vineyard terraces and their caretakers

This chapter questions how resilience is *enacted* in Cinque Terre *from* the perspective of Cinque Terre itself, as seen through the drystone vineyard terraces and their caretakers. Keeping with the assumption that participants must be believed, this chapter takes seriously human participants claims that the landscape and *terra* of Cinque Terre was as much of an actor in their resilience stories as themselves. Not only did terrace caretakers and the Cinque

Terre landscape comprise the third perspective in my ethnographic work, the claimed multispecies entanglement was particularly evident when I worked with terraces. Thus I use ethnographic vignettes from the filmed building of a drystone terrace to introduce the key participants in this chapter. The film also serves to legitimate claims of Cinque Terre's multispecies character.

Each part begins with an introduction to the participant followed by stories of enacting resilience based on that participant. The first part details the drystone vineyard terraces and the rocks that build them. Scholarship on geology and architecture situates drystone terraces. Scholarship on geology and environmental philosophy situates rocks. The second part details the grapevines that sit on top of the drystone vineyard terraces. Grapevines are contextualized by botany and viticulture studies. The third part details the caretakers who tend to both the terraces and the vines. The caretakers are contextualized by environmental and food anthropology.

Because the participants are entangled, the stories overlap and mix. Rocks and grapevines are present in each story just as the caretakers are also present. Here, multispecies tools are used to validate the perspective and to demonstrate how humans can present the voice of those without a human voice. The environmental humanities tool of environmental history is used to show how resilience has always been more-than-human. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the difference in perspectives on resilience from an insider and nonhuman point of view. Its main argument is that resilience is enacted over various temporalities and consequently can be slow, evolving and even circular. Its main contention is that resilience is not the exclusive realm of humans.

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A challenge of this thesis is that it is built on describing a resilience that occurs outside of hegemonic narratives, one that includes both humans and the natural world. In order to

create full scholarly description in such challenging waters, it is necessary to bring two scholarships in conversation with each other that can productively attend to both humans and natural world. It also presents a variety of voices, of humans and nonhumans, of migrant women and rocks, most of which have been largely ignored in scholarship. Again, positioning these voices necessitated broad interdisciplinary understandings. Consequently, this thesis may initially jar the reader because of its surprising and multilayered nature. For this, I beg the reader's patience. I also suggest that such unorthodoxy is precisely the value of interdisciplinary work because it reveals the unanticipated and the unexplored.

## Chapter one: Tourists

This chapter asks how resilience as an object is imagined in Cinque Terre. It offers an ethnographic and literary description of resilience from the perspective of tourists looking *at* rather than dwelling *in* the region. The literary description here is based on a representation of resilience in Cinque Terre by repeat Cinque Terre tourist and guidebook writer, Rick Steves, who styles himself, only partly tongue in cheek, as the “ruiner” of the region. The main aim of this chapter is to trouble dominant notions of resilience by presenting its more hegemonic form and then demonstrating that resilience is more complex than it is represented. Because the chapter troubles hegemonic understandings of resilience, it also serves as a foil to the ensuing chapters which exclusively present nonhegemonic understandings and lived experiences of resilience.





*Fig. 19. Riomaggiore. A similar view to Rick Steves' guidebook cover, except this image contains people.  
Photograph by author.*

In demonstrating how Cinque Terre is imagined in travel writing as a “resilient place,” I hypothesize that this discursive framing has undoubtedly influenced how Cinque Terre is experienced by outsiders. Here I use my own experience as a tourist to Cinque Terre, expecting to find a resilience akin to that of Steves guidebooks, as a point of triangulation. Consequently, this chapter serves as a “meta-representation” of Cinque Terre from my point of view. It gives an account of my own knowledge acquisition in the region as I graduated from short-term tourist towards (semi-) insider status over time. Fieldwork has long been seen as complicit with tourism owing to its emphasis on etic observation and interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The aim of long-term ethnographic research, however, is to move beyond these limitations by gradually developing an emic point of view. My initial perception of Cinque Terre was shaped by first impressions and reading rather than immersion in the region’s complex socio-ecology. As I toured around, I noted what seemed strange or noteworthy. Rick Steves and his guidebooks were noted continually by tourists and locals alike. Tourists appreciated his homespun approach to narrative guiding. Locals recognized his influence with a mixture of reverence and disdain. Steves himself, the self-proclaimed professional tourist, claimed that

<sup>1</sup> See Graburn, “The Ethnographic Tourist;” Picard, “Tourism, Awe.”

he had single handedly popularized Cinque Terre for the masses. As will be seen, Steves' work is to some extent representative of the stereotype-laden "brochure discourse,"<sup>2</sup> which lists certain locations and areas as more "visitable" than others owing to their certain characteristics and aesthetic effects. As linguists, among others have argued, the analysis of discourse is the first step in linking linguistic practices with larger contexts.<sup>3</sup> Part of the triangulation with larger contexts here is using environmental humanities literary studies to align Steves' disaster-to-resilience narrative with hegemonic environmental disaster narrative.

The chapter opens by setting the scene in Cinque Terre by means of a short ethnographic vignette. This vignette establishes guidebook authors as having a material influence on tourists and tourism providers, but also on the places they visit. The chapter then moves on to establish a scholarly background for guidebooks and travel writing more generally. The third part of the chapter focuses on the work of Steves, offering a close reading of his Cinque Terre guidebook and discussing the role of resilience in his evaluation of Cinque Terre as a "visitable" place. The final part of the chapter offers a further ethnographic vignette aimed at examining Steves' claim that Cinque Terre's was uniquely responsible for its resilience. This final part serves to trouble Steves' discourse of an individualist and linear post-disaster resilience, especially as he had a hand in creating its recovery.

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<sup>2</sup> See Strachan, "Paradise and Plantation." Also, see Carrigan, *Postcolonial Tourism*.

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*; Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; Mills, *Discourse*. Broadly speaking, the approaches in these discursive theories seek to examine the social construction of knowledge as expressed through continually evolving language. Acknowledging the divergent histories and theories contained in these works, this thesis situates discourse at its fundamental meaning, that is, language.

## Introducing the perspective: Tourists

Manarola, Cinque Terre, Italy: May 2016

Manarola's main street was filled with tourists, threading around small blue *gozzi* (boats), heaped vendors' wares and itinerant cats. The pastel pink, blue and yellow apartments on either side of the street offered no respite from the heat despite blocking the sun. I stood in line for what seemed to be the only restaurant with available seating. As bodies surged past, sweat ran down the small of my back. This was not what I had anticipated, or at least not in May. The day before it had poured buckets and I had been stuck in my cold, windowless (yet still expensive) AirBnB without blankets or a heater. Today it was sweltering. The European summer holidays hadn't even started yet. The sheer volume of people in the streets was overwhelming. Where had all they all come from?



Fig. 20. Manarola. The harbor. Photograph by author.

I finally made it to the front of the line. The server barked at me in English despite my polite Italian greeting: “*Minimum two people! Are you TWO?*” Hungry and tired, the grateful couple standing behind me took my place in line and were whisked to a table for two while I remained where I was, dumbfounded. I didn't think to protest; I just wanted to eat. I scanned the line. My gaze landed on a thirty-something woman sporting neon blue yoga pants, a lulu lemon yoga top – one of those ones that look difficult to get into – and running

shoes. She seemed friendly enough, and she was clearly standing alone, between two groups in non-athletic attire. I approached her to ask if we might eat together since single diners were not allowed. *“That’s so weird,”* she replied. *“I was wondering why you didn’t go in before. I saw them talk to you. Rick will not be pleased. Anyways, sure. Let’s lunch! I’m Rebecca.”* She stuck out her hand confidently. I then introduced myself and asked her what she was doing in Cinque Terre. She was American, doing some fashion work in Milan (where she was participating in an exhibition), and had dropped by for a few days based on “Rick’s” endorsement of the *“sweet landscape.”* I was confused and asked: *“Wait, who’s Rick?”* Her tone was so affectionate that I thought she might be referring to a family member. My question caught her off guard. *“Rick Steves! How can you not know him? I’m obsessed. He’s such a dork, but his advice is incredibly spot on. I did his walking tour of Milan and it made me love the city even more. He loves Cinque Terre and I completely see why. It’s glorious.”* She pulled out her mobile phone to show me a digital copy of *Rick Steves’ Italy*.

In 2015, when I first wrote my research proposal, I had never actually set foot in Cinque Terre. Many ethnographers will admit retrospectively that a combination of coincidence, luck, and serendipity determine where they will spend most of their time in the field. My experience was no different. At the time, I was reading Jess Walters’ *Beautiful Ruins*, a love story set in the 1960s that centers on an Italian innkeeper and an American starlet in Liguria. The author never specifies its precise location, but the book’s cover is clearly set in Cinque Terre, featuring a seaside village painted in pastel hues nestled atop a cliff overlooking turquoise water. An Italian friend of mine recognized the place immediately and suggested I consider conducting research there. There had been a big flood a few years back, he said, but he knew that the region had recovered well. It seemed like a resilient place.

My preliminary research revealed that while geologists had previously taken interest in the coastal villages of Cinque Terre, they had so far attracted little attention from social

scientists or humanities scholars, those operating in English at least. Meanwhile, travel blogs described Cinque Terre as a set of secluded seaside villages. Thus, when I arrived in Cinque Terre six months later for a brief scoping trip, I had precious little to guide me: my romance novel, a few impressionistic travel blogs, and a handful of scholarly literature outlining the geological infrastructure of the region. I welcomed the novelty of it all. I wanted to experience Cinque Terre for myself: to immerse myself in the region, seeing it with fresh eyes and little background research. However, instead of quaint, relaxed villages of the kind where the innkeeper asks your name then invites you over for dinner, I encountered hordes of camera toting, fanny-pack sporting tourists, many of a certain age, dropped off hourly by a seemingly limitless supply of passing trains and boats. I also had no idea who Rick Steves was.

During our lunch, Rebecca and I discovered that we had traveled to similar places and shared an adventurous approach to food. While I spent my college years watching Samantha Brown and Anthony Bourdain travel to global food destinations, she had devoted herself to watching *Rick Steves Explores Europe*.<sup>4</sup> “Besides,” she told me, “I’m from a Filipino family. We didn’t need some white dude [Anthony Bourdain] telling us about flavor. We already have that.” Yet in Europe, Rebecca didn’t seem to mind seeking guidance from another “white dude,” Rick Steves. Eventually, we came around to discussing my research project and my interest in post-flood resilience in the region. Rebecca responded, nodding: “Oh yeah, I read about that! Neat story.” I would soon discover that many tourists often used words like “neat” and/or “interesting” in reference to the 2011 flood. Rather than a main event, the flood offered a “feel good” background story that merely added to the character of place,

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<sup>4</sup> Samantha Brown is a TV host who has hosted several globally focused travel shows on the American pay TV channel *The Travel Channel*. The late Anthony Bourdain was a celebrity chef and TV host who created food travel shows with a political focus for American pay TV channels, notably the Food Network and Travel Channel. Rick Steves’ hosts travel shows about Europe on American public television stations.

perhaps smoothing over the tourism-related sins of crowded streets, expensive amenities, and discriminatory dining practices.

Our restaurant experience was lackluster. Our meals were expensive, the service sub-par. My gnocchi weren't homemade as advertised, and Rebecca felt put off by the pressure to get in, eat quickly, and hustle out. *"I'm leaving a bad review about this place on TripAdvisor and Rick Steves' travel forum. The people should know,"* she moaned, clicking the one-star rating button. *"Rick is not going to like this! That was terrible service. I can't believe he recommended it."* After the meal was finished, Rebecca invited me to go on a Rick Steves self-guided walking tour with her. *"Once you experience the Rick,"* she told me, *"you will never forget him."* As we walked, she pointed out several others carrying Rick Steves guidebooks. His books seemed to be everywhere. Overall, Rebecca thought Cinque Terre was cute, but it was overpriced and probably not the best place for a young single female. I couldn't help but agree. I had spent a lot of money already on my stay, and I was already beginning to doubt my choices. Rebecca didn't blame Rick for leading her astray though. *"Tourism changes so quickly these days with social media and whatnot,"* she told me, *"it's hard to keep up. He's doing the best that he can in this economy. He really cares and he just does what he wants. That's what I like about him."* Rebecca was a diehard "Rickite," the term for a Rick Steves devotee.



Fig. 21. Sharing Cinque Terre wine with a tourist. Photograph by author.

Four months later, I returned to spend ten days in Cinque Terre, again in Manarola, for a second scoping trip. As an exercise in sheer curiosity, I decided to count the number of guidebooks I saw being carried around, noting the authors and the series. The vast majority of the tourists I came across were armed with guidebooks: *Lonely Planet*, *Le Guide Vert Michelin* (the Michelin Green Guide), *Frommers* among them. As a digital native, I had imagined paper guidebooks to be an anachronism but, as with my sight-unseen imagination of Cinque Terre, I was soon proved wrong. *Everyone* seemed to be carrying them: maybe they were anxious about losing their way, or missing out on some attraction or another. Soon, it became obvious that Rick Steves' books were among the most popular, accompanying a significant number of tourists to Cinque Terre. On almost every street and *sentiero*, I saw men and women carrying the signature mustard-yellow and royal blue covers of Rick Steves guidebooks.

During this second trip, I toured a small winery in Riomaggiore. Near the end of the tour and accompanying tasting, the owner of the *cantina* (wine cellar), a graying man in his

early sixties, declared breezily that Rick Steves was responsible for putting Cinque Terre on the global map. “*Without his influence, we would just be another coastal region. The world wouldn’t know how marvelous Cinque Terre wine products truly are!*” Our guide concurred: “*Without Rick Steves, we would not have become famous like we are today.*” Her tone was almost fatalistic. She then added: “*I’ve met him a few times. Usually my cousin works with him when he visits. He doesn’t come every year, less and less. Sometimes he sends someone else. Americans follow him like a church.*” I got the sense she was holding back. “*Do you like him?*” I asked somewhat conspiratorially. “*Eh, what is not to like? You are here because of him.*”

The assertion that a middle-aged American like Rick Steves, who proudly professes no desire to live anywhere outside the United States,<sup>5</sup> had done so much to popularize Cinque Terre surprised me. At first, I was tempted to dismiss the claims of the *cantina* owner and the wine tour guide. But similar sentiments were expressed by other business owners and tour guides on subsequent tours, and when I moved for a prolonged spell of fieldwork the following year, I discovered that even Steves himself had previously said that his books and television series were at fault for “ruining” the region.<sup>6</sup> He describes his malign influence with misplaced pride:

[Cinque Terre] was once an undiscovered paradise. It’s still a paradise, but these days you can only call it “undiscovered” in a relative sense compared to, say, Venice. And I suppose it’s partly my fault. When I first described and recommended Italy’s Cinque Terre in the late 1970s, there was almost no tourism there. Now it seems to be on the list of almost every Italy-bound tourist.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Steves, *Travel as a Political*.

<sup>6</sup> Steves, *Rick Steves Presents*.

<sup>7</sup> Steves, “Discovered Vernazza.”



Self-deprecation aside, Steves' claim that he had helped put Cinque Terre on the map of Italian tourism spoke to his trademark nonchalance, which Rebecca and other "Rickites" seemed to appreciate. In 2014, the *New York Times* claimed that Cinque Terre was 'very popular with the Americans because of Rick Steves - his book is their bible.'<sup>8</sup> Other travel writers echo Steves' assertions. For example, in a post provocatively entitled "Rick Steves, his Foreskin, and the Cinque Terre," Ligurian transplant James Martin notes that Rick Steves' "Cinque Terre effect" has happily directed tourists to explore a "tiny corner of the Best of Italy," thereby freeing up the actual best of the Ligurian coast for locals.<sup>9</sup> In another, scarcely less sarcastic post, "Damn you Rick Steves," blogger Kathleen R. complains that Steves' descriptions had initially led her to believe that the region was a "quiet and quaint" locale best suited to adventure travelers seeking to get off the beaten track. When she arrived, she was dismayed to find that that the region was inundated with tourists. Steves is not fully to blame "for the changing tenor of the region," she concedes, but "it was all just so maddening, this loss of a dream, this loss of my perfect Italian destination."<sup>10</sup> As for so many others, her imaginary Italian paradise was just that, imagined. Apparently, I was by no means the only person perplexed by Cinque Terre when I arrived.

My first days in the field yielded two important discoveries for me as a fledgling researcher. The first discovery was that Cinque Terre was a major tourist attraction – one that was expensive, noisy, and chaotic. Many English and Italian guidebooks now caution that Cinque Terre has been well and truly "discovered,"<sup>11</sup> and had I conducted more thorough preliminary research, my initial surprise could have been avoided. However, naivety aside, my surprise was also indicative of what the anthropologist Noel B. Salazar labels "tourist imaginaries," where destinations are already "known" through the widely circulating

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<sup>8</sup> Williams, "The Cinque Terre."

<sup>9</sup> Martin, "Rick Steves, His Foreskin."

<sup>10</sup> R, "Damn You Rick Steves!"

<sup>11</sup> Whitehouse, *Liguria*, 127; Touring Club Italiano, *Cinque Terre e Golfo*, 16.

imaginaries about them, regardless of actual situations at the destination.<sup>12</sup> Naively, I had chosen to believe representations of Cinque Terre written by bloggers and others who claimed it was an out-of-the-way, relatively unfrequented tourist site. Still worse, I had used these representations (and my own experiences of other parts of Italy) to create a romantic imaginary of what Cinque Terre would be without actually having seen it for myself. Consequently, my first impressions of Cinque Terre were a radical departure from what I expected.

The second discovery was twofold. First, I was surprised to find that guidebooks generally, and Rick Steves' specifically, seemed to have prompted many tourists to visit Cinque Terre. Most of the tourists I encountered carried guidebooks with them, whether physical copies or on their mobiles or tablets. The aforementioned Rebecca had multiple PDFs of guidebooks on her phone, while others carried the books, either whole or in part, on their person. Steves himself recommends that his book users rip out the parts they need before they travel: lo and behold, I witnessed tourists pouring over tattered fragments of his books as they were exploring Cinque Terre's stone-lined streets. While it is difficult to establish the extent to which guidebooks influence tourist behavior, they clearly make an impression.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the second surprising discovery was that Steves was cited by numerous people as having had a direct impact on Cinque Terre. As literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt has argued, travel narratives can effectively produce "the rest of the world" for a Western readership; they can also legitimate the expansionist aspirations of empire, bridging the gap between the present and the past.<sup>14</sup> Finally, they can create material realities, such as those involved in making a place famous. In this context, Steves' (and locals') bragging assertion that he has "ruined" Cinque Terre serves as a sort of foundational tourist myth, in

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<sup>12</sup> Salazar, "The Power of Imagination."

<sup>13</sup> Bender, Gidlow, and Fisher, "National Stereotypes."

<sup>14</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 5.

keeping with the anthropologist Tom Selwyn's suggestion that tourist myths serve to connect specific destinations with registers of desire, fascination, and intrigue that relate to tourists' own cultures and societies.<sup>15</sup> Expanding on Selwyn's analysis, the anthropologist Naomi Leite observes that tourist myths ground relations between insiders ("hosts") and outsiders ("guests") through particular *narratives*, which range from broad cultural meta-narratives to stories about personal somatic experiences.<sup>16</sup>

Seen in this light, the notion that Steves "ruined" Cinque Terre can be understood as a way of establishing boundaries between foreign (American) tourists and Italian locals. By citing Steves' books during their vineyard tours, vintners acknowledge the region's importance for Italy, while for Steves himself it is his own authority as an American speaking to other Americans that is reinforced.

If Steves' books function as a tourist myth, what do they actually *say* about Cinque Terre? And how might these books contribute to how tourists imagine resilience in the region? These are the questions to which I now turn.

## Introducing Rick Steves

Rick Steves, American author and entrepreneur, has published over thirty different guidebooks about Europe. He has also adapted the highlights of these books into a series of well-received American public television programs, called *Rick Steves' Europe*, which premiered in 2000 and has been recorded intermittently for a total of ten seasons since then. The latest season was filmed in 2018 and aired in 2019. Steves is known for his country-specific advice (France, Great Britain, Italy), region-specific guides (eastern and northern European cruise ports), all-purpose language guides (the 3-in-1 French, Italian & German Phrase Book), and a smorgasbord of "best of," "pocket," and "snapshot" guides such as

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<sup>15</sup> Selwyn, *The Tourist Image*.

<sup>16</sup> Leite, "Afterword." For a similar construction of narrative in anthropology of tourism, see Bruner, *Culture on Tour*.

Pocket Prague, Best of Spain, or – most relevant to our concerns here – *Italy’s Cinque Terre*.

The Rick Steves brand also includes guided tours, travel gear (including suitcases, money belts and accessories), and social media engagement.



Fig. 22. Vernazza. Man carrying a Rick Steves guidebook. Photograph by author.

It is Steves’ guidebooks, however, that are his hallmark. Unlike other prominent guidebook brands (e.g. the NC2 Media owned *Lonely Planet* or the Pearson-owned *Rough Guides*), Steves retains ownership of his brand, working with a Berkeley-based publisher, Avalon Travel, a subsidiary of the Perseus Books Group. While Steves’ guidebooks can be easily purchased in the UK, Australia, and Canada, they are written first and foremost for an American audience. Indeed, Steves believes that travel ought to be a “political act,” a duty for Americans.<sup>17</sup> Although he encourages them to remain within the “first world,” he views travel as a first step towards “turn[ing] away [from] fear” and learning to empathize with others.<sup>18</sup> He also views travel as instrumental for American “national security” purposes, stressing the value of “engage[ment] with the other 96% of humanity and gain[ing] empathy for people beyond our borders.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, for Steves, travel has moral connotations. Due

<sup>17</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*.

<sup>18</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*.

<sup>19</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*. Steves is not the first American to think along these lines, writing more than a century earlier, American author Mark Twain wrote that “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-

to his Lutheran faith, which encourages social activism, he urges readers to “advocate for those outside the USA who have no voice here, but are affected by our policies.”<sup>20</sup> While Steves’ printed guidebooks are not as politically oriented as some of his other texts, including his blogs, television shows, and opinion pieces, they do betray his pro-globalization ideological orientation and his distinct, “dorky-dad-next-door” narrative voice.

In his books, Steves likes to refer to his own personal trajectory in the tourism business. It was as a teenager visiting Germany, he says, that he first became enamored with travel.<sup>21</sup> After spending several summers backpacking through Europe as a young adult, he started conducting small-group tours of various European destinations. As his tour business began to grow, he started to self-publish guidebooks. His first book, *Europe Through the Back Door* (1980), continues to be updated and published annually. Italy has a special place in Steves’ repertoire as his “favorite” European country. Italian destinations, including Cinque Terre, Florence, and Rome, feature prominently in his many of his guidebooks. Steves’ affinity for Cinque Terre extends beyond what he reports in his books. According to his “irreverent history” (the published origin story for his business), Steves inadvertently “discovered” Cinque Terre on his first trip to Italy.<sup>22</sup> It was a warm welcome from a bar owner in Vernazza that made him “fall in love” with the region, and he claims to return there regularly.<sup>23</sup> He has successfully communicated his admiration for the region to his American audience – so much so that he can claim to have single-handedly contributed to its decline, making Cinque Terre transform from a “hidden gem”<sup>24</sup> to “one of God’s great gifts to tourism.”<sup>25</sup>

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mindedness and many of our people need it sorely on those accounts.” As quoted in Theroux, *The Tao of Travel*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*, Ch 10.

<sup>21</sup> Steves, *Rick Steves Presents*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Steves, “Cinque Terre,” np.

<sup>25</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 1.

Published by Avalon Travel, Steves' European guidebooks are bestsellers in the US. As his associate editor put it, they aim to provide a particular approach to European travel that is

[t]he opposite of one size fits all. We lean into a destination and ask what of kind of experiences does this destination offer a traveler. Avalon's goal is to help travelers make memories, as well as assess what information is needed. Our brands and individual titles have one thing in common: expert authors. We prefer authors who live full- or part-time in the destination. We like writers with life experience to share. Our authors are teachers, historians, filmmakers, surfers, foodies, musicians, divers, campers, photographers, and many more things.<sup>26</sup>

Avalon's appeal is based on the authoritative voice of its "expert authors." For "Rickites," Rick *is* the authority on Europe in their cultural imaginary, with the 2018 re-issue of most of his European guidebooks selling 5% more than in 2016. Steves continues to be part of a multi-million dollar industry in the United States alone,<sup>27</sup> and in 2018 he bragged in his blog that his books occupied 19 of the 22 top slots for US travel guidebook sales.<sup>28</sup> It is worth pausing here to consider the issue of what counts as a guidebook, and what purposes such books serve.

## Travel writing and guidebooks

How should one categorize an eclectic literary genre that contains maps, images, folklore, opinion, and history alongside restaurant reviews and historical details of the "Big Pineapple?"<sup>29</sup> The contents of guidebooks are broad, varied and multi-faceted. Each book holds something different, written from a different perspective, even if the books in question

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<sup>26</sup> As quoted in Stoller, "So You Thought Travel."

<sup>27</sup> Watson, "Travel Guide Sales Value." This analysis shows that guidebook sales were 224.26 million USD in 2007 compared to 124 million USD in 2017. While sales have decreased over the past decade, the guidebook industry remains strong.

<sup>28</sup> Steves, "The Talented Team," np.

<sup>29</sup> The Big Pineapple is a sixteen-meter high fiberglass pineapple tourist attraction located in Queensland, Australia.

focus on the same location. With little supplied knowledge about the author, guidebooks communicate tacit ideological perspectives and notions of value, authenticity, and place that work together to create “affective landscapes”<sup>30</sup> to be consumed under the auspices of the tourist gaze.<sup>31</sup> Such books effectively function as a “surrogate tourism guide,”<sup>32</sup> giving a semblance of authority regardless of their rather shaky grounding in reality, and the far from unimpeachable sources upon which they often depend.<sup>33</sup>

What if we position guidebooks as a form of travel writing, infused with subjectivity, rather than as something seemingly more objective? But if guidebooks are a form of travel writing, then what is travel writing? While it may seem self-evident that travel writing requires some sort of narrative arc, involving a journey to some other place, how is travel writing different from, say, the quest narratives of *The Odyssey* (8th century BC), *Lord of the Rings* (circa 1930s), or *Moby-Dick* (1851)? After their first edition, the travel narratives of Marco Polo (circa 1300 AD), Ibn Battuta (circa 1355 AD), and John Mandeville (circa 1357 AD) were repeatedly re-published, in some cases centuries later. These classic examples illustrate the enduring popularity of travel writing as a genre. Indeed, narratives by and about travelers have existed for millennia, and they continue to be written and read *en masse*. Despite their ubiquity, there is a relative dearth of scholarship on specialist travel writing, such as Bill Bryson’s *Notes from a Small Island* (1995), as compared to literary works where the protagonist travels, such as Cheryl Strayed’s *Wild* (2012) or Ernest Hemingway’s *Green Hills of Africa* (1935). This is perhaps understandable insofar as travel writing has been

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<sup>30</sup> Ogden, “Lonely Planet,” 161.

<sup>31</sup> See Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*. The term refers to sociologist John Urry’s conceptualization of the development of Western tourism since the end of the eighteenth century. The gaze emphasizes the social, material and discursive character of travel and traveling. It shapes tourists’ experiences and the production of places for visual consumption.

<sup>32</sup> Bhattacharyya, “Mediating India.”

<sup>33</sup> Many critical exposés on the so-called “truthfulness” of guidebooks demonstrate that guidebooks tend to be more invention than fact. For examples, see Kohnstamm, *Do Travel Writers Go*; Norum, “The Less-than-Lonely Planet.”

typically relegated to the “tourism” and “leisure” sections of libraries and bookstores despite its direct relation to “serious” topics such as economics, modernity, and consumer capitalism.

In describing the work of the British travel writer Bruce Chatwin, the literary scholar Luigi Marfè argues that travel writing is best understood in terms of “literary representations of narrated space,” in which the writer describes certain places and the ordeals required to arrive there, replete with “strange anecdotes, eccentric conversations, and bizarre details.”<sup>34</sup> For Marfè, this “narrated space” turns travel writing into a form of “literary invention.”<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, the factuality of any given account is relatively unimportant; what matters instead is the author’s perspective.<sup>36</sup> Travel writing, in short, is a highly effective and productive means of stimulating the imagination – about particular people, places, and times – from an outsider’s perspective. Such writing is often presented as if it were timeless, divorced from the very social, cultural, and political contexts by which it is informed.<sup>37</sup> For example, *Beautiful Ruins*, the 2012 novel that influenced my decision to go to Cinque Terre, is situated in a modern yet somehow ageless present where the landscape inspires romance between a Hollywood star and a penniless fisherman. While I certainly did not expect the book to be recreated before my eyes when I eventually arrived in Cinque Terre, my disappointment when I first arrived certainly points to tacit imaginative priming: by the sorts of “imaginative geographies” – the production of place through its imaginative representations – that are discussed at length in the literary critic Edward Said’s work.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Marfè, “Chatwinesque,” 451.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 452.

<sup>37</sup> Burton, *Travel Narrative*; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Thompson, “Introduction.”

<sup>38</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, II.





Fig. 23. Manarola. Welcome to Paradise: Affirming tourist expectations. Photograph by author.

Said's work has been influential in giving attention to the relationship between the travel/narrator and the subject of the travel/ narration,<sup>39</sup> and also in situating travel narratives and their readerships within larger social and political structures.<sup>40</sup> Today, the field of travel writing studies has grown to include a range of perspectives beyond its postcolonial moorings. Literary critic Mary-Louise Pratt's work in the early 1990s, for example, has supplied us with a critical vocabulary for the genre, noting how travel writing interacts with locales to produce "contact zones," "monarch-of-all-I-survey," and "anti-conquest."<sup>41</sup> Drawing on Said and Pratt, literary scholars Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan have expanded the scope of travel writing studies by examining the genre in terms of "interference," or the ability of travel writing to articulate "expansionist ambitions" yet "challenge received ideas on cultural difference."<sup>42</sup> Finally, literary critic Sara Mills has built

<sup>39</sup> Bracewell, "Europe;" Campbell, "Travel Writing."

<sup>40</sup> Buzard, *The Beaten Track*; Mills, *Discourses of Difference*.

<sup>41</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. Also, see Thompson, "Introduction."

<sup>42</sup> Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*.

on all of these theoretical trajectories by demonstrating that meaning-making exchanges between place and person do not occur in isolation, but in relation to other contexts.<sup>43</sup>

Such insights from travel writing studies highlight the global nature of mobility, the pervasiveness of cross-cultural curiosity, and the relative affordability of contemporary travel (particularly given low-cost airfares) as alternately socially leveling and a class-affirming practice.<sup>44</sup> However, there remains a substantial gap between charting literary travel studies and mapping any impacts travel books may have. Part of this is down to travel writers' enduring attempts to differentiate themselves from "mere" tourists, but part of it is also due to the nature of tourism itself. Tourism is a global phenomenon involving myriad combinations of people, places, and contexts. Tourism studies, the academic field that looks to unpack these combinations, is likewise multifaceted: an amalgam of concepts and approaches developed within and across a number of different disciplines. The breadth and depth of this field is beyond the scope of this thesis, which nonetheless draws, as tourism studies does, from literary and cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and geography.<sup>45</sup> Traditionally, tourism studies has been concerned with performances of place, space, and identity. Much tourism studies scholarship has been based on the axiom that tourism can be understood in terms of how places and landscapes are viewed, and how various ways of seeing become an integral part of the social realities they create.<sup>46</sup> This axiom can also be applied to the guidebook, which is both a vehicle for tourism and a travel narrative in its own right.

Since the turn of the twentieth-first century, scholarly work on guidebooks has begun to gain traction. Most research tends to focus on either historical guidebooks, particularly those

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<sup>43</sup> Mills, *Discourses of Difference*; Mills, *Discourse*.

<sup>44</sup> For examples, see Chaves, *Every Rock a Universe*; Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes*.

<sup>45</sup> For a literary studies example, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. For an example from anthropology, see Picard and Di Giovine, "Introduction: Through Other Worlds." For an example from sociology, see Cohen and Cohen, "Current Sociological Theories." For an example from geography, see Del Casino and Hanna, "Representations and Identities."

<sup>46</sup> See Adler, "Travel as Performed Art;" Lew, "Place Representation;" MacCannell, *The Tourist*; McGregor, "Dynamic Texts and Tourist Gaze;" Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*.

written by Europeans in the colonial era,<sup>47</sup> or on the social uses of these books by tourists traveling abroad.<sup>48</sup> There is also a smattering of critical work on contemporary guidebooks, most notably Lonely Planet,<sup>49</sup> which bills itself as the “world’s most successful travel publisher” with over one hundred twenty million books printed in eleven languages.<sup>50</sup> Less attention has been paid to other guidebook brands as well as travel blogging and other forms of social media, which between them have done significantly more than any printed material to fuel tourism in the digital information age. Thus, while seminal studies on travel writing do mention guidebooks, they tend to do so in passing, usually under the guise of tourism research. The books themselves have hardly attracted scholarly attention, and are often dismissed as mere by-products of modernization in affluent (usually Western) societies.<sup>51</sup> This is unfortunate given the crucial nature of guidebooks in facilitating cross-cultural encounter and exchange.

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Up to now, I have established the ubiquity of Rick Steves’ guidebooks in the hands of English speaking and American tourists in Cinque Terre. I have also highlighted that guidebooks and travel writing have been shown to stimulate the imagination of the reader and influence how she viewed the world through which she toured. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully trace the connection between travel writing and outcomes in travel practice in Cinque Terre, guidebooks clearly make an impression on tourists. As writer of guidebooks, Rick Steves’ perspective carries weight. As a repeat tourist to and avowed fan of Cinque Terre, his clout undoubtedly influences both tourists and locals alike. With this

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<sup>47</sup> For examples, see Anisimov, Bekasova, and Kalemeneva, “Books That Link Worlds;” François, “If it’s 1815;” Koshar, “What Ought to Be Seen.”

<sup>48</sup> For examples, see Therkelsen and Sorensen, “Reading the Tourist Guidebook;” Siegenthaler, “Hiroshima and Nagasaki;” Zillinger, “The Importance of Guidebooks.”

<sup>49</sup> For examples, see Azariah, “When Travel Meets Tourism;” Hallett, “A Taste of This;” Kenny, “Our Travellers’ out There.”

<sup>50</sup> Lonely Planet, “About Us;” np.

<sup>51</sup> For examples, see Boorstin, *The Image*; Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins*; MacCannell, *The Tourist*.

influence in mind, I now want to turn to a close reading of *Rick Steves' Snapshot: Italy's Cinque Terre*, which I will refer to from now on as *Italy's Cinque Terre*. It is this guidebook which guides our exploration how resilience is imagined in Cinque Terre from an outside perspective.

### Rick Steves' vision of Cinque Terre

A close reading of *Italy's Cinque Terre* reveals how travel narratives construct densely crosshatched imaginaries of people, place, and time. Given Steves' enduring popularity and his recognized influence in the region, a close reading of his guidebooks offers an instructive glimpse into how Cinque Terre and its situated resilience has been represented and interpreted, and how such discursive framings have tangible effects on the social and physical environment. Although the term "close reading" has been applied to a wide range of different literary genres and methods,<sup>52</sup> my approach can be understood as "reading with a focus on the details; these details include the analysis of vocabulary, word choice, syntax, and structure, as well as how these elements and other literary and rhetorical devices contribute to the layers of meaning that make up the text."<sup>53</sup> Text is defined in a broad sense as any instance of language in use, including written and visual forms.<sup>54</sup>

Steves writes his guidebooks in an informal style, making frequent use of personal pronouns. This style makes it easy for the reader to imagine herself accompanying him. Every few pages, he cultivates the reader's confidence by dropping in candid tidbits such as: "Cinque Terre is tops, but several towns to the north have a breezy beauty and more beaches."<sup>55</sup> Sometimes he is more authoritative: "[F]rankly, staying fewer than two nights is

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<sup>52</sup> For an outline of the current debates that underscore close reading as a technique in modern literary studies, see Lockett, "Close Reading."

<sup>53</sup> McConn, "Close Reading of Literary," 67.

<sup>54</sup> Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*.

<sup>55</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 86.

a mistake that you'll likely regret."<sup>56</sup> In another passage, Steves claims to have "never seen happier, more relaxed tourists."<sup>57</sup> These seemingly minor comments help create an atmosphere of friendliness, familiarity, and trust in his guidance. At the same time, Steves' narrative strategy is close to what literary theorist Franz Stanzel categorizes as an "authorial narrative situation,"<sup>58</sup> in which a charismatic narrative persona engenders confidence in readers by describing a world to which she may not personally belong to but that she nonetheless knows well. This persona is built in part out of Steves' own origin story, as an adolescent thirsting for adventure in Europe who then becomes a suitably well-informed, well-traveled adult who loves to show tourists his favorite places, and encourages them to follow in his (well-worn) footsteps.



*Fig. 24. La Spezia. The cruise ship terminal where many tourists dock to see Cinque Terre.  
Photograph by author.*

Unlike the Lonely Planet, Rough Guides or Fodor's brands, which are often written by two or more authors, Steves' series features himself as sole author and authority. Accordingly, his accounts are peppered with first-person descriptions of the various places his guidebooks cover, creating an impression that Europe is "knowable" for a single

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> As referenced in Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, 89-93.

individual. His material, much of which often borders on the trivial and mundane, is thus transformed into seemingly incontrovertible facts, bypassing the need to cite sources or acknowledge informants. These facts are interwoven with opinion and advice that help to create a distinctly white, middle-class imaginary of place that not only claims to be authentic, but also comes to take on the status of general “truth.” Instead of referring to sources, Steves personalizes his writing by providing casual commentaries and recommendations that often jauntily refer to the first names of owners, workers, and residents (*viz.* “steely Marisa requires check-in before 16:00,”<sup>59</sup> or “American expat Amy and her Italian husband Francesco, offers seven rooms”<sup>60</sup>). As controlling author-narrator, Steves gives the impression of providing a reasonably accurate depiction of a place and its people while positioning himself as a major authority on everything to do with Europe: a classic case of Pratt’s “monarch-of-all-I-survey.”

A second feature of Steves’ narrative voice is trust. Steves builds trust in two key ways: by conveying a sense of his easy rapport with the locals, and by interspersing trust-building rhetorical devices throughout the text. In addition to introducing his audience to people, Steves suggests that these are *trusted* people – if locals trust him enough to form a relationship, then the reader should also trust him to guide their travels. This manufactured sense of insider knowledge also allows him to make sweeping moral judgments about people: “perhaps predictably, the system has been corrupted by power and money ... [The] past park president, nicknamed ‘The Pharaoh,’ made great inroads before poisoning the process with cronyism, forcing him to leave office in disgrace.”<sup>61</sup> Public commentary functions here much like private gossip, shared between the author-narrator and his readers. As various scholars have demonstrated, gossip often works to instill a form of shared moral leadership and

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<sup>59</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 57.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

community.<sup>62</sup> The numerous gossip-like anecdotes interspersed throughout Steves' guidebooks build his credibility and mark a key difference between his predominantly American readership and their European hosts. This allows him, as demonstrated above, to present the stereotypical picture of Italy as hopelessly corrupt (yet still worth visiting), whereas the US (naturally) is not.

Trust between narrator and reader is further established through the use of rhetorical devices. In contrast to many travel guidebooks, in which feedback from readers Steves actively encourages dialogue with his audience by interpolating questions such as "How was your trip?" and by requesting that readers share their experiences and discoveries with him "after using this book."<sup>63</sup> His website supports this by hosting an online forum where readers get to post questions and comments, and he then responds in person, sometimes going on to feature some of these comments in his printed guidebooks. By giving his readers the opportunity to share their experiences with him, Steves indicates that he is attentive to his audience and has their best interests in mind. He is also fond of using declarative sentences and minor clauses - clauses that are grammatically incomplete - in a way that the rhetorician Elizabeth Markovits characterizes as "frank speech."<sup>64</sup> Frank speech, as its designation suggests, is a sympathy-inducing version of demotic, serving as a contrast to elevated speech patterns in order to appear unpretentious and consequently increase the likeability of the speaker.

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<sup>62</sup> Ferreira, "Gossip as Indirect Mockery;" Gluckman, "Papers in Honor Of;" Tholander, "Pupils' Gossip as Remedial."

<sup>63</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity*.

## Nature and community

*Italy's Cinque Terre* begins conventionally by situating the reader in its terrain, describing the region's rugged mountains, its carefully tended vineyards, its rocky coastline, and the brightly colored houses that make up its villages. The region is summarized as a "beautifully isolated six-mile stretch of the most seductive corner of the Italian Riviera"<sup>65</sup> [where residents are] "carving a good life out of difficult terrain [that is] one of God's great gifts to tourism [with a] unique mix of Italian culture and nature."<sup>66</sup> This introduction effectively transforms "nature" into Cinque Terre's central character. This natural environment is "carved out" by hosts as a "gift" for guests, the gift in this particular instance being tourism. Other industries are barely mentioned in the text aside from occasional references to vineyards, emergency services, and hiking trails (which comprise the infrastructure for regional tourism).



*Fig. 25. Cinque Terre. A runner races past a National Park sentiero tour guide leading a slow tour group. Photograph by author.*

Steves' account differs from other guidebooks in his persistent attention to the *exceptionality* of Cinque Terre. Some guidebooks, Rosie Whitehouse's *Bradt Guide to*

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<sup>65</sup> Often the Riviera includes the coastline between St. Tropez in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France and Livorno in Tuscany, Italy.

<sup>66</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 1.



Liguria for instance, calls Cinque Terre “quite the mellow place,”<sup>67</sup> while others, Lonely Planet for example, refer more dramatically to Cinque Terre as “cinematic” with “gravity-defying precipices.”<sup>68</sup> However, Steves’ work goes beyond them both to portray Cinque Terre as not just beautiful, but uniquely seductive; an *ideal* place, in keeping with American conventions of the rural idyll.<sup>69</sup> Steves also establishes Cinque Terre as a positively different sort of place, which makes it well worth a visit.<sup>70</sup> Romantic hyperbole of this kind supports literary scholar Andrew Warnes’ argument that American literature uses exceptionalism to demonstrate (national) cultural heritage, which in turn shapes how Americans view and interact with the world.<sup>71</sup> Warnes argues that such exceptionalism is revealed in writers’ attitudes to worth, consumption and the insatiable pursuit of the next thing.<sup>72</sup> While Warnes is not writing about travel literature per se, writers like Rick Steves would likely confirm his assertion that American writers tend to be influenced by broader cultural notions of exceptionality.

According to Steves, Cinque Terre is special in a way that perhaps only Americans can understand, and he now aims to share his love for the region with other Americans. “Party in Viareggio or Portofino,” Steves admonishes, “but be mellow in the Cinque Terre. Talk softly. Help keep it clean.”<sup>73</sup> The adjective “clean” is telling. As historian Lynn White has famously remarked, in the Judeo-Christian tradition nature tends to be framed, either as something to be dominated or something to be cared for (“stewarded” is his term).<sup>74</sup> In his classic essay “The historical roots of our ecological crisis,” White argues that the medieval idea of nature as an instrument for humanity’s use has come to shape contemporary understandings. In

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<sup>67</sup> Whitehouse, *Liguria*, 127.

<sup>68</sup> Hardy, Garwood, and Landon, *Italy’s Best Trips*, 88.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion on how this construct unfolds in Italy, see Figueiredo and Raschi, “Un’ Immensa Campagna Avvolta.”

<sup>70</sup> Koshar, “‘What Ought to Be Seen.’”

<sup>71</sup> Warnes, *American Tantalus*.

<sup>72</sup> Warnes, *American Tantalus*.

<sup>73</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> White, “The Historical Roots.” Also see Jenkins, “After Lynn White.”

ancient texts, White suggests, humanity was granted dominion over all nature – including land and animals – and literal interpretations of this God-given gift have since helped to solidify a staunchly anthropocentric view of the world that, at worst, has led to severe ecological degradation.<sup>75</sup> Although White’s interpretation has been repeatedly challenged,<sup>76</sup> overarching assumptions about the relationship between cosmology and nature remain largely uncontested.<sup>77</sup> Steves’ own emphasis on care is a political one in tune with current debates on climate change and human responsibility. In what could be mistaken for signage in any North American national park, Steves patronizingly urges his readers to “leave the park cleaner than you found it, bring a plastic bag (*sacchetto di plastica*) and pick up a little trail trash along the way. It would be great if American visitors-who get so much joy out of this region-were known for this good deed.”<sup>78</sup> Steves, in other words, wants American tourists to be good citizens, mitigating the potentially negative effects of their travels. At no point, however, does he consider tourists *per se* to be harmful; rather he seems to believe they can reduce harmful impacts by being mindful of nature even as they consume it.

This raises the issue of what “nature” actually means in such contexts. In recent years, scholars have produced a wide array of work on the multiple meanings of nature. Much of this work emphasizes that nature is at once materially and discursively produced.<sup>79</sup> The Marxist theorist Raymond Williams, for example, famously remarked that nature is the most complex and debated word in the English language.<sup>80</sup> More recently, the anthropologist Shiho Satsuka has described the ways in which Japanese tourists negotiate the meaning of mountains as “nature” in the Canadian Rockies. Satsuka argues that nature, whatever its

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<sup>75</sup> White, “The Historical Roots,” 1205.

<sup>76</sup> For examples, see Jenkins, “After Lynn White;” Minter and Manning, “An Appraisal.”

<sup>77</sup> Escobar, “After Nature;” Minter and Manning, “An Appraisal.”

<sup>78</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> For examples, see Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness;” Iovino, Cesaretti, and Past, “Introduction;” Plumwood, *Feminism*.

<sup>80</sup> Williams, *Keywords*.

meaning, is always a product of translation, which has very real effects on social, political, and economic worlds.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the environmental historian William Cronon sees nature as being narrativized in ways that depend on the storyteller's context.<sup>82</sup> Like Cronon, the philosopher Val Plumwood argues that nature must be seen as a *political* rather than a categorical description. With all of these conceptions in mind, it becomes clear that nature in *Italy's Cinque Terre* is no one precise thing, but rather a loose assemblage<sup>83</sup> that exists for, yet is inextricably entangled with, humans. Nature is also a *translated* category. In his work, Steves is translating nature from his lived and embodied American context onto Italian soil; in a sense, he is appropriating or colonizing Cinque Terre for an American audience so that they, as tourists, can profit from it in their turn.

Similarly, when Steves describes Cinque Terre's natural characteristics, he tends to do so with an appeal to American cultural appetites, that is, with man-made production and food in mind. For Steves, Cinque Terre's terraced landscape is part of the realm of the man-made, a "happy result" of "the area's unique mix of Italian culture and nature."<sup>84</sup> Here, we see that he translates "nature" to mean the terraced landscape, which he interprets as a "happy result" of human labor acting upon the material world. The result of this labor is food. As he writes, "Each village fills a ravine with a lazy hive of human activity."<sup>85</sup> Here, the ravine is metaphorically described as a beehive: the symbol of collective labor, with humans lazily buzzing about in its easy nature/culture honeycomb. Humans (albeit zoomorphized here) are

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<sup>81</sup> Satsuka, *Nature in Translation*.

<sup>82</sup> Cronon, "A Place for Stories."

<sup>83</sup> My use of "assemblage" aligns with an environmental humanities perspective, as outlined by Anna Tsing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (p.292-293). For Tsing, assemblages are socially constitutive encounters that gather round a place and are not restricted to a particular scale. They also build ways of living without assuming an interactive structure. Tsing's use of term draws on Deleuze's "agencement," which she translates as "assemblage." Unlike discursive Foucaultian understandings of the term, Tsing argues that her usage does not apply to collaborations that expand and conquer place, nor does it align with Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, in which a network is a chain of associations that structures further associations.

<sup>84</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

clearly central to Steves' narration of Cinque Terre, and if nature is granted any agency at all, it exists to serve humans.

Which humans, however? It is clear that Steves' imagined audience is not those "few ugly, noisy Americans [who] give tourism a bad name here."<sup>86</sup> Instead, he urges tourists to respect the local customs and to act as responsible citizens.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, in his portrayals of local people,<sup>88</sup> Steves describes them in singularizing terms: as a community. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines community as a "group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common."<sup>89</sup> Community can also be understood as a sort of boundary mechanism, that is, it delineates a people set apart from others while also demarcating an ambiguous space for negotiation among outsiders who may, at whatever point and for whatever reason, wish to join. The ontology of community is bound up with notions of belonging and separation. Yet who exactly are the "people of Cinque Terre" that Steves seems so eager to describe in his book? And who is included in – and excluded from – that community?

Combining varying degrees of transience and permanence, the people of Cinque Terre confound conventional definitions of community. Many workers, especially those in the service industry (e.g., cooks, cleaners, and servers) live elsewhere due to high living costs in Cinque Terre, and must commute to work on a daily basis. The notion of community becomes even more convoluted when one considers that most of Cinque Terre's housing is occupied by transitory tourists. Such nuance is lost in Steves' accounts. Moreover, due to the dynamics of rural depopulation and out-migration, many of Cinque Terre's landowners are not locals at all, but instead live in cities such as Milan or Genoa.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>89</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, "Community."

In his travel blog, Steves laments the loss of the singular and seemingly homogeneous Cinque Terre community he once knew. The current “big trend,” he writes, is

elderly apartment owners moving into the big city for a more comfortable place to live out their golden years. They then hire Eastern Europeans to manage their Italian Riviera apartments, renting (at suitably steep prices, especially during the high season) to the tourists who come in, as the tide nourishes barnacles, with almost every passing train.<sup>90</sup>

Steves’ negative perception of these developments is clear enough. Eastern European “outsiders” and the Italian elderly are out of step to Steves’ notion of how Cinque Terre “ought to be.” Moreover, by comparing locals to “barnacles,” Steves implies that they are lazy (at least by American standards) because they do not have to work. This is a similar characterization to that of the lazy beehive described above (see also Chapter two). This portrayal of people and place establishes the foundational cast of characters for the story that unfolds in the remainder of this text.

### Disaster in Cinque Terre

After setting the scene, Steves moves on to describe Cinque Terre’s history. He pays particular attention to the transformative financial impacts of tourism and its influence on the 2011 flood. Steves writes:

The people of the Cinque Terre were taught a tough lesson. It’s their beautiful land that brings the tourists. But with the affluence brought by tourism, some had abandoned their land - leaving vineyards unplanted and centuries-old drystone terracing to crumble - for less physically demanding, more profitable work in town. (Grapevines have far-reaching root systems that help combat erosion, and

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<sup>90</sup> Steves, “Discovered Vernazza,” np.

traditional vintners keep their stone terraces in good order). After a generation of neglect, the unprotected land was washed down into the towns by violent weather.<sup>91</sup>

In typically his moralistic vein, Steves strongly criticizes those who have abandoned their land in search of an easier life elsewhere. He seems to believe that “the people” have forfeited their generational responsibility by allowing the land to go unprotected. He does not consider whether such “demanding work” still exists; nor does he acknowledge that service-industry work is often difficult and demanding.<sup>92</sup> Steves erases the histories of those who stayed behind and those who migrated to the region, like the Eastern Europeans described above. In fact, the only migration of any kind that Steves views positively involves *the Americans*, who likewise “have fallen in love with the region and/or one of its residents ... and are still here.”<sup>93</sup>

Putting on his best authoritative voice, Steves points out that “violent weather” has come in to ruin the land, “washing it down” into the towns. This is the first time in the book that he mentions the 2011 flood. Steves see the flood itself, hyperbolically presented as being of biblical proportions, as the predictable by-product of a “generation of neglect.”<sup>94</sup> He blames the locals by noting how the community precipitated its own demise by “corralling”<sup>95</sup> the riverbed into an inadequate underground waterway, which was one of the primary causes of the rush of floodwater and mud. In the passages that describe the flood, the land features as both object and actor. When vineyards are uncultivated and walls crumble to dust, they become ill-fated objects. Objectified in this way, the landscape becomes opposed to people, who move instead to the urban centers, seeking employment and profit. This neglect, Steves

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<sup>91</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 49.

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of invisibility of demanding work, see Hatton, “Mechanisms of Invisibility.”

<sup>93</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

suggests, has made the land vulnerable, powerless, and destined to disintegrate because of continual neglect. At the same time, it is the roots of the grapevine that hold the earth in order to “combat erosion.” For Steves, land and community must work in harmony to maintain an equilibrated nature. The degradation of land and humans also occurs simultaneously. Neglect and abandonment have caused collective devastation.

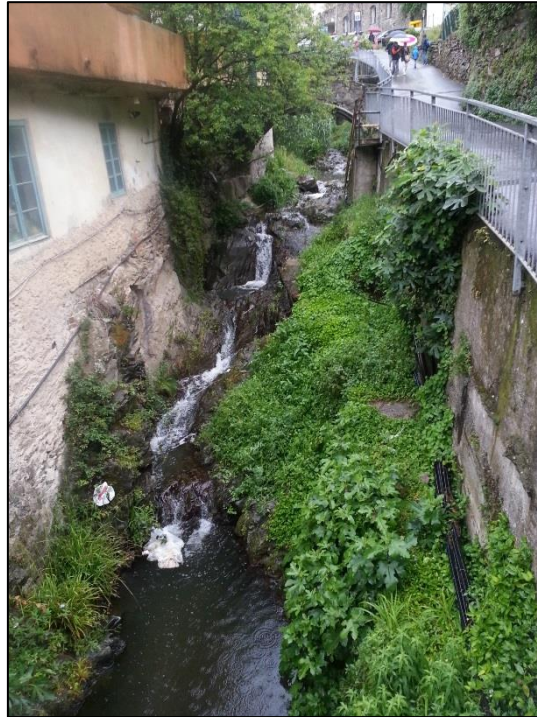


Fig. 26. Manarola. The stream on an average rainy day. Photograph by author.

Steves’ “cause-and-effect” morality tale is simplistic and prescriptive: if the land is neglected, then humans must be prepared for the consequences of violent weather – for what the ecocritic Lawrence Buell calls “nature’s revenge.”<sup>96</sup> Although nature is often depicted as a passive resource, inexhaustibly available to the humans who need it,<sup>97</sup> it may also be viewed as an instrument of divine retribution targeted at those same humans, who have arrogated it to serve their own ends.<sup>98</sup> Buell defines these designations as meta-narratives. In one of these, “environmental apocalypticism,” the natural environment is capable of causing

<sup>96</sup> Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*.

<sup>97</sup> For work on contestations of nature as a resource, see Strang, *The Meaning of Water*.

<sup>98</sup> Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*.

a catastrophe that threatens to end planetary life.<sup>99</sup> The threat of “eco-apocalypse,” Buell suggests, has hung over Western visions of nature since at least the nineteenth century, influencing such seminal works as George Marsh’s *Man and Nature* (1864) and, a century later, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962). Because of this prevalent narrative as nature as apocalyptic and vengeful, cultural critic Frederick Buell argues, however, that such catastrophist tropes have become increasingly mundane – and humans’ response to them increasingly fatalistic – in light of routine representations of natural disasters in popular media.<sup>100</sup>

Buell’s references to the current global ecological crisis are certainly applicable to Steves’ Cinque Terre guidebook. Everyday discourses surrounding anthropogenic climate change, natural disaster, and environmental deterioration influence Steves’ writing even though they are rarely front and center of his work. Steves maintains that his work is “political,”<sup>101</sup> partly because travel and the writing attached to it are themselves inherently political, but a better word to describe it might be “ethical.” Guided in part by his Christian beliefs, he sees natural disasters such as the 2011 flood in Cinque Terre as caused by human *moral* failure as much as anything else.

In Steves’ view, it was because local people had effectively abandoned the land that it became vulnerable to extreme weather. In 2011, as already mentioned above, torrential rains cascaded down Cinque Terre’s mountain slopes, creating mudslides that cost millions in damages. While this was not the worst flood in recent memory,<sup>102</sup> it has been heavily narrativized. Rosie Whitehouse’s aforementioned *Liguria* guidebook describes it, as Steves himself does, as “biblical,” suggesting that the natural disaster was caused by human

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<sup>99</sup> Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 281, 285.

<sup>100</sup> Buell, *From Apocalypse to Way*.

<sup>101</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*.

<sup>102</sup> The flooding in 1966 is reported to be equally, if not more, disastrous in terms of financial loss and loss of life.



negligence and shoddy building practices.<sup>103</sup> Attributing individual or communal blame to a disaster, as Whitehouse and Steves do, has been commonplace throughout history.<sup>104</sup> Cautionary tales abound warning people to be careful in their dealings with nature, often citing the Bible as their original source.<sup>105</sup> In the paradigmatic Judeo-Christian origin story, water is a tool controlled by God and charged with tumultuous energy, first used to create the world and then to rebuke it when people turn away from their responsibilities.<sup>106</sup> Given Steves' self-proclaimed Lutheran-based social activism,<sup>107</sup> it is no surprise to find that that his own particular version of the Cinque Terre flood narrative resonates with biblical images of flooding and water as an alternately creative and destructive force. In moral narratives of this kind, people are held accountable for the disasters that unfold, but nature's punishment is eventually beneficial as it restores equilibrium, cleansing and renewing even as it destroys.

#### The resilience of the human spirit

In Steves' work, flooding in Cinque Terre is reduced to a simple calculus of human cause and environmental effect; structural factors are ignored in favor of a redemptive morality tale. As the environmental humanities scholar Astrid Bracke has noted, floods have become key in anthropogenic imaginaries as the "literal consequence of climate crisis, but also as a symbolic image for life in the Anthropocene: unpredictable, overwhelming, and engulfing."<sup>108</sup> For Steves, in contrast, floods follow a foreseeable pattern, and their after-effects are largely manageable. As he writes:

Today, you'll find that Cinque Terre is back to normal. You may not even realize that in the affected areas of Vernazza and Monterosso, everything is brand-new:

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<sup>103</sup> Whitehouse, *Liguria*, 137.

<sup>104</sup> Simpson, "Blame Narratives."

<sup>105</sup> Mauch, "Introduction."

<sup>106</sup> Genesis 1:6.

<sup>107</sup> Steves, *Travel as a Political*.

<sup>108</sup> Bracke, "Flooded Futures," 278.

stoves, tables, chairs, plates, walls lined with bottles of wine, and so on, all had to be replaced from scratch. Strolling through these towns today, keep in mind everything these people have been through - and appreciate the resilience of the human spirit.<sup>109</sup>

The text is conspicuously silent on how this new state of normality was achieved or, indeed, on what counts as “normal” in the first place. As Steves describes it, there is a “new, flood-created beach,”<sup>110</sup> but he neglects to mention that the beach is the result of a mountain sliding into the sea. He describes someone killed in the flood as a martyr, “last seen heroically trying to open up a grate to increase canal drainage,”<sup>111</sup> but he does not pause to consider how this loss could have been prevented. He recalls the recovery process in which “every shop, restaurant, and hotel on the main drag had to be rewired, replumed, and reequipped,”<sup>112</sup> but he fails to mention the physical and emotional labor that the rebuilding entailed. He also conveniently neglects non-human causality. Steves’ “new normal” locates Cinque Terre in a temporal frame that is purely based on his own personal expectations; and although sympathetic readers might point out that these expectations are the result of decades of visits to Cinque Terre, he seems more concerned with narratives of personal responsibility, and the collective spirit of redemption that surrounds them, than with looking too closely into their underlying structural cause.

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<sup>109</sup> Steves, *Italy's Cinque Terre*, 49.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.



Fig. 27. Monterosso al Mare. "Back to normal." Photograph by author.

In Steves' reading, resilience, and the disaster that precedes it, appear to be part of an eternally repeating cycle of the human spirit – a cycle in which, just as the weak are often blamed for their own downfall,<sup>113</sup> those perceived to be resilient are celebrated for being uniquely responsible for their own success. It seems worth noting that such redemptive stories have a central place in American mythmaking and identity.<sup>114</sup> They also possess wider appeal: in Catherina Unger's *Cinque Terre: Vigneti con vista mare/ Vineyards with Seaview* (an Italian/English coffee table book), for instance, she describes how Cinque Terre's fragile ecosystem after the flood can only be sustained through attentive acts of "everyday care" from residents.<sup>115</sup> Without a positive "chain reaction" of responsibility, Unger asserts, young people will continue to leave the land and the "strong magic of the vineyards" will be lost.<sup>116</sup> Intergenerational relations also figure strongly in Rosie Whitehouse's *Liguria* guidebook, which applauds the work of committed community members "dedicated to restoring, rebuilding and preserving Vernazza for future generations."<sup>117</sup> For its part, Lonely Planet

<sup>113</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

<sup>114</sup> McAdams, "The Redemptive Self."

<sup>115</sup> Unger, *Cinque Terre*, 111.

<sup>116</sup> Unger, *Cinque Terre*, 112.

<sup>117</sup> Whitehouse, *Liguria*, 137.

simply states that: “the villages, in resilient Ligurian style, recovered swiftly.”<sup>118</sup> In each of these guidebooks, Cinque Terre is uniquely responsible for itself: the community must actively counterbalance past and present transgressions in order to protect the future. Such safeguards, Steves causally remarks, are “hard to swallow until you get used to it.”<sup>119</sup> This indicates that recovery through atonement is a bitter pill, but one that ultimately can become incorporated into the everyday until the taste is no longer noticeable. That Cinque Terre’s burden is primarily *physical* is not lost on Steves. Its renowned beauty is a result of its precarious position between steep terraces and deep sea, and it requires arduous physical exertion to maintain these crumbling terraces, harvest grapes, or just walk up and down the terrace steps that lead to the next town. Although he previously called the Cinque Terre humans lazy, Steves exclaims that the land is “worth the sweat”<sup>120</sup> and, with no apparent irony, that “hardworking Vernazzans” are rewarded for their labor of “climbing up and down and up and down” with a “world-class view from their eternal resting place.”<sup>121</sup> The ultimate reward for Cinque Terre residents, it seems, is to have a seaside burial.

How might we understand resilience narrative in Steves’ work? At one level, Steve seems to subscribe wholeheartedly to the neoliberal view that “‘resilient’ peoples do not look to states or other entities to secure and improve their well-being because they have been disciplined into believing in the necessity to secure and improve it for themselves.”<sup>122</sup> For the resilience scholars Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper, the rise in popularity of the term “resilience” is due to the rise of neoliberalism and resilience is, in effect, a by-product of neoliberalism.<sup>123</sup> However, the political scientist Philippe Bourbeau<sup>124</sup> critiques this

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<sup>118</sup> Lonely Planet, *Italy*, 181.

<sup>119</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 46.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>122</sup> Reid, “Interrogating the Neoliberal Biopolitics,” 113.

<sup>123</sup> Walker and Cooper, “Genealogies of Resilience.”

<sup>124</sup> Bourbeau, “A Genealogy of Resilience.”

understanding of resilience for its failure to account for the ways in which governments and other state actors have hijacked the concept to meet their own ends, while another political scientist Chris Zebrowski,<sup>125</sup> claims that the emergence of resilience as a concept is complicit with neoliberalism's emphasis on "good social behavior," as demonstrated by Steves' "resilient spirits" who need nothing other than their own willpower.

My point here is not to align with any particular point of view in the neoliberalism-resilience nexus, but rather to highlight that discourses on neoliberalism and resilience are readily, perhaps necessarily, entangled with one another in present times. In this context, it becomes possible to argue that Steves' redemptive narrative functions as a mirror for the contemporary neoliberal American society that produces it. Literary and other cultural texts often function as a mirror of the society that produces those texts, regardless of where they are located.<sup>126</sup> Extrapolating from this, Steves seems to be indicating to his fellow Americans that a large part of the value of Cinque Terre is that its residents exhibit "good" (aka neoliberal) behavior. This is not to say that these residents lack resilience; as Zebrowski suggests, "to say that resilience is the correlate of neoliberalism does not mean that resilient populations are an illusion or a 'false' conception."<sup>127</sup> On the contrary, such a claim invites critical inquiry into the processes through which resilient populations are represented as "having resilience." Narrativizing resilience is one thing, but actually creating it is quite another. This raises the question of how the lived experience of resilience in Cinque Terre squares with Steves' representation of it as springing from willpower alone.

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<sup>125</sup> Zebrowski, *The Value of Resilience*.

<sup>126</sup> For a discussion of literature and mirror metaphors, see Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

<sup>127</sup> Zebrowski, "The Nature of Resilience," 161.

## The contrast of lived experience

La Spezia, Italy: November 2017

One of the challenges facing every fieldworker is that of building rapport with potential research participants. When I moved to Cinque Terre to conduct research in 2017, the tourist season was coming to a close. To locals, I must have appeared to be just another foreigner who wanted the “inside scoop” on Cinque Terre. I knocked on many proverbial doors: some opened, others closed. While I wasn’t asking, “Where do *real* locals eat?” or haggling for discounts on postcards, I *was* encouraging people to allow me into their everyday lives: an extraordinary ask.

Based on my preliminary research in 2016, I already knew about Rick Steves’ notoriety in Cinque Terre. I now wanted to know what the locals thought of him: how he was viewed by the designated “resilient spirits” who called Cinque Terre “home.” I contacted a few Cinque Terre-based bloggers in the months preceding fieldwork in the hope that they would agree to speak with me about Steves. Interestingly, nearly all of these bloggers wrote in English rather than Italian and most of them seemed to be women, but I hadn’t yet figured out a correlation. I also hadn’t anticipated the cold shoulder I initially received.

As I would find out later, part of the reason for the lack of response was that these bloggers were inundated with email from readers. Most people were acting out of simple curiosity, and were hugely appreciative of the stories of Americans (or other foreigners) living abroad. One participant recounted that admiring readers would sometimes show up at her restaurant with her favorite American foodstuffs to share with her. After several such visits, she removed all online mention of her workplace. Other readers, in contrast, felt that the bloggers should act as informal tour guides and cultural mediators. Many would leave comments on the blog or send emails asking about travel details or complaining about their underwhelming holiday experiences. The scale of contact with tourists grew with each year.

Some stopped blogging altogether, others turned blogging into a full-time occupation. It wasn't until I described my aims as contrary to those of Rick Steves and his "Rickites" that I started to garner some responses. My point of difference, I argued, was that I wanted to act as a mouthpiece for issues on the ground rather than seeking to profit from their lives. At the time, I didn't realize that distancing myself from the profit motive would make all the difference.

Sisu was the first to respond to my request. I had gone on numerous tours by this point, and had interacted with hundreds of tourists. I hadn't yet ingratiated myself with anyone living or working on site. My first meetings with Sisu were filled with "getting to know you" chats and sundry pleasantries. I discovered she was also an American and had moved to Cinque Terre "for love" over a decade before (see Chapter two). We would meet for coffee or drinks. Eventually, I found out that she knew Steves. Meanwhile, I volunteered to help with *la vendemmia* with a local vintner. I introduced myself to everyone I met. I even went to church. If Steves was mentioned, it was usually brief, and nearly always polarizing, with opinions divided between those who thought he had helped to popularize the region and those who agreed with him that he had ruined it.

Then, more or less out of the blue, Sisu called me again. "*Ciao! I'm going to be in town for groceries at the IperCoop. Is there anything you need? Also, do you still want to interview me about Rick Steves?*" The IperCoop is the "hyper" version of the Italian Coop grocery store chain, and is located in a newly constructed shopping mall with abundant free parking on the outskirts of La Spezia. Sisu would often drive about forty minutes from her Cinque Terre home to buy her weekly groceries there. There was a small grocery store in her hometown, but prices there were high and selection limited. I hadn't been to the IperCoop yet, so I was thrilled to figuratively kill two birds with one stone. I gave Sisu an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Sisu picked me up outside my apartment building in a tiny Fiat. It was my first time driving in La Spezia. We zipped around the harbor and then negotiated a series of tight one-way streets. *“Let’s talk!”* She said. *“Do you want to record me? I’m completely fine with it. I’ve thought about it a lot and you seem like you’re really here for the truth, not some tourist brochure.”* I was somewhat taken aback. *“I am, I mean, I want to know what’s really happening here,”* I sputtered, *“and just to reassure you, everything you say will be de-identified, just like in the ethics paperwork that I gave you when we first met.”* She wasn’t concerned. *“Nah, people will be able to tell anyway. It’s a small place. Everyone knows everyone’s business. I’m fine with it. I’ve been here long enough and have nothing to hide.”*

It occurred to me that this was one of the ways in which discourse produces material realities. Steves’ words held power, and there could be very real repercussions for talking about him in certain ways. I chose my words carefully. *“I wanted to ask about your life in Cinque Terre and your relationship with the place especially.”* We parked at the shopping center and sorted shopping bags. *“First, I wanted to ask you about the story of your blog and why you decided to blog?”*

As we walked along, shopping, we chatted in English. We weren’t too worried about being overheard as we were outside Cinque Terre’s English-language milieu.

*“Blogging was just a personal outlet because I had moved from the US and was starting to go out of my mind... I was initially sending very long colorful emails to friends and family about my ‘adventures’ and ah, I just, finally, I don’t know if someone recommended it to me or I was like ‘You know what, I need to just write this once and everyone could just read it if I send out a link’ and so, eventually I decided, ‘Oh I should start a blog!’”*

I understood her sentiments. At around the time she was moving to Italy, I had just moved to France for my first job after university. I had also blogged to update friends and



family about my life abroad, and had found many of the “love migrants” who feature in this thesis (see Chapter two) from their blogs and online personas. These highly personal accounts helped me to understand Cinque Terre in a way that differed from the typical Lonely Planet guidebook.

Sisu’s blog was active during the 2011 flood. In the months before the event, she posted weekly updates. She and her Italian partner were living at the time outside of Cinque Terre in La Spezia, and most of his extended family had been on holiday outside the region. She told me about her experience of the flood:

*“It was the next day, we ran into one of our friends from Monterosso, and he looked horrible. He looked scared and upset. He was running around like he didn’t know what to do. He was just like he was just kind of like going in ten different places at once. So we were like: “Maurizo, what happened? What’s going on?” And he was like: “Non c’è ragione”<sup>5</sup> [there’s no sense]. He didn’t even know how to respond. He was so upset. “C’è un alluvione, ha caduto tutto e Vernazza è distrutto e Monterosso è sotto fango” [It’s a flood, everything is lost and Vernazza is destroyed and Monterosso is under mud]. He was like: I need boots. I need cigarettes. I need water. Anything. I need to get back. So we were just like oh my god what happened? And he was just like, you know, Vernazza is destroyed. So we were shocked. We had no idea. The sun is shining. It’s a beautiful day.”*

Today, less than a decade after the flood, it seems incredible that Sisu and her partner wouldn’t immediately know about what was happening. Yet instant media as we know it now was still in its infancy (eg. Facebook only became a publicly owned company in 2012). Moreover, since the flood occurred at the end of the tourist season and many people who work in Cinque Terre don’t live there, there wasn’t a large mass of people who were

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<sup>5</sup> Italian speakers will note that the Italian is incorrect in this paragraph. I leave it as is because this is how it was relayed to me.

immediately affected by it. And those who *were* affected were little interested in going online; they urgently needed to attend to their own affairs. Consequently, news trickled out slowly. Although Sisu’s partner was a native-born local, he didn’t hear about it immediately because locals knew that his family was out of town, and therefore out of harm’s way.



Fig. 28. Monterosso al Mare. Debris after the flood. Photograph from Margherita Ermirio.

As any concerned friend or family member often does when they hear bad news, Sisu began checking on her loved ones. *“I had talked to a few other friends, trying to piece together what had happened and wrote it. Got it up.”* Sisu decided she could help by writing about what had happened. *“I put [friends’] pictures up there and then just started sending the link out, just to say, like, someone needs to know. Found out that Rick Steves knew [about] it because his friends had told him; they sent him emails, and so he had mentioned it online.”*

That Steves had already posted about the flood before people on the other side of the mountain knew about it further demonstrates his wide-reaching influence.

Sisu continued: *“I used a quote that he said, ‘cause it was real interesting, he said something like ‘I feel like I’ve lost a friend.’ And Vernazza is his friend and it’s been, you know, beaten up by nature.”* I wasn’t surprised to hear Sisu describe Steves’ comparison of Vernazza to a friend. I had come across one of his posts after his visit to Vernazza in 2012, in which he blogged that: *“It was like I was visiting a dear relative in the hospital - someone*

who had been very sick and was still weak ... but was out of the woods and recovery was assured.”<sup>128</sup> To hear Sisu repeat this, however, made me realize how entrenched Steves’ narratives had become, both to himself and to his audience of European-bound tourists. It is increasingly acknowledged that places are ascribed with meaning, which in turn creates emotions, sadness included, experienced by both individuals and groups.<sup>129</sup> In Western tourism practice, much sentiment about place has been traced to romantic notions of nature that date back to the post-Enlightenment period, whereby “collective moral frameworks and emotional cultures through interiorized embodied moral practices and emotions experienced at the individual level.”<sup>130</sup> This is not to say that these sentiments or emotions are not “real,” rather that such feelings and their expression have histories. For both Sisu and Steves, their connections to Cinque Terre were profoundly emotional. Sisu’s connection was forged over years of living and working in Cinque Terre, while for Steves – at least according to his book – the connection to Cinque Terre was part of his professional origin story. Both Sisu’s and Steves’ emotional responses to the flood were undoubtedly “real,” but there was a fundamental difference between the two. Steves stood to suffer commercially because of the flood, whereas the consequences for Sisu were more personal. Regardless of the consequences, their respective emotional and practical responses were the same: to write publicly about their grief.

Sisu found resonance with what Steves had written about the flood. Because he was an internationally known authority on Cinque Terre, Sisu recognized that his words carried more weight than her own, and so she used his notoriety to justify her own written responses.

*“It was just this real poignant and emotional phrase that he used about his sadness, so I quoted him and because they taught us in school to always cite your sources (Sisu had a*

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<sup>128</sup> Steves, “Cinque Terre Floodlore.”

<sup>129</sup> For examples, see Baldwin, Smith, and Jacobson, “Love of the Land;” Crouch, “Places around Us;” Hom, “Italy without Borders.”

<sup>130</sup> Hom, “Italy without Borders,” 7.

liberal arts undergrad degree), *I sent the link to his website saying that I used your quote, here's what happened and blah blah blah. And he took my link and he put it into his travel newsletter and then from there it just, like, the traffic to my blog went crazy.*"

Although Sisu had originally used Steves' credibility as a justification for writing to friends and family, she quickly learned that his cachet mattered in tangible ways, especially for the purposes of raising money. In the aftermath of the Cinque Terre flood, there was an outpouring of interest in helping to rebuild the region. If initial news of the deluge appeared in various print media news sources such as *The Guardian* (UK), *The New York Times* (USA), and *Le Monde* (France), much of the subsequent reportage was disseminated through blogs, Facebook, and YouTube. In the aftermath of the flood, Steves' own blog would give regular updates on the reconstruction of Cinque Terre, also linking it to newly formed aid organizations such as *Save Vernazza*<sup>131</sup> or *Rebuild Monterosso*,<sup>132</sup> which were inviting individuals to donate cash toward the reconstruction effort. Through what is termed "influencer marketing,"<sup>133</sup> the public attention Steves drew to the flood had a significant impact on both the blogs and the aid organizations he linked to. As Sisu explains, the impact consisted at first of Internet traffic on her blog, then personal donations:

*"I remember just sitting there looking at the dashboard, looking at the numbers, the traffic from Steves' blog, thinking this was like the most incredible thing, I was like: 'Oh my god!' I mean, I was happy because the whole point of doing it was to get the word out, you know, to get people to know. Linking to Steves wasn't necessarily to get people to donate money, obviously donations were helpful, super helpful, but I just wanted that people knew. Donations were an afterthought."*

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<sup>131</sup> Their website can be found here: <http://savevernazza.com/>

<sup>132</sup> Their website can be found here: <http://rebuildmonterosso.com/>

<sup>133</sup> Chandler and Munday, "Influencer Marketing."

Sisu’s insistence that she wanted people to know about what happened came from a feeling of powerlessness: she felt she couldn’t do anything except write. Meanwhile, both Vernazza and Monterosso were largely evacuated in the aftermath of the flood. Joining those who stayed were emergency workers, who were given special management entrance permits. Together, residents and emergency workers freed the towns from mud and debris; everyone else was barred from entering. Consequently, even if she had wanted to help dig out the towns, Sisu would not have been allowed to. Disseminating information was the only thing she felt she could contribute to the cause. Thanks to Steves picking up her blog, as well as a number of other, similar blogs and websites,

*“Everyone started going to my blog. And once it got out that much, then people started contacting me, asking: How are things going? So, I had to keep updating it, because they kept saying, you know, what’s happening now, what’s happening now, can I do something, is there anything I can do to help? Can I send stuff? People saying: I have a account with Fed Ex, can we organize something, I’ll just cover the shipping and ship it to Italy.”*

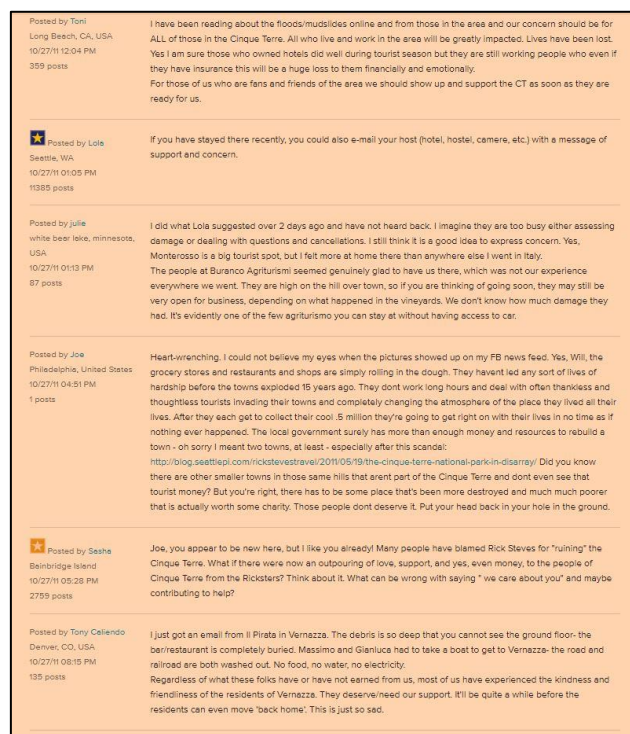


Fig. 29. A screenshot of the Rick Steves travel forum after the flood. Public domain.

By linking to Sisu's disaster story, Steves undoubtedly helped to bring attention to the flood and the recovery effort. In so doing, he depicted "what ought to be seen,"<sup>134</sup> meaning that he viewed Cinque Terre as a worthwhile place and cause. He helped his followers take steps to help, make donations, and ensure that the region bounced back, which in turn enabled a sort of a perpetuation of value.<sup>135</sup> Others, presumably sharing Steves' assessment about the value of Cinque Terre, donated to the recovery effort. Interest in helping to rebuild Cinque Terre continued for a few years after the flood, with some tourists volunteering their time to work on construction or agricultural projects in the region. These so-called "voluntourist"<sup>136</sup> projects continued for a time despite the region being labeled by Steves the following year as being "ready [again] for prime time."<sup>137</sup> This denotes a classic post-disaster response where a wider, often transnational, community comes to the aid of those affected in order to help them be resilient. This response might best be described as resilience in action. However, this model is vulnerable to the criticism that those with the most resources tend to be considered the most resilient. In Steves' case, it also begs the question of motive in helping:

*"We're resilient because of the work of the townspeople, using the resources that we had. Because people have just hauled up their sleeves and worked like hell. It's true that we raised money and that Rick Steves helped with that. But he's not doing it for altruism, but because he makes money off of us. Rick Steves came, and walked around and stuff. He's a moocher. He's been doing that for twenty-five years. An information moocher."*

In my conversation with Sisu, we transitioned from discussing the 2011 flood to talking about wider issues in Cinque Terre. While Sisu agreed with Steves' assessment that Cinque Terre was resilient because its inhabitants worked around the clock, she disagreed with his

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<sup>134</sup> Koshar, "What Ought to Be Seen."

<sup>135</sup> For a discussion on perpetuating place in tourism, see Cordeiro, "Perpetuating Tourism Imaginaries;" Meyers, "An Aesthetics of Resilience."

<sup>136</sup> This term refers to someone who volunteers while on holiday. For an examination on the topic, see Mostafanezhad, *Volunteer Tourism*.

<sup>137</sup> Steves, "Post-Flood Cinque Terre," np.

summation that the region was uniquely resilient, or that the flood required people to “return to the land.” People had already been regenerating Cinque Terre decades before the flood, she said, although it was a remarkably slow process. For Sisu, Steves was part of the problem rather than part of its solution. As she put it:

*“It’s incredible how destructive mass tourism has been, not just to the Cinque Terre but many places in Italy. They profit off of us and our stories. Steves has taken the flood and made recovering from it this heroic thing that happened. I mean, of course it took heroic focus to dig out the mud, but it also needed to be done. Anyone in our situation would have done it. Plus the Press never mentions the nearby Val di Vara which is still ruined. They dug out but then didn’t have the funds to rebuild. We got the press because people profited off of us. Meanwhile, we’re now trying to show that the real heroes are the everyday people, who get up, do their thing for Cinque Terre or wherever, and then do the same the next day.”*

For Sisu, the tourism industry was profiting from a resilience story that Steves had helped to create. As those who were willing to talk about the flood told me repeatedly, the experience was horrible to go through. Yet many didn’t see that much difference between a literal flood of water and the metaphorical flood of tourists who appeared in their midst every day. Both types of flood had significantly changed the landscape, and both had significantly altered people. Both types of flood had caused personal grief, and both had damaged infrastructure. For many residents of Cinque Terre, *both* the 25 October 2011 flood *and* overtourism in Cinque Terre were disasters, and it was overtourism that would have the longer-lasting, albeit less spectacular, effects.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have shown how imaginations of resilience can be reduced to simple narratives of cause and effect. Linear narratives of this kind are not restricted to popular culture, but they are prominent there. Rick Steves’ guidebook offers one such narrative in its

representation of resilience in Cinque Terre, which envisages a return to “normal,”<sup>138</sup> effected by the “resilience of the human spirit,”<sup>139</sup> that eventually enables tourists to continue to enjoy the region’s “beautiful land.”<sup>140</sup> This vision is simplistic and ahistorical, showing little understanding of the broader effects of the flood or of its underlying structural causes. The emphasis, in Steves’ case, is on producing a *moral* account that follows a quasi-biblical arc: a state of equilibrium is destroyed; nature strikes back; and people are then forced to labor for their redemption. In Steves’ work, redemption is understood in terms of a “back-to-the-land” movement, whereby locals are re-employed on the region’s wine-growing terraces. This is a familiar rural narrative, easily understood at first glance. However, on closer inspection, it reveals a much more complex, multilayered story, involving a variety of actors, both human and nonhuman, that are too numerous to name (see Chapter three). Here we begin to see that humans, nonhumans, and the landscape are all constantly being renegotiated and reinterpreted.



Fig. 30. Vernazza. Structural flood damage, far away from the tourist gaze. Photograph by author.

It is true that Steves’ account, and the online conversations that followed it, were helpful in confirming the value of Cinque Terre for both residents and tourists, leading the

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<sup>138</sup> Steves, *Italy’s Cinque Terre*, 49.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*



latter to do volunteer work and make significant donations to the recovery effort. However, this also created a circular effect, whereby those marked as resilient were considered worthy of more resilience. Having a certain resilience is a marker of value; that Steves helped to create the “resilience” that he then marketed to his readers in America and elsewhere is indicative of this. Representing resilience, as Steves shows, is part of what makes a particular destination attractive: a strategy for selling tickets to ride.

It seems significant in this context that most of the residents I talked to did not want to talk about the 2011 flood; the ones who did were people in tourism (*eg.* Steves) or people in the media (*eg.* Maria in this thesis’s opening vignette). This disjuncture between tourism, media, and people “on the ground” points toward a narrow representation of disaster, and the resilience that follow it, which may well serve the global tourism and media industries, but does not necessarily benefit residents or people with lived experience of the original event. Resilience, of course, is not the only strategy for selling Cinque Terre (or other destinations) as “visitable” places. There are a wide variety of reasons for why tourists travel. Resilience, then, is only one piece of a much larger scheme. Here, the productive descriptive capacities of ethnography in conversation with environmental humanities-centered literary analysis point toward an opening and a need to further explore the nexus between travel media, industry and hegemonic resilience (and other) narratives in modern society. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this thesis’ aim to explore resilience as an ethnographic object.

As an ethnographic object, resilience here has been described as narrow and heroic, following a disaster-to-resilience framing. The chapter presents a perspective on resilience that is not based on knowing a place. Rather the chapter shows a perspective based on what can be gleaned from reading or what can be marketed and sold.

This chapter serves as a foil for the remaining parts of the thesis. Resilience in following chapters stands in contrast to this perspective. There it is neither narrow nor

especially heroic. It also does not follow linearly after a disaster. In fact, a disastrous flashpoint is not present in either chapter. Moreover, as this first chapter has indicated, outcomes after a disaster are likely the product of many things, especially money. What, then, does resilience look like in Cinque Terre if uncoupled from disaster? How does perspective tied to place change knowing resilience as an object? With these questions in mind, we now turn to two perspectives physically tied to the place of Cinque Terre.

## Chapter two: Love migrants

How is resilience used in Cinque Terre from an insider-outsider perspective? This chapter examines resilience through the lifeworld of Sisu, the composite American love migrant to Cinque Terre that I introduced in the last chapter. As previously explained, Sisu is a persona based on the many foreign women who have moved to Cinque Terre for love. Here Sisu's lived experience of resilience is mixed with stories of love, migration, and the desire to belong to a place. This chapter departs from the imagination of resilience in Cinque Terre of first chapter in order to develop an analysis of the juxtaposition from imagination on a place and to the lived experience of "becoming with" a place.

Love, in particular, is an essential part of Sisu's lived experience in Cinque Terre. Over time love has come to shape her subjectivity in several important ways, namely it was love that motivated Sisu to migrate to Cinque Terre and is it love that keeps her in place. Here, I have coined the term "love migrant" to describe Sisu, and others like her, because her migration was for love instead of marriage, work or other rationales. For me, love migrants

acted as gatekeepers to Cinque Terre life. I include her lived experience here because each perspective I feature in this thesis aligns with my own autoethnographic journey as I transitioned from tourist to embedded researcher in Cinque Terre. Furthermore, their stories are important to understanding resilience in Cinque Terre because love migrants are an integral part of the larger configuration of Cinque Terre. It is because of love migrants' adamant claim of resilience outside of a disaster scenario that I began to realize a conception of resilience that was tied to experiences in and perspectives on Cinque Terre.



*Fig. 31. Cinque Terre. "Cinque Terre heart" graffiti on a regional train window.  
Photograph by author.*

This chapter is "classically" ethnographic in that it focuses on written ethnographic description derived from ethnographic research and largely anthropological citations. This ethnographic description is triangulated with the environmental humanities notion of "becoming with" as well as contextualized with interdisciplinary understandings of love, migration, and attachment to place. As with the entire thesis, the underpinning assumption of this chapter is that people, particularly women, are the experts in their own lived experience. This assumption is derived from feminist and anthropological theories seeks to uncover

heretofore marginalized or ignored voices. Consequently, I do not trouble love migrants' claims of love or resilience. Instead, I seek to understand their claims by describing how they use the object of resilience in their lives in Cinque Terre. I accomplish this by recounting Sisu's life in Cinque Terre, from her earliest recollections of the region's landscape and people to her establishment as a contributing member of society, to her ongoing struggle to protect her adopted land. Through these stories, we see that love migrants use resilience as a way of legitimating their claim to Cinque Terre, of forging a sense of belonging, and of producing material change.

The chapter begins with a scene-setting ethnographic vignette that establishes the Cinque Terre "love migrant" perspective. Two key points arise here. The first is that love, whether of a person or of a place, emerges as the main motive in these women's decisions to migrate to Cinque Terre in the first place – hence the term "love migrants" to describe them. The second is that these love migrants see themselves as resilient through their experiences of migrating to, then staying on in, the region. This second point further muddles the notion that resilience is derived from linear cause and effect (see Chapter one).

The chapter then moves on to explore how love migrants in Cinque Terre use resilience. I do this by way of three illustrative vignettes that trace the progress of Sisu's life in Cinque Terre. The first vignette details her arrival and subsequent negotiation between her tourist past and her resident future; the second follows her journey to establish herself in Cinque Terre; and the third is her reflection on why she has stayed on, and on what she and others are doing to perpetuate their love of the region. For love migrants, as I found out, resilience is entwined with their fight to protect one particular place as well as to sustain their emotional world: they leverage resilience as a justification for both of these struggles, which in turn provides a reason for why they claim to belong and why they continue to stay.

As outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, the creation of a composite persona was necessary to preserve the anonymity of my love migrant participants. To further support this, I have used extensive quotes from formal interviews as the foundation for the following vignettes rather than specific experiences (though the experiences in the vignettes did actually happen). Basing the vignettes on quotes serves to distance particular individuals from bearing responsibility for everything said. While it is possible that some participants will recognize themselves in a particular quote, others will not and the quotes chosen represent overlaps in opinion and experience with all of them. These precautions are essential as Cinque Terre is a major tourist destination with a small resident population, but a large global reach.

## Introducing the perspective: Cinque Terre's love migrants

Monterosso al Mare and Riomaggiore: March 2018

I had tried to be fashionably late, yet I was the first to arrive at Sisu's birthday party. For the most part, the bar was empty of people and furniture. I said "*ciao*" to the bartender, ordered an espresso, and tried to make small talk. The fresh vernal air from the open front door cut between us like a knife. She thought I was a hapless American tourist trying out my high school Italian. I thought she was a disinterested barkeep, bored and with precious little to do. I know this because we talked about it a few hours later. Before our mutual confessions, I had to wait. Wait for people. Wait for conversation. Wait for Sisu.

After what felt like an eternity, another woman arrived. She also ordered coffee. Her Italian was accented; it was similar to mine, but different. I decided to take the plunge and strike up a conversation with her.

*"Are you here for Sisu's birthday party?"* I inquired in Italian.

She switched into English. *"OMG! Yes! Who are you? How do you know Sisu? Where do you live?"*

Her English was distinctive. I knew based on her accent that she was likely to be from the US east coast. Her eyes glistened with happiness as we exchanged stories. She confessed that she had met her husband in Cinque Terre while on holiday over twenty years before. I confessed that I had also moved for love once, but not to Italy. She talked about her children and her family life in Cinque Terre. I mentioned my burgeoning love of La Spezia.

*"Oh La Spezia is so chi chi these days! I can't believe it. It used to be a dive. Now you can go shopping on Sundays! (Being able to shop or buy groceries on Sunday was a relatively new thing.) It finally feels alive."* Apparently much had changed in the region since her arrival twenty years ago.



Fig. 32. Monterosso al Mare. A view of the beach and its bars. Photograph by author.

Finally, the birthday girl arrived. Other women ambled in with her. The party kicked off. Most of us were in our thirties, with a few late twenty- and early forty-somethings. Food appeared: *prosciutto*, *focaccia* (a type of flatbread), and olives. Local wine was abundant. The atmosphere was a ruckus of laughter and merriment. Before long everyone knew about my research.

After a fair bit of local wine, one of the women loudly whispered, *“I hope you’re going to represent us all fairly. Being in a famous place means we get a lot of press. We’re all resilient, but not in the way that you think.”* This was perhaps the first moment I realized that my original understanding of resilience was not compatible with its actual meaning on the ground.

Her barely concealed attempt to provoke a conversation seemed to work as other attendees chipped in with their thoughts on resilience. *“I’ve put up with a lot, you know. Just moving here was a battle. Everything since I’ve arrived has been a battle.”* Another woman exclaimed, *“Oh my gosh, me too. Whether it’s justifying myself to nosy tourists or justifying my presence to my neighbor who is still mad at **me** that my husband didn’t marry her niece. I am the definition of bouncing-back.”* A third person added, *“I’ve been resilient through it all.*



*I've adapted. I'm been knocked down so many times and I'm still here.*" Clearly there was more to resilience in Cinque Terre than I had anticipated.

As we finished the wine and nibbles, I approached the bar to pay my share and found that my first coffee had been added to the tab at the local price rather than the tourist one. By association, I was a local. This was the point when we confessed our respective stereotypes to each other. From that day on, I was a local – at least according to that particular bartender in that particular bar. I would also learn that becoming local was a reticular process.

We soon strolled to a nearby restaurant, reserved in its entirety in Sisu's honor. More women arrived for dinner. More wine was poured. More camaraderie was established. After a great meal, we boarded a train for Riomaggiore for more drinks at the bar owned by Sisu's friend and her husband.

The majority of the birthday attendees were native speakers of English. Even if they weren't, everyone had a mastery of the language. Italian was their second or third language. At some point, the inevitable topic of the impending tourist season came up. The discussion ranged from new shops and changes to National Park administration to the train schedule and competing with tourists for a spot to sit on the beach. Then, suddenly, the topic shifted to our romantic relationships. Sisu shouted, "*Sarah has an Italian love too!*"

I had recently ended my relationship with my Italian partner of four years. Sisu wasn't yet aware that he and I were through. Her public question about him signaled that I was one of *them*, the love migrants. I tried to hold back tears, but the wine wasn't helping. I blurted out that I had broken off our engagement and promptly started crying. There was deafening silence, followed by an outpouring of empathy. The women embraced me as one of their own, as if we had been friends for years. "*Ah, Italian men! We all love them, but the cross-cultural difficulties can be brutal.*" "*Oh sweetie, we're all been there. Being overseas is rough AF - don't sweat it.*" "*We've got you.*"

My confession led to a proliferation of stories, their own: of women who had left their partners but stayed on by choice or by circumstance; of women who had arrived for other reasons and other kinds of love. While our stories were all different, they followed a similar pattern: initial travel, then falling in love, then the decision to move to be with the loved one.

Nadia, for example, told me she had met her husband in the early morning hours in Vernazza, more than fifteen years ago. At the time she was in her early twenties, vacationing in Italy and was on track to finish her bachelors in the United States in the coming year. The last bar in town had closed, and the partygoers were continuing to mingle in the seaside square. She struck up a conversation with her future husband in English; he replied in Italian. They couldn't understand one another, but continued to talk, giggling at the lack of communication. Eventually one of his friends acted as translator for the rest of the evening. Thereafter, they kept in touch via email, which was followed by trips to Italy and the US. Eventually, they decided to marry to make travel between the two countries easier. She had been in Cinque Terre ever since.

Ida was an early thirty-something South African with an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts. She had met her partner on the beach in Riomaggiore. She and a friend had been visiting Cinque Terre while on holiday. He initiated a conversation with the pair in English while they were sunbathing. Ida continued traveling through Europe, but the pair continued texting. At the end of her trip, he asked her to extend her stay and return to Cinque Terre, so she did. The two have been together ever since. As her grandparents were born in Italy, she was able to secure Italian citizenship relatively easily through an ancestry migration scheme. She had been in Cinque Terre for about five years.

Gertrude, a woman in her forties, had moved to Italy in the 1990s for a life change. She had visited Cinque Terre while on holiday, loved it, and decided to move there. She referred to this decision as her *Under the Tuscan Sun* move, referencing the autobiographical book,

and later film, which depicts an American academic who relocates to Italy to remodel an old Tuscan farmhouse. As a citizen of a EU member country, she had the right to live and work in Italy as she pleased. After establishing herself by learning Italian and starting her own business, she met a man who would become her long-term partner. While they had eventually parted ways, they were still polite when they crossed paths in the village. She dated other locals in the meantime, which was fun if somewhat predictable. While romance had faded, her love of Cinque Terre, as a landscape and as a place, remained.

Although I didn't have access to official records, my fieldwork had led me to estimate that there were at least fifty foreign-born people living in Cinque Terre, many of whom had moved there for love. During formal interviews, and later participant observation, I would listen to these and other women's tales of love, migration, and transnational encounter. Time and again, I discovered that we had a lot in common. We each had an Italian love story entangled with love of a person and/or place and the fight to belong.

Months later, during a conversation about love migration to Cinque Terre, Sisu explained that I had missed an important part of her Italian love story. As she saw it, love migration was mainly about profound connection to *place*. As she elaborated, "*Most of the women that you've spoken to, have loved Italy, and stuck around because of Italy, not particularly because of that one man – or woman. Not everyone is as straight as you might assume.*"

I had to admit to Sisu that my assumption had been that the women were upholding a conventional (i.e. heteronormative) human notion of romantic love. "*That's what most people think,*" she replied. "*Maybe we fell in love with Monterosso or Vernazza first or even second, but I mean, the women stick around, despite the uphill battle to be here legally, to just be here, to be in Cinque Terre. People fail you. The land rarely does.*"

A love of Cinque Terre was cited by each of my participants as the rationale for why migrated to and stayed in Cinque Terre. Sometimes the love of Italy or a person was also included in their rationale. Whatever the other circumstances, love migrants were adamant that they had first fallen in love with the landscape and the place itself. Just as my initial understanding of resilience in Cinque Terre would be transformed, my preconceived notions about love also would need adjustment.

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As previously outlined, this vignette establishes the second perspective of this thesis: the love migrants in Cinque Terre. Love migrants served as gatekeepers and primary participants during the second stage of my fieldwork. Because of their insider-outsider status as migrants, they represent a perspective in transition from the tourist imagination of resilience featured in Chapter one to the long-term enactment of resilience explored in Chapter three. Due to their status, this perspective is predicated on the merging of worlds and identities in Cinque Terre, and on the lived experiences of people becoming long-term residents for emotional reasons – for love. In the following sections, I will explore how love migrants' rationale for migration, as well as their identity as tourists-turned-migrants, confounds standard notions of tourism, migration, and mobility as well as love.

### On falling in love (with Cinque Terre)

Vernazza, Cinque Terre, Italy: June 2018

It was late afternoon. The air was still. The temperature was sweltering. Vernazza's only street felt like an oven filled with sweaty bodies. Sisu was late. I was waiting for her (and an empty table) outside a bar-cum-restaurant near the train station. We had agreed to meet up for drinks one of her rare afternoons off. Seating was first come, first served. At this particular bar, I had learned to pounce on an open table as soon as it was vacated. To do

otherwise meant waiting indefinitely in the heat. At least two hundred people milled around me.



Fig. 33. Vernazza. The train station in the morning. Photograph by author.

Distracted and disoriented, tourists occasionally bumped into me while trying to get their bearings or gazing intently at their mobile phone. This was the suffocating atmosphere that prevailed in Cinque Terre during the tourist season, between April and October. Neither I, nor the regional infrastructure, seemed equipped to deal with the onslaught. I developed a tactic of becoming a human anchor of sorts, doing my best to avoid being knocked over by waves of large groups of people looking in every direction except in front of them. It was not uncommon to be bruised as people walked into you. I once received a bloody nose from a waving elbow. The physical infrastructure wasn't much better. Defacement of buildings was common.

Sisu arrived just as a table became vacant. She looked frazzled. Her brunette hair was tied in a messy bun – the type worn by young American women the world over. We rushed to grab seats. *“So sorry!”* Sisu apologized. *“I got caught doing errands. It’s all such a pain during the tourist season. I swear the crowds are getting worse.”* Several other Cinque Terre residents had commented to me that this year seemed even more packed with tourists than usual. Some attributed the increase to the new cruise-ship terminal in nearby La Spezia.

Others thought the increase had to do with currency fluctuations in the Euro. Whatever the reason, the crowds were anxiety-inducing, to say the least.

Whenever we met for *aperitivo* (late afternoon/evening drinks and food), it was a friendly respite from the frantic pace of work and family life. “*Did I tell you that I was in Venice last August?*” Sisu asked. “*It was fine, totally fine in comparison to here. It didn’t feel crowded at all.*” Venice is often used as the proverbial example of mass tourism in Italy (see Introduction). Similarly, in Cinque Terre, the tourist population vastly outnumbered the locals in each of its five villages during the tourist season. “*Here though, unlike Venice, you get trampled. Although you kind of get used to it, it just gets hard living. Maybe it felt different because I don’t care about Venice like I do Cinque Terre.*” Sisu lived in Monterosso al Mare, which she commonly shortened to Monterosso when she spoke about it. Today, she had completed errands in Monterosso before meeting me in Vernazza. She had tried to ride her bicycle to the post office on the opposite side of the village, but had had to walk her bike because there were too many people walking on the road. Her delay meant that she had missed her intended train. However, as the train runs three times per hour<sup>1</sup> during the tourist season, she just had to catch the next one. The train journey between the two towns is twelve minutes. Navigating such scenes had become a part of her daily routine, but today Sisu felt particularly on edge. She was telling me about her misadventure in detail: “*And I couldn’t believe it! I was going “ding ding ding” with my little bell and people just turned around and looked at me. I couldn’t move forward.*” Sisu was referring to the infamous “tourist stare,” a sort of seeing without seeing. Delivery drivers seemed to bear the brunt of the stare. Several complained to me about the difficulties they routinely experienced making their rounds,

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<sup>1</sup> This is only during daylight hours. The train schedule is less frequent in the evening and does not run between 1am and 6am.

shouting “excuse me” (in English) or “*occhio*” (in Italian) in the often vain hope that people would yield to their delivery trolleys.

Sisu continued, suitably riled: “*I’m not an aggressive person, but sometimes I get so mad. Today a gentleman turned around, and screamed at me, “hey, calm down, eh! Relax, eh!” And I was like, “I am relaxed. I just need to get through.”*” Her voice became louder, more stressed. “*Argh! I just wanted to get shit done quickly so I could enjoy my afternoon off.*” Sisu lifted her arms to the heavens and then flopped back in her chair, inadvertently hitting our table neighbor with her swinging right hand.

“*Oh sorry! Mi dispiace (I’m sorry),*” Sisu gasped. She placed her hand over her mouth as she looked over at the table.

“*Don’t worry about it. Sounds like you’ve had a bad day.*” Our ginger-haired Australian table neighbor had been sipping a beer. He lifted his glass and grinned. “*Cheers.*” He clearly wanted to chat.

“*Ha! Yeah, you could say that,*” Sisu responded. She smiled as she instantly put on her hospitality persona. “*Sometimes even living in paradise has its problems.*”

“*Yeah, it’s beautiful, but I can see how all of the people could drive you batty. I’m a dive instructor in Bali and even this crowd is crazy for me.*” Like Cinque Terre, Bali is an internationally known tourist destination known for its seaside villages and mountainous scenery. Sisu lit up. “*Oh! I really enjoyed visiting Bali! How long have you been there?*” For a few minutes the three of us discussed tourism in Bali and compared our experiences. The Australian had been in Bali for over five years on a temporary residency visa. He was an avid SCUBA diver and thought Bali was great because he could “live like a king” there. He owned a house near the ocean with a swimming pool as well as an adventure-experience company that catered to tourists. As it was winter in the southern hemisphere, he had joined

some mates for a European tour. Cinque Terre had been on his “must-see” list in order to dive in its marine sanctuary.



Fig. 34. Vernazza. The crowd beneath the station waiting for the next train. Photograph from Margherita Ermirio.

As he finished his beer and left to join his friends, we said goodbye. Sisu waved.

*“Anyway, sorry again. It’s was lovely talking about Bali. I hope you love the rest of your time here!”* She shifted her plastic chair closer to me and the table. We sat side by side in silence, watching the street for a few seconds. We had a view of the train station steps and the 25 October 2011 flood plaque, which features photos of people wading knee-deep in mud. Some seagulls began to squawk loudly near us as the town’s church bells began to chime. Sisu looked at me. *“That guy was nice enough, and I truly hope he loves his stay in Cinque Terre, but his hospitality and migration experience was totally different to mine. Plus, do you know how easy it is to get a work visa for Indonesia?”* Sisu was referring to both practical and categorical differences between herself and the Australian dive master. Although they were both from English-speaking industrialized countries, his migration experience reflected very different socio-political realities than hers. For one, he was able to own his own business and



his own house in his adopted country as well as employ domestic help while only holding a temporary visa. By contrast, despite Sisu's Italian citizenship, she was unable to own a house, build a fulltime business, or employ home help. In fact, Sisu *was* the help.

A server finally appeared to take our order. We had been waiting for about twenty minutes. He greeted us with a tired smile. "*Ciao ragazze (chicks)! What's happening? The usual?*" We both ordered Campari spritz – an *amaro* (bitter) drink made with bitter herb and fruit liquor, *prosecco*, ice cubes, and orange slices. It's a classic Italian summer alcoholic drink that's a close cousin to the more internationally famous Aperol spritz. Sisu ordered two drinks to "calm herself." I couldn't tell if our interaction with the Australian man had made her mood better or worse.

A train from La Spezia toward Genoa pulled in to the station above us. A mass of people began streaming down the train station stairs into the street. A baseball-cap-wearing family of five struggled to get down the steep stairs with their giant neon suitcases. "*When I first moved, I wasn't prepared for this kind of life. I pictured it being more "Momma Mia" and less "Dickens." There is a lot of Dickens here. I now see how my original ideas about Cinque Terre contribute to the current problems – especially mass tourism but not only – here.*" Sisu was well aware of how stereotypes about Italy (and the Mediterranean more generally) had influenced her thinking and actions when she was a tourist as well as when she moved full time to Cinque Terre. Her comparison between the American film (*Momma Mia*) in which a woman moves to a Greek island, where she runs a small Bed and Breakfast, and a British author famous for writing about the harrowing social conditions in Victorian England, didn't seem to fit the scene we were in. What did Dickens have to do with watching floods of tourists descend on Vernazza? Perhaps a "disconnect" between what we were seeing and what Sisu had experienced was the point.

Sisu pursued the point, though. *“So many people come here thinking that it’s an undiscovered paradise, just like in Momma Mia, or expecting things to be a certain way. But the reality is completely different. There is some Dickens-level social stuff going on.”* She sighed, surveying the scene. *“I know tourist overcrowding is thought to be a first world problem and no one has sympathy for us.”* Sisu was by no means alone in her qualification of mass tourism as a “first world” problem. Many Cinque Terre residents saw mass tourism in a similar way, especially if they were involved in debates about how to address the issue. While I wasn’t certain about the origins of this, it seemed to serve mainly as a marker of the speaker’s awareness of their relative economic privilege. It also seemed defensive, as if the speaker were anticipating criticism. Sisu took another sip of her spritz. *“People – friends, tourists, whoever – always patronizingly tell me that it could be worse. That I need to be thankful. That I at least I don’t need to worry about homelessness or whatever issue is popular. But tourism definitely is a problem - not to mention that the argument about other issues is a straw man argument. Having one issue doesn’t negate other issues. Not to mention that overcrowding is just one issue of many here.”* According to Sisu, there weren’t too many people around who were convinced that either she or Cinque Terre had problems, and she considered it her duty to explain these problems as she saw them. Often her explanations were circular, incorporating various ideas and parts of the problems as she interpreted them. For those who did acknowledge that Cinque Terre had problems, mass tourism was a widely discussed issue. However, as Sisu indicated, mass tourism was not the only problem; it was just one of many issues. For example, the threat of homelessness was also an issue. Housing for locals was limited and “bad luck” could render someone homeless, particularly if that bad luck correlated with the owner of the property.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For explorations of tourism led-gentrification and lack of housing for residents rooted in a substitution of the residential rental by a tourism rental market, see Gravari-Barbas and Guinand, *Tourism and Gentrification*.

Sisu continued her diatribe as we sipped our drinks and people watched us. *“In the past few years, it’s getting more and more stressful with the amount of people that are coming. The effects of mass tourism are things that you don’t immediately see. Many effects are social not economic.”* I couldn’t help but agree with her. From what I had witnessed so far, some of the social effects of mass tourism were widespread cynicism, a chronic lack of social services, and pervasive mental health issues. *“So sure, financially we’re fine, although small business owners might disagree with me there. Taxes crush people here. Environmentally and socially we’re not fine. Some of the effects are physical too, but you have to know where to look in order to see it. And when tourism changes – not if, when – then a lot of businesses will hurt.”* Like many contemporary “wicked problems,” the contours of the problem seemed indeterminate, and every attempt to measure it had the effect of reshaping it.<sup>3</sup> However, Sisu’s “squeaky-wheel” attempts to explain Cinque Terre’s problems also spoke to her determination to help resolve them.

*“I understand now why everyone who lives here drinks so much. Drugs are huge. It’s how we cope. I sometimes ask myself why I keep doing this, why do I keep fighting to stay here? I do it for love, but is that enough to continue?”*

Rather than dismiss Sisu’s question as hyperbole, I decided to wade in: *“Well, is love enough?”* Another train rumbled into the station. For a few moments, we couldn’t hear anything but a female voice robotically announcing the incoming train over the station’s loudspeakers. Sisu sighed and watched the latest wave of people stream down the station stairs. She finished her first Campari spritz. I held my breath. Until this point Sisu had been discussing Cinque Terre’s issues in more abstract terms, but my last question had applied directly to her. I had little idea what her response would be. She stared at the crowd as she slowly replied, *“Sometimes, it feels like I’m living in the most beautiful prison in the world.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Bauman and O’Brien, *Environmental Ethics and Uncertainty*.

Although she hadn't really answered my question, her phrase "beautiful prison" seemed fitting. Sisu had an emotional attachment to Cinque Terre. It wasn't that she was stuck, more that she felt somehow bound to the region. Her feelings were trapping her. Sisu continued, rhapsodic as she often was: *"I don't know if love is worth it – worth the stress of being here and watching the thing you love change, I just know that I haven't left. Love is why I moved and love keeps me here. I think love is why I am always trying to make sense of what's happening here."*

A tour group, Weekend Student Adventures, wandered by, most of them female, university-age students with hair held in high ponytails. Rick Steves' son, Andy, runs the group, whose business model caters toward American university students in Europe for study abroad programs (see Chapter one). I wondered how many of them had similar expectations to the ones Sisu was describing. *"Oh gosh, look at them,"* Sisu half giggled, waving in the direction of the tour group. *"They're full of hope, romance and adventure. What's weird about my story is that I got exactly what I wanted: I migrated to Italy and now live in this beautiful place."* She motioned to the group, which was now standing in line for *gelato*. *"Maybe I didn't know what love means - our culture doesn't have the best examples of what happens after love-at-first-sight. I expected to love Cinque Terre, I didn't expect to find a man to love. I guess I didn't realize how hard it would be to love something."*

I recalled my own study abroad experience in Paris and how, while I wasn't exactly seeking out a foreign lover, I was at least open to the possibility of meeting someone. I hadn't actually formed any romantic attachments by the end of my semester abroad, but I did move to Paris for work after graduating. Living and working in Paris was completely different from studying in Paris. I loved Paris despite all of its problems, but that wasn't enough to keep me there; it was the love of a person rather than a place that later convinced me to move to

Canberra from Paris. Unlike me, Sisu had stayed in the place that she fell in love with. What was the difference between us? Were our loves different?

*“I guess ranting is what happens when you love something because you want the best for the object of your love. So you do what you can. Oh gosh!”* Sisu looked horrified. *“Is ranting the best that I can do?”* I assured her that debriefing about problems was necessary; that it was therapeutic. I also sympathetically pointed out that she had done many more things for Cinque Terre besides ranting. She had created a successful travel blog promoting alternative forms of tourism. She had volunteered for la vendemmia and curated local businesses’ social media accounts. She had become, and remained, a highly active part of many community organizations. Plus she worked full-time in food service.

She smiled, *“I do sound pretty bad ass.”*

Our late-afternoon conversation had raised several important questions. For example, what did Sisu really mean when she was talking about love? What made her experiences different to those of the Australian tourist? Was mass tourism the most pressing problem in her life?



Fig. 35. Vernazza. The main square by the sea in the off season. Photograph by author.

To some, this vignette may seem like a classic example of overtourism as disaster. After all, Sisu’s palpable frustration, the waves of tourists arriving as if on cue at the scene, and problems of gentrification all sit comfortably under the heading of a broadly defined disaster and its effects. However, to view this event through the lens of overtourism, or disaster more generally, would be a narrow approach. It would fail to place enough weight on Sisu’s adamant rationale of love in this particular context: it would focus on the noise rather than on the detail. An emphasis on overtourism also potentially blinds us to the ways in which Sisu links her story to that of Cinque Terre. Overtourism might be one context for Sisu’s story, but it is not the heart of her story. The heart of her story is love.

What can love mean in a larger story about resilience? To unravel this, more attention needs to be paid to Sisu’s motives for moving to and staying in Cinque Terre. Just as my opening vignette served to situate Sisu in the wider context of Cinque Terre, the following one serves to situate love as the foundation for her story. The significance of the story (and others like it) is that it demonstrates an everyday aspect to resilience. It begins to demonstrate how love, and emotion more generally, can underpin resilience.

### The meet-cute: Cinque Terre and Fortunato

Sisu met Cinque Terre on a sunny afternoon in 2006. She met her now husband, Fortunato, the next day. At the time, she was studying abroad in Florence, and she decided to take a weekend trip to the “famous five.” The region’s stunning network of trails above a dazzling azure sea immediately captivated her, and as she would put it later in one of our regular conversations, “*For me, nature is a hundred percent of why I’m here.*” She spent her first day hiking between each Cinque Terre town. In Riomaggiore, she hiked to the thirteenth century *Santuario di Nosta Signora di Montenero e Campiglia* (Our Lady of Montenero and Campiglia Shrine) where she snapped (analog) photos of splendid coastal views. She sunbathed in Manarola, intermittently jumping off its famous rocks into the deep green-blue

harbor. She got lost in the maze of drystone terraced vineyards between Manarola and Corniglia, until a kindly local pointed her in the right direction. In Corniglia, Sisu slurped *gelato* and ventured down (and back up) the three hundred stone stairs to the cove beneath the town where she read part of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. In Vernazza, she wandered the ancient stone alleys to the castle overlooking the sea. At her final destination, Monterosso, she devoured stuffed anchovies and local white wine. It had been a perfect day with an itinerary to be found in any guidebook. Then she met Fortunato.

He served her dessert wine at dinner. They somehow started talking. His English was quite good, while her Italian was basic at best. Their interaction was the stuff, she told me, of the "romantic holiday imagination." She stopped by his restaurant again the following day. They talked about *The Kite Runner* (he had heard about it!) and about art. Sisu had never met a man so well versed in art, nor one so well-traveled. Fortunato was completely different from the men she knew at home, or even in Florence. In contrast to all the shallow promises made by suitors before, he arranged to meet her in Florence for a romantic dinner and then *he actually showed up!* He wooed her with food and gallery tours during subsequent visits to the city. She traveled several more times to Cinque Terre until her departure date. Although they were never physically intimate during this time, their initial romance blossomed into a long-term love affair. They talked constantly via Skype, then, after the end of the tourist season, he visited her in the US for Thanksgiving. She reciprocated for spring break the following year then went back again after she graduated from university. Eventually, physical intimacy followed. They flew back and forth to and from their respective countries over the next few years, often for the maximum time amount allowed by the immigration authorities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Before 2010, the maximum limit for Americans in the Schengen Zone was six months. The interpretation of the rule has now changed and now Americans can only be in the zone for three months at a time, with three months out, for a total of six months in a three hundred sixty-five day period.

While Sisu's love story is undoubtedly romantic, how else might we understand her narrative? Personal histories of women moving for love and emotive reasons are common, but remain theoretically underdeveloped in scholarship on migration, tourism, and gender studies. Entire social systems have been built on the premise that a woman leaves her family, sometimes over vast distances, in order to join a man. Even today's more emancipated choices, in which women make their own decisions to travel, are often an extension of previous patriarchal systems. Scholars have demonstrated that partner migration largely follows patterns of patriarchal norms, where people and landscape are imbued with patriarchal, heterosexual, and gendered meanings.<sup>5</sup> The reverse, men moving for women, is still unlikely. However, these systems have not been predicated on the notion of love. Consequently, theories of migration or patriarchy do not necessarily help us understand what Sisu and her compatriots mean when they say that love was their primary motive to move and *to stay on*. Moreover, partner migration is not necessarily the same as migration for love, particularly if one of the main objects of that love is a place or landscape like Cinque Terre.

While they continue to feature regularly in popular literature and culture,<sup>6</sup> women's romantic relationships abroad also remain under-theorized in the vast literature on tourism and mobility apart from their occasional appearance in the literature on sex tourism.<sup>7</sup> One of the earliest and most commonly cited works on female tourist/local male encounters recounts the experiences of Palestinian men in Israel in the early 1970s, for whom "possessing" the bodies of foreign women was a means to obtain prestige as well as undermine colonial rule.<sup>8</sup> In more systematic studies of women's holiday experiences, which began in the 1990s, nomenclature quickly became a problem. The actions of women seeking romance, or just sex,

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<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Aure, "Highly Skilled Dependent Migrants;" Brettell, "Marriage and Migration;" Pritchard and Morgan, "Privileging the Male Gaze."

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Dionne, *American Girl in Italy*; Evans, *Naked (in Italy)*; Foster, *Room with a View*.

<sup>7</sup> For examples, see Bowman, "Fucking Tourists;" Frohlick, Susan, "I'm More Sexy Here;" Green, Scrase, and Ganguly-Scrase, "Beach Boys Do It."

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, "Arab Boys Tourist Girls."



while on holiday did not fit previously defined classifications of “sex tourism,” where male tourists made some form of payment for relations with local women (or local men). The majority of women were not directly paying for a relationship, if they were paying anything at all; furthermore, because these women were imagined as engaging in romantic relationships out of a vague desire for adventure, some scholars claimed that female tourist relations with local men were more “genuinely” romantic, and that physical relations followed a “natural” relationship trajectory.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the term “romance tourism” was coined to explain female tourists’ encounters with local men, particularly men in the Global South who held significant power differences from their tourist lover.<sup>10</sup> While some contemporary researchers agree with this basic distinction between male (sex tourism) and female (romance tourism) pursuits,<sup>11</sup> others have rejected the idea of a benign or “lighter” form of male quest and have argued that, whatever the nomenclature, Western women are engaging in sex tourism.<sup>12</sup> Others ignore the distinction entirely by focusing entirely on the physical action of sex in tourism.<sup>13</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to undertake a thorough investigation of intimate relations abroad, these conceptions about sex and romance tourism fail to do justice to Sisu’s experiences, along with my own, because they fail to take into account various forms of motivation and intimacy *beyond* sex and romance.

Moreover, in the limited scholarship available on sex tourism, the male perspective is often prioritized, while the perspective and agency of women has been routinely ignored.<sup>14</sup> Feminist sociologist Erin Sanders-McDonagh argues in her recent book on tourist women engaging in sex that the male gaze continues to prevail in contemporary scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Simon, “Status of Sex Research.”

<sup>10</sup> Bauer, “Romance Tourism Sex Tourism?”

<sup>11</sup> Dahles and Bras, “Entrepreneurs in Romance

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, “Dollars Girl’s Best Friend?”

<sup>13</sup> For examples, see Berdychevsky, Gibson, and Poria, “Women’s Sexual Behavior;” Brown and Stephan, “Anonymous and Uninhibited.”

<sup>14</sup> Carrigan, *Postcolonial Tourism*; Jacobs, “Have Sex Will Travel;” Pritchard and Morgan, “Privileging the Male Gaze.”

<sup>15</sup> Sanders-McDonagh, *Women and Sex Tourism*.

Sanders-McDonagh asserts that the best possible corrective to this would be to question foundational societal assumptions about the gendered nature of desire.<sup>16</sup> One such assumption is that sex was the primary motive for Sisu's declaration of love of Cinque Terre, and for her romance with Fortunato. From Sisu's perspective, her declaration of love of the land and her (initially) platonic relationship with Fortunato fall outside the bounds of both sex and romance. Moreover, her later decision to migrate for love also makes her experience an outlier within the established literature because while some love migrants might be considered marriage migrants, not all of them move for a partner or to be married. In particular, the many love migrants who moved because of an emotional connection to the *place* of Cinque Terre don't quite fit into such categories. Such narrow categories come with considerable baggage, reeking of outdated views and attitudes that situate some as "normal" while failing to comprehend those whose bodies, appearance, and behaviors fall "out of bounds."<sup>17</sup>

While falling in love with place whilst on holiday certainly warrants further investigation, moving for love also requires considerable further investigation. As Sisu continually reiterated during her conversations with me, "*I came here because of the nature. And for me, the sea and the land is, are, both part of me, part of my life. That's what I fell in love with when I came here. Truly.*" Throughout these conversations, Sisu was adamant that love of Cinque Terre had been her first priority in moving there. She was also aware that her explanation sounded flimsy. "*I know it sounds naive or like I'm covering up my sexual shame with talk of love - I have a minor [degree] in sociology and remember what they used to say about people like me. Had I not loved it here, I wouldn't have kept coming back.*"

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<sup>16</sup> Sanders-McDonagh, *Women and Sex Tourism*, 141.

<sup>17</sup> Törnqvist, "Troubling Romance Tourism."

Sisu's experience of falling in love with a particular place was not unique, nor was her insistence that her love was genuine. One sociological study of Anglophone migrants to Italy and Greece discusses love as a motive to migrate in terms of an "irrational discourse"<sup>18</sup> born out of "Western nostalgia for romantic love as a response to the over-modernization and materialism of today's world."<sup>19</sup> While there is some merit in unpacking notions of nostalgia and romantic love as well as reactions to over-modernization, to dismiss love as "irrational" is to risk casting aside one of the most complex of our emotions. As Sisu once comically told me, *"I mean, sure, if we're talking about Americans, then many of us have drunk the Italy-is-romantic kool-aid since birth. Other nationalities use this terminology too, including Italians, so it can't just be American melodrama."* In our conversations, Sisu was well aware that she was culturally primed to think of Italy as romantic, but she also made it clear that love was far more than just a nostalgic romantic fantasy. The notion of romantic love may have a Western heritage,<sup>20</sup> and the language of love may be entwined with the language of work and purpose,<sup>21</sup> but these correlations do not make it fantastical or render its effects any less real. As the critical geographer Carey-Ann Morrison argues, some love is deemed "in place" while other types or performances of love are deemed "out of place," and are thus considered illegitimate.<sup>22</sup> In repeatedly justifying her emotional motives for moving, Sisu recognized that her rationale would probably be considered "out of place," but was still resolute that love was paramount to her and others' lived experience. Moreover Sisu's insistence on love of place seemed to indicate a sort of reciprocity with Cinque Terre. Because she continually returned and eventually moved to Cinque Terre, her actions were shaped by Cinque Terre and perhaps Cinque Terre was also shaped by her.

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<sup>18</sup> Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou, "Anglophone Marriage-Migrants," 385.

<sup>19</sup> Isaakyan and Triandafyllidou, "Anglophone Marriage-Migrants," 381.

<sup>20</sup> Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*.

<sup>21</sup> Gregg, *Work's Intimacy*.

<sup>22</sup> Morrison, Johnston, and Longhurst, "Critical Geographies of Love," 517.

## Love of place

While emotional attachment to place has been well theorized in a number of different fields,<sup>23</sup> moving because of this has received less attention.<sup>24</sup> In one of the more useful contributions to this debate, the feminist environmental philosopher Val Plumwood argues that the current era of global consumer culture has punished people's attachment to place by privileging mobile workers, the beneficiaries of globalization, while commodifying place itself.<sup>25</sup> Seen in this context, love migrants' insistence that they moved for love of a particular place and/or a particular person rather than for employment or other life-enhancing prospects, resists the prevailing notion that migration is directed by socio-economic rather than emotional considerations. In this sense, whom or what we love is political.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps as a consequence of fighting to justify her love against hegemonic rationales for migration, Sisu also needed to justify it to herself. While many of my participants described their feeling of love for the *terra* of Cinque Terre, they also said they had difficulty *maintaining* their love of land. The same was true with their human loves. As Sisu questioned in the previous vignette, "*was love enough?*" Some of the difficulties were bureaucratic, while others were bound up in social, cultural, or economic differences, from lifestyle aspirations to the negotiation of childcare. Still other difficulties involved coping with creaking infrastructure, or rapid environmental change. Staying put, in other words, was far from easy for them, and it involved constant management of problems: a form of resilience that was a necessary trade-off in the ongoing attempt to belong. Here love functioned as a kind of motivational anchor. How should we understand love as a motivational anchor for the decision to moving to and ingratiation in Cinque Terre as a landscape and as a population?

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<sup>23</sup> For examples, see Baldwin, Smith, and Jacobson, "Love of the Land;" Manzo and Devine-Wright, *Place Attachment*; Trauer and Ryan, "Destination Image, Romance."

<sup>24</sup> For a notable exception, cf. Boccagni and Baldassar, "Emotions on the Move."

<sup>25</sup> Plumwood, "Shadow Places."

<sup>26</sup> Rowe, "Be Longing."

Furthermore, what is the role of the Cinque Terre landscape in this process? Can it reciprocate?

The tenet of *becoming with* is central to the environmental humanities<sup>27</sup> and can be used elucidate Sisu's motivational anchor that moors her to the landscape of Cinque Terre. From an anthropological point of view, humans (and their cultures) have long been understood to be dynamic, always in the process of becoming. Anthropologists João Biehl and Peter Locke, for example, argue that humans go through simultaneous social, symbolic and material becomings where of people take on the characteristics of those who have also traveled similarly, regardless of whether their travels were via crossroads, alongside, or merely in proximity.<sup>28</sup> In the environmental humanities, the notion of becoming is expanded to include the nonhuman.<sup>29</sup> The environmental humanities notion recognizes that becoming never occurs in an isolated fashion, rather is embedded in relation to and *with* other multispecies others,<sup>30</sup> thus the label *becoming with*. Putting such a concept into action, environmental humanities scholar Thom van Dooren demonstrates how becoming with birds is a relational and developmental achievement inextricably entangled with humans.<sup>31</sup> Feminist science and technology scholar Donna Haraway writes that "if we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming *with*."<sup>32</sup> In both examples, the word "with" indicates a sense of aloneness, but not necessarily mutual change, during transformation. Through the lens of becoming with we can see how Sisu's initial interaction with Cinque Terre led to an emotive transformation. She became in love *with* Cinque Terre. As time progressed, her love of Cinque Terre motivated

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<sup>27</sup> Emmett and Nye, *The Environmental Humanities*; Oppermann and Iovino, *Environmental Humanities*; Wright, "Becoming with."

<sup>28</sup> Biehl and Locke, "Deleuze and the Anthropology." Also, see Ingold, *Being Alive*.

<sup>29</sup> Often *becoming with* is associated with multispecies studies. I do not explicitly draw on multispecies studies here because it will be featured in the next chapter.

<sup>30</sup> Kirksey, *The Multispecies Salon*.

<sup>31</sup> van Dooren, "Authentic Crows."

<sup>32</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 244.

the process of moving to, learning about, adaptation to and personal development in Cinque Terre. As we will see, her interactions with Cinque Terre were never fixed nor guaranteed, but were constantly negotiated. Cinque Terre, as both a landscape and a place, was also influenced by her, albeit in different ways. In this way, the love that Sisu professes could be seen as a manifestation of relations between Sisu and Cinque Terre where both are becoming with the other. Having established how love can have a central place in Sisu's story, an important question remains: what *is* love?



Fig. 36. Cinque Terre. One view from the *sentiero* that Sisu hiked on her first visit. Photograph by author.

Love is a contentious and heavily laden term, with no single definition.<sup>33</sup> Just as there are many different meanings of love, so there are many different kinds of it.<sup>34</sup> For all its obvious importance, the inclusion of love as an object of study merits more consideration from the humanities and social sciences. The anthropologist Sagar Singh suggests that love is not generally considered to be a “serious” topic – just as many topics considered to be “female” or “feminine” continue to be dismissed for lacking seriousness - or is seen as a thin disguise for lust.<sup>35</sup> Singh also claims that love is largely absent from both anthropology and

<sup>33</sup> Schäfer, “Romantic Love Heterosexual Relationships.”

<sup>34</sup> Apart from the scholars detailed below, my generalizations of love here are largely informed by feminist scholars, including Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* and Leavitt, “Meaning and Feeling.”

<sup>35</sup> Singh, *Rethinking Anthropology of Love*. For similar correlations between emotion, affect and the feminine, see Grossberg, “Affect’s Future.”

tourism studies because of the lasting influence of early psychoanalytical research which discounted love in place of more easily quantifiable studies of sexuality.<sup>36</sup> Even those studies that do consider love, generally examine institutionalized expressions of heterosexual love such as home, courtship, and marriage. The critical geographers Carey-Ann Morrison *et al.* argue that while there is a tendency to conflate love in all of its forms with romantic love, the overarching concept is relational, requiring a broad intersectional and geographically distributed approach.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, in her critical historical summary of the word “love,” the linguist Sarah Schaefer initially defines it a noun, “an emotion possessed, shared, or felt, and the act of any of these,” associating this noun in turn with “clusters of meaning connected to political, social, and economic change,”<sup>38</sup> such as acting for love of a person or love of country. Schaefer then goes on to assert that love, as a verb, means to “entertain a great affection, fondness, or regard for.”<sup>39</sup> This thesis takes Schaefer’s definitions as the basis for the love described by Sisu.

While falling in love on holiday, moving for love, and the concept of love each merit significant further investigation, far more than can be done here, the main aim of this section has been to introduce love as a primary motivation for Sisu. It now remains to see how love influences resilience, and how resilience is used in the everyday context of Cinque Terre.

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<sup>36</sup> Singh, “Love, Anthropology and Tourism.” For other work beginning to rethink the entrenched scholarly biases against love, see Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Lindholm, “Romantic Love and Anthropology.”

<sup>37</sup> Morrison, Johnston, and Longhurst, “Critical Geographies of Love.”

<sup>38</sup> Schaefer, “Love,” 97.

<sup>39</sup> Schaefer, “Love,” 97.

## Becoming in Cinque Terre

La Spezia, Italy: July 2018

*“Have you seen the blog by this woman who calls herself a Cinque Terre expert?”* As part of my research routine, I would often google “Cinque Terre” + “blog” to get the latest results. These results had lately revealed a new blog making grandiose claims about the blogger’s expertise on Cinque Terre in particular and Italy more generally. I had not heard her name before. Sisu laughed. *“Is she a local or a tourist?”* We were seated in a bar in La Spezia, chatting over coffee and pastries, with the smells of Friday’s street market wafting around. Even on non-market days, we liked to meet in the city for coffee or *aperitivo* because there were more options than in the towns. Sometimes we would meet for sushi or burgers – anything different from standard Italian fare. With the explosion of tourism and other port-based businesses,<sup>40</sup> international dining options had proliferated in La Spezia. Sisu always said it was nice to act like a tourist in La Spezia, but I wouldn’t have classified her as one; after all, she had lived in La Spezia for a good while.

I googled the address of the blog. Sisu took my phone and browsed the site. *“Nope, never heard of her. Looks like some haughty college kid who wants to be a blogger. Look at this! She’s total BS.”* Sisu pointed to a photo of the blogger eating at a place known for frozen pizza. The words “delicious” and “best ever” were used to describe the blogger’s dining experience. What someone ate (and where) revealed much about how “local” that person is likely to be viewed by others. How someone talked about food likewise revealed much about how they *wanted* to be viewed.

*“Frozen pizza doesn’t have to be horrible,”* I countered. *“It’s not that bad.”*

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<sup>40</sup> The larger regional economy of the La Spezia region was largely outside of the scope of this thesis. However, during my fieldwork it was obvious that there was substantial infrastructure development in La Spezia and beyond.



“Yeah,” Sisu retorted, “but no one would write “best ever” for frozen pizza. Especially not if you know it’s frozen.” I agreed: “frozen” certainly didn’t carry the cultural heft of the descriptors “fresh” or “homemade.” The blogger probably did enjoy the pizza she ate, but her opinion would likely have been quite different had she known she was eating frozen food. It wasn’t that Sisu or I were upset with the pizza makers; rather we were uncomfortable with how staged the blogging seemed. It was all about taking selfies with a beautiful backdrop, rather than actual immersion in the place or appreciation of the quality of the cuisine. While I sometimes couldn’t tell if the pizza was frozen or not, the ubiquity of frozen pizza in the region seemed to be emblematic of many things, including the limited kitchen capacity, growing crowds, and a cost-effective solution to tourist expectations for pizza<sup>41</sup> in Italy. It was also admittedly about our feeling superior to these fledgling bloggers: our discussion of “frozen” versus “fresh” served to indicate that we were both “in the know.”



Fig. 37. Manarola. A restaurant menu for tourists. Photograph by author.

<sup>41</sup> Pizza is actually more of a southern Italian dish; however, restaurant owners who cater to tourists often include pizza on their menus because of its global popularity. The same cannot be said for dishes that originate in the Italian diaspora, such as spaghetti with meatballs or pasta carbonara made with cream.

Sisu looked around to see who might be listening in on our conversation. Once she was satisfied that no one was, she began to rant about foreigners' narratives that claimed authority but had little evidence to support their claims. *"There have been so many articles and whatever published from the point of view of expats and tourists that are completely unrealistic. It's basically fiction. They didn't learn the language, customs, or anything about real life in Cinque Terre."* I knew what she meant: I had come to Cinque Terre in part because of those articles (see Chapter one). My lived experience of Cinque Terre certainly didn't bear much resemblance with such carefully constructed online imagery. But at what point can someone call themselves an "insider," and what privileges can or should one exercise as a result?

One thing I have learned from my work is that among the many people who associate with Cinque Terre – be they tourists, love migrants, or native-born Italians – evaluations of authenticity seem to converge in a kind of identity competition. Wrapped up in this competition is the belief that the right to be, and be known as, an "insider" has to be earned. For example, a native-born Italian who was born in Cinque Terre, but has then moved away for work, will not automatically be classed as an insider. However, they may still be seen as more of an insider than a love migrant who has spent thirty years in the region. The demarcations of the relationship between insider and outsider, tourist and non-tourist are fuzzy at best and depend on any number of variables. In Cinque Terre, there also seemed to be an acute sense of anxiety about the potential loss of identity and belonging. Sisu had lived in Cinque Terre for more than a decade: surely she felt that she belonged?

Sisu took a breath, looked at the website again, with its description of cute fishing villages, and continued to hyperventilate: *"This is what angers me. People come here because they are reputed to be small fishing villages ... They are searching for a Hollywood sense of authenticity and it's gone, if it even existed."* I wondered if "authenticity" included our

uncomfortable plastic chairs, which seemed to be from the 1970s. The claim of authenticity (or lack thereof) often functions as a way of asserting belonging,<sup>42</sup> but if Cinque Terre wasn't authentic, then what was it, and who exactly belonged?

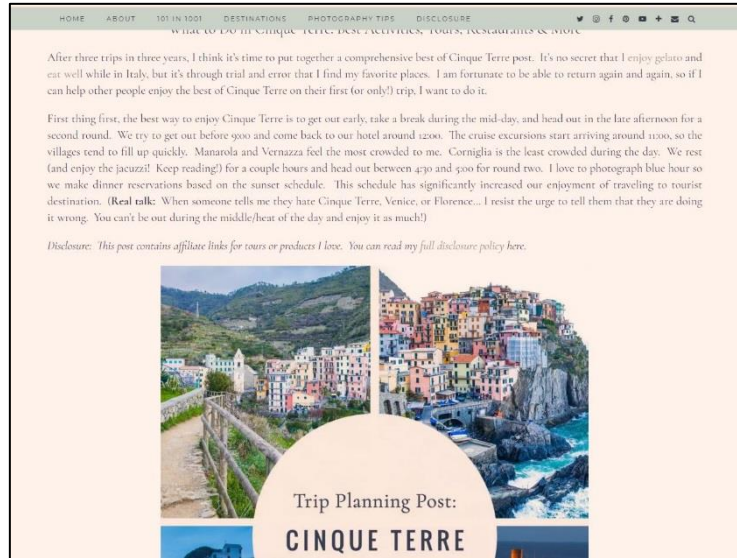


Fig. 38. A blog post about Cinque Terre. Creative commons.

By now, Sisu was warming to her theme. “Being buried under the masses of human tourists, with garbage cans overflowing with waste and late trains. This is authentic to now in Cinque Terre. This is how it is. I know because I’ve been here. I’ve been here, through thick and thin.”

“Don’t be so hard on Italian trains!” I jokingly argued. (I was, and still am, in awe of Cinque Terre’s trains, which must move tens of thousands of people each day along a narrow fifteen-kilometer coastline with just a few grave incidents each year. I was willing to forgive a few minutes’ delay.)

But Sisu wasn’t finished yet. “Because I mean, as your town grows goes up, and it gets bigger, it’s like people say “Oh, there are no fishermen.”” There were fishermen in Cinque Terre, of course, but they weren’t usually classified as “traditional.” Perhaps they were imagined as some kind of Italianized embodiment of *The Old Man and the Sea*, where

<sup>42</sup> Hough, “Rethinking Authenticity Tourist Identity.”

weathered old men, who live in ramshackle coastal huts, go out to sea in rickety boats.<sup>43</sup> Artisanal, locally sourced fish was also available, but many tourists balked at paying the market price. I was reminded of “back-to-the-landers” in the US who dream of a simple life on the farm, but rarely consider what farming actually involves. Sisu seemed to agree with this: *“I’m like yeah, because if you have kids, and you’re a fisherman, you know that being a fisherman is a very, very hard job. What do you want your kids to do? Go to school, to Milan, and learn computers, and not become fishermen.”* It struck me, not for the first time, that we were probably talking about male-dominated careers. As we talked, I thought of the professional fishermen I knew in the region. Apart from a female engineer working in oyster farming, they were all men. Same thing with the kids learning computers in Milan; I envisioned them as men. Where were the women in our Italian imagination?

*“They’re all in the kitchen, making pesto,”* Sisu answered promptly.

We both laughed uneasily. Pesto is a Ligurian specialty, and many of the women we knew were indeed involved in pesto-making classes. However, it was the undercurrent of sexism and gender expectations that made us both uncomfortable. It seemed that both locals and tourists expected women to be in the background; in many cases, women *were* in the background.

As Sisu remarked, efforts to combat this were often met in Cinque Terre with patronizing remarks of *“Oh you girls! Nice try, but that’s not how things work here... The rationale I think is because women aren’t imagined as having a place in Cinque Terre beyond making babies and pesto, then it’s hard for us to actually have a place in Cinque Terre. But we’re making our place!”*

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<sup>43</sup> Perhaps cashing in on this vision, and on Hemingway’s tenure in Liguria, one of the more established bars in Vernazza is called the Blue Marlin.

When I asked Sisu what she meant about “making our place,” she replied, “*Remember when Darnise whisper shouted at you during my birthday dinner about us having resilience but it wouldn’t be what you expected? I think this is what she meant. I think our story of struggling to belong – making our place – is a story of resilience, except, unlike in the movies, we’re resilient in slow motion.*”

Our conversation, ostensibly about a Cinque Terre blog, had exposed two tensions. The first was between gender norms and who could speak with authority. On the one hand, we were criticizing a woman who was publicly claiming authority about Cinque Terre, and effectively dismissing her because we considered her dining habits to be inauthentic and “touristy,” regardless of her actual connection to the region. On the other hand, we were lamenting the fact that women had little place in a supposedly authentic imagination of Cinque Terre, nor were many women active within the public sphere in “real life.” Our discussion reminded me of Nancy Naples’s feminist revisiting of the insider/outsider nexus. Naples argues that the binary distinction between insider and outsider conceals significant power and experiential differences,<sup>44</sup> and often serves as a discursive mechanism for controlling those who are considered to have the right (or not) to speak. Sisu felt that the blogger didn’t have the right to speak because she wasn’t enough of an insider to claim expertise. But how is “insider-ness” made and who can claim the authority attached to it? In comparison to the blogger, Sisu clearly felt that her experiences *did* give her the right to speak about Cinque Terre; after all, she had put considerable time and effort into Cinque Terre, and she had made initial sacrifices in order to migrate, and further sacrifices along the way in order to stake a claim to belong. This is the second tension that emerged from the vignette, and it is this tension to which I now turn.

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<sup>44</sup> Naples, “Feminist Revisiting Insider/Outsider Debate.”



Fig. 39. Monterosso al Mare. A sign explaining a restaurant's lack of pizza.  
Photograph by author.

## Time and work: Migration

In order to put Sisu's "time and work" into perspective, let us return to her love story. In the previous vignette, we saw her fall in love with both Cinque Terre and Fortunato. In the following one, we will trace her move to and establishment in Cinque Terre.

As previously mentioned, after traveling between the US and Italy for quite some time, Fortunato invited Sisu to move permanently to Italy. The idea for her to move to Italy rather than him to the US seemed to be the more pragmatic choice. Because immigration to the US is notoriously difficult, it seemed to both of them that Italy would be the easier option. Fortunato also had employment with the family restaurant and was unsure what he would do in the US since he didn't have a university degree. Sisu, by contrast, had a job she liked but wasn't committed to. She was certain that a university degree from a good American university would be widely accepted in Italy, and that finding work wouldn't be a problem. She made the move in late 2007. Perhaps naively, she only applied for a *permesso di*

*soggiorno* (Italian residence/work permit) after she had moved in with Fortunato. It had not occurred to either her or Fortunato that there might be bureaucratic obstacles in her path.

Unlike some other EU countries, for instance France or Ireland, Italy does not recognize *de facto* partnerships. Sisu's application, based on their committed relationship, was therefore rejected and she had to leave Italy before her tourist visa expired. The only options seemed to be for her to get married or find a job in Italy that would sponsor her. The couple wasn't ready for marriage, and Sisu had received no replies to any of her job applications. Increasingly desperate, she turned to Internet forums and found there might be a way to obtain Italian citizenship after all, through ancestry.

Sisu is a fourth generation American. With her dark Brunette hair, green eyes, and olive skin, she has always thought she *looks* Mediterranean. Her family had previously always said they had Italian heritage but, typical of the American melting pot, her family tree was not totally clear. It wasn't until she decided to investigate getting a passport by way of Italian descent that Sisu discovered her ancestors were indeed Italian, both of her biological grandmothers having been born in and emigrated from Italy when they were quite young. One left before the Second World War, one after. Presumably because of pressure to assimilate, her grandmothers never spoke Italian to their children or grandchildren.<sup>45</sup> Both grandfathers, meanwhile, were born in the US. One had southern European roots, whereas the other had German-speaking origins. Based on Italy's ancestry laws, only the grandmother born in Italy after 1948 qualified Sisu for a passport. "*Thank goodness for grandma!*" Sisu would often declare.

While those who can use ancestry as a way to migrate to Italy, residents often cite marriage as the easiest way to move to Cinque Terre or Italy long term. After marriage to an

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<sup>45</sup> Repressing native language was common practice for generations of immigrants to the United States. For a detailed history on assimilation for Italian migrants to the US, see Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*.

Italian citizen for two years, citizenship is conferred. While official regulations potentially have more flexibility for Western migrants than others, they are still narrow in practice. The love migrants I spoke to generally agreed that migration regulations should apply equally to everyone; however, they often disagreed, especially in light of current migration politics, with the standards themselves. Furthermore, the rules often seemed to change overnight, without prior notice. As Sisu noted, *“I mean, it’s, there’s like ninety-five rules all written differently. You get different answers depending on who you talk to.”* As many who have gone through immigration processes will attest, it is usually quite difficult – so much so that scholars are beginning to see immigration regimes as inflicting violence on those who go through them, the effects of which often manifest in mental health or physiological disorders.<sup>46</sup> As Sisu explained, *“It’s not as easy as people think it is. I think a lot of times people have this very “Under The Tuscan Sun” idea, you know. In the book and movie, the protagonist just moves! Easy Peasy. Like, I’m going to move to Italy, it’s going to be a dream, and they often don’t realize it’s not the easiest country to live in, especially if you actually want to live here legally.”*

Sisu hadn’t anticipated that moving to Italy would be as difficult as it was. She described it as one of the most difficult experiences of her life. Yet getting her papers in order was only the first set of challenges to navigate. Once she had the legal right to remain in Italy, she moved again to Monterosso in late 2008, just in time for winter when the majority of Cinque Terre is closed for the off season (November to March). The town was empty. There were hardly any tourists, but hardly any residents either. She had never been there in winter before and the combination of the damp and the isolation shocked her. Almost as soon as she arrived, Fortunato wanted to go on tour, as it was his holiday period. Unfortunately Sisu had

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<sup>46</sup> For examples, see Bhugra et al., “EPA Guidance Mental Health;” Kirkbride and Jones, “Epidemiological Aspects of Migration;” Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi, “Necropolitics and Slow Violence.”



used much of her savings to move, and with no job on the horizon she didn't want to use the rest of her money to travel. Unlike her previous times in Italy, when Fortunato was working full time and there were activities in the region, there was immediate tension due to a lack of understanding about what their lives would be like during the off season. Sisu described her first winter as follows: *"I hiked so much during that first winter, because there was nothing else to do. I was also starting to freak out because none of my job applications even got me an interview. I was learning Italian from Fortunato, which was a recipe for disaster – never learn a language from a relative. I was beginning to think that I had made a huge mistake, but I kept going out there hiking, and discovering all of the nooks and crannies of Cinque Terre, thinking "I'm doing this to live here, in this incredible place.""*

Given Sisu's professed love of the Cinque Terre, it is no surprise that she spent her months hiking through the terraces. Hiking was a way to "know" and become with Cinque Terre. She learned "all of the nooks and crannies." Cinque Terre was no doubt becoming with her as well: rocks overturned, plants trampled, footprints laid. Yet, despite her relationship with Cinque Terre, she still had to make a living and pay the bills abroad as a non-expat<sup>47</sup> foreigner? Eventually she found work which turned out to be low-paid and seasonal. *"I don't think I realized how much I would have to be working and how stressful life can be, even when you love a place."*

When we talked about the surprises of moving to Italy, Sisu would inevitably laugh at her naivety. *"I don't think I thought it would be like in the movies, you know, all laughter and rainbows. I just think that my initial surprises are like any city person that moves to the country. Plus I thought my degree would open doors. It didn't. No one wanted to hire me."*

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<sup>47</sup> The term "expat" (short for expatriate) commonly refers to those residing abroad for business, missions, teaching and leisure, and to high-skilled migrant laborers and foreign students. For a detailed discussion of the term, see Cohen, "Expatriate Communities."

### Time and work: Paid employment

Cinque Terre's economy centers on seasonal work and offers little in the way of full-time, year-round employment. During the tourist season, workers never stop. While official work schemes dictate the rules of employment, adherence to the law is often tested. As she told me, Sisu had held a wide variety of jobs since arriving in Cinque Terre over a decade ago. The summer tourist season was manically busy; wintertime was dead. Many people took long holidays during the winter to recharge and combat loneliness.

After years of obtaining various casual summertime contracts, Sisu now had her own business. She also helped out in the family business. *"I mean, it's always fingers crossed with work in Italy. I invested a lot of time into finding stable enough jobs in Italy, which is hard. Youth unemployment is high and educated people are leaving Italy in droves. In the end, I relied on a lot of seasonal work, which is what most working people do here. It's good enough during the season, and then you get unemployment in the winter. It all works out in theory, but in practice it can be horrible."* Sisu's disappointment in not finding a job that required an undergraduate degree was understandable given the optimism many university graduates have when entering the workplace. To make matters worse, when she moved to Cinque Terre the global financial crisis was in full swing, which meant that many of her friends back home were either jobless or under-employed. Although the work she eventually found in Cinque Terre wasn't what she had anticipated, she was thankful to have it. But in the end, the greatest difficulty wasn't the actual work; rather it was continually justifying her belonging and identity, to tourists and locals alike.

Her first job was in a *gelateria* (gelato shop), where she served *gelato* from about 10am until 7pm, six days a week. The work itself wasn't difficult, although being on her feet all day did give her some back problems. It was her interactions with tourists that proved to be the difficult part of her new work-life. From day one on the job, she noted two main reactions to

her from tourists. The first was what she called the “*you’re living the dream*” sentiment. During my own time in Cinque Terre, I had witnessed this reaction on numerous occasions, both first hand and while observing daily life. Sisu noted that this reaction emerged mostly from people under forty, regardless of nationality. *“It would come from young couples on their honeymoon or twenty-somethings. People without families or professional careers. They would always say they’d trade lives or ask me how they could move to Italy too.”* At first, Sisu welcomed the curiosity, especially as she was newly arrived herself and was learning how life worked in Cinque Terre. Sometimes she helped people workshop how they, too, could move to Italy. As time went on, she noticed that if she mentioned potential negatives, such as issues finding work, she was met with disbelief. *“After a while I realized the reason that they wanted to be like me is because they didn’t see what I was doing as ‘work.’ It was like a fantasy to them. I think this reaction was more about Cinque Terre than anything. They thought it was perfect. That reaction was fine, just annoying.”* Tourists’ almost envious reaction that Sisu could work in an ice cream shop and live in a major tourist attraction seemed to speak to a belief that service work isn’t work. According to the tourism researchers Tara Duncan *et al.*, lifestyle migration, that is, where one moves for lifestyle or a “dream,” is increasingly perceived by younger generations as an increasingly important aspirational goal, blurring the line between work and leisure.<sup>48</sup> For those who have the means to be mobile, lifestyle is an important consideration. However, as Duncan also points out, this type of mobility is often used to describe those who have the legal and economic freedom to move across borders and between cultures, such as lifestyle bloggers, backpackers, or remote workers. For these types of workers, service work is often a means to a lifestyle rather than a career. For Sisu, her first year working in the *gelateria* was fine. Service work seemed to her, as to many tourists, like a transitional job. During the subsequent years, however, when she

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<sup>48</sup> Duncan, Scott, and Baum, “Mobilities of Hospitality Work.”

continued in service work, it became more apparent that this work was becoming part of her identity rather than a transitional phase.

As the years passed, she began to work in retail shops where she received more of this second type of response. It was in retail work that she felt her difference was most on display. *“They would say, ‘Why on earth would a college-educated American come to live and work in a retail shop in Cinque Terre?’ Is there something wrong with you, that you couldn’t find a love or build a life back at home?”*



Fig. 40. Cinque Terre. Typical food products sold in tourist retail shops. Photograph by author.

Sisu told me that some people seemed disgusted with her decision. Some verbally belittled her, while others saw questioning her as some kind of joke. Still others seemed to take on the role of social enforcers, telling her she was wasting her potential or denying local people a job. In time, she learned to treat these negative reactions with a pinch of salt, but she acknowledged that the daily round of questioning, over months at first and then years, was wearing her down. *“When those guys in their fifties come up and ask, ‘What are you doing here?’ I had started saying, ‘Oh, I was extradited here, you know, exiled for trafficking drugs!’ I would just wait for their reaction. Some took it seriously. Others kept pushing, ‘No really, how did you get here.’ I would just reply, ‘I came by plane.’”* As the journalist Barbara Ehrenreich notes in her exposé about service work in America, some jobs are

considered more “work-like” than others and thus more deserving of money and status.<sup>49</sup> While some scholars have noted that the transitory lives of international hospitality workers challenge conventional notions of identity,<sup>50</sup> it is still worth recognizing that, regardless of the configuration, identity is still often tied up in work. Stigma about work choices in an American context has been shown to be a moral concern rather than an economic or class issue.<sup>51</sup> The criticism Sisu underwent thus became more than just a constant irritant; it concerned her very identity as a migrant who had chosen to remake her life elsewhere for love.

Such unfounded criticisms are not welcome to anyone’s ears, and they can be extremely nerve-wracking. But in the case of Sisu, and many others like her, the felt immediacy of such questioning was devastating, both in terms of its intensity and its duration. The persistent interrogation had changed her life, manifesting itself in irritability and fatigue, among other physical and mental symptoms. As scholars have demonstrated, social enforcement often works subtly, through snide remarks and gossip,<sup>52</sup> which act as weapons through which social norms are enforced and people held in check. Sisu’s customarily sarcastic responses to nosy tourists were thus both pragmatic and telling. In effect, they were challenging a narrow worldview of movement and migration. That someone could want to leave the US, and by plane at that, obviously did not align with prevalent political discourses. Migration is often imagined as a process that takes place on foot, by boat, or through illicit channels; however, statistically speaking, most migrants travel by air. Sisu’s sarcasm can be understood in this context as a “weapon of the weak.”<sup>53</sup> Her reaction to tourists’ disdain was

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<sup>49</sup> Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*.

<sup>50</sup> Duncan, Scott, and Baum, “Mobilities of Hospitality Work.”

<sup>51</sup> Williams, Blair-Loy, and Berdahl, “Cultural Schemas, Social Class.”

<sup>52</sup> For examples, see Ferreira, “Gossip as Indirect Mockery;” Gluckman, “Gossip and Scandal.”

<sup>53</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

to reinforce her own identity by making it clear that she had made her own choices, that her love and thus rationale for moving and staying was valid.

### Time and work: Community

Questioning her identity and belonging was not limited to tourists, however. *“I think it’s only maybe just been in the past two or three years,”* Sisu remarked, *“that I started to actually feel part of the community in Monterosso.”* She had mostly lived in Monterosso since migrating in 2008. She lived in La Spezia for just over a year at one point, but was never far away from Cinque Terre and visited frequently during that one-year period. Regardless of where she lived, she would continually return to hiking and being in the terraces and woods of Cinque Terre. When she was there, it reconfirmed that she had made the right choice for her. Many of the people I spoke to in Cinque Terre had theories about when they became local – if they felt they ever had done. I was often told that spending the wet and miserable winter months in Cinque Terre rather than taking an extended winter holiday endears you to locals. After spending two winters in Cinque Terre, I can attest that this endearment may have more to do with the limited pool of people to talk to than anything else.

Getting people to talk to you at all was another issue. As Sisu explained, *“people here tend to be a little more reserved – and I think it’s because they see so many foreign girls who come and think ‘I’ll come over to Italy and I’ll meet this guy.’ I mean, there’s been a ton of girls arrive – either looking for romance or who fall for a local guy – since I’ve been here. So I think it was kind of like a waiting period, to see, like ‘is she going to stick around? Am I going to devote time to learning her name?’ A lot of the girls don’t stick around. By staying as long as I have, I’m the exception rather than the rule.”* Was her avowed love of Cinque Terre the thing that made her the exception rather than rule? Although it is impossible to

definitively argue one way or another, love certainly anchored her in place even while being socially isolated.

Even those who were prepared to speak to Sisu would often hold her in suspicion or saddle her with the values she was expected to uphold as a woman in the region. *“At the beginning people told me that unless I had a child, I’d never be accepted by the family. Then others thought it was shameful that I worked outside the home, or at least outside the family business. The comments never stopped.”* Unlike many migrant women in Mediterranean states, love migrants, even those with children, largely work outside the home in Cinque Terre. While they are mostly considered “good” migrants because of their national origins,<sup>54</sup> love migrants are still subjected to various practices of “othering” and burdened with unrealistic expectations. As Sisu described it, she was “always an outsider looking in.” Neither accepted as completely American by tourists nor Italian enough for locals, she held a liminal position as not quite American and not quite Italian.



Fig. 41. Manarola. A public art display celebrating traditional women’s work with grapes.

Photograph by author.

In addition to gendered expectations, there were also social expectations that defined her. These expectations demarcated how she belonged and whom she belonged to. One

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion on exclusion and discrimination for migrants from migrant sending countries to Mediterranean countries, see Tzanelli and Yar, “Paradoxes of Belonging.”

memorable example was when Sisu started going to the doctor for yearly check-ups. *“When I started going to the doctor, they wanted to know which family I belonged to. For over a decade, they always wrote down my husband’s parents’ name as my name.”* At first Sisu didn’t think anything of using Fortunato’s family name at the doctor’s. Because she didn’t yet have Italian fluency, Fortunato had booked an appointment for her. Although they weren’t married, he used his name for the booking. *“It was like they negated that I had any other name. And then since I have a uterus, the doctor would report on its function to everyone. ‘No baby yet,’ he’d tell people – because patient privacy might as well not exist, like my only purpose was to have a Fortunato baby. It’s about who you belong to and why.”* At the doctor’s office, Sisu was framed as belonging to Fortunato’s family: her identity was bound to a man. Yet, against the grain, Sisu persisted in creating her own identity as one of the love migrants who stayed.

How might we best understand the effects of Sisu’s story on her? I have highlighted here how her presence in Cinque Terre was often interpreted as having moral value. For tourists, she was either on permanent holiday (which negated the work she was performing), or she was engaged in work perceived to be below her (and by extension, those similar to “her kind”). For locals, she was an outsider who, if left untended, could not fulfill her function. (As discussed in the opening vignette, in general women in Cinque Terre do not hold “front stage” roles and are instead assumed to work “back stage.”) Any time Sisu trespassed against these assumed roles, she was socially reprimanded. However, although she vigorously resisted such typecasting, she also had a hand in reproducing it, as in her exasperated dissection of the blogger who had publicly claimed authority about Cinque Terre.

It is perfectly possible to see Sisu and others like her as practicing resilience in their everyday lives because she continually bounces back and adapts despite the odds. Her love of Cinque Terre holds her in place. It is her love that has moored her against doubts and



naysayers. This is the main claim I am making here. The medical anthropologists Ian Wilkinson and Arthur Kleinman argue that social suffering takes place in the moral experiences that assault human personhood. They assert that the most "terrible and disabling events of suffering," such as those that often accompany forced migration, tend to involve "the experience of losing our roles and identities."<sup>55</sup> However, when she mentioned her own resilience, Sisu was largely referring to weathering fairly routine social changes as the basis for her sense of belonging and identity. *"Finally people are starting to notice all of the effort that I've put in. So when my mother in law asks why I have the right to have an opinion on something--usually politics --I tell her that I've done my time. I've stayed through thick and thin and that is what gives me the right. I guess you'd call it resilience. Having resilience is the only thing that gives me legitimacy here, and so I use it to my advantage."*

### Walking through lived experience

Cinque Terre UNESCO World Heritage site: September 2018

As I have established, hiking and being with the *terra* of Cinque Terre made Sisu happy. It was her favorite activity. She knew nearly every trail in Cinque Terre's mountains. Much of Sisu's sense of belonging to Cinque Terre was marked out across the ground; it was all about knowing the landscape and working with it. It was through hiking, after all, that she had first fallen in love with Cinque Terre; and it was hiking, over the years, that had allowed her to further develop her love of place. I often joined her on hikes, and walking was the medium through which we developed friendship and discussed our lives. The anthropologists Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst note that walking is a "profoundly social activity," and that social relations "are not enacted in situ but are paced out long the ground."<sup>56</sup> For Sisu and for myself, our social interactions were similarly paced out along the cliffs and terraces. Walking

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<sup>55</sup> Wilkinson and Kleinman, *A Passion for Society*.

<sup>56</sup> Ingold and Vergunst, "Introduction: Ways of Walking," 1.

also allowed us to observe the built and natural environment around us. Even on trails that we knew well, there was always something new to see. We noted changes over time. A building painted. A terrace wall reconstructed. Trash removed from a cliff. As Rebecca Solnit has pointed out, “a path is a prior interpretation of the best way to traverse a landscape, and to follow a route is to accept an interpretation.”<sup>57</sup> Routes and places invoke memory and create meanings as well as create *becoming withs* such as the interconnected becoming of culture, of people, of terraced places.<sup>58</sup> How to account, then, for the slow forms of resilience, the ones that are “paced out along the ground?”

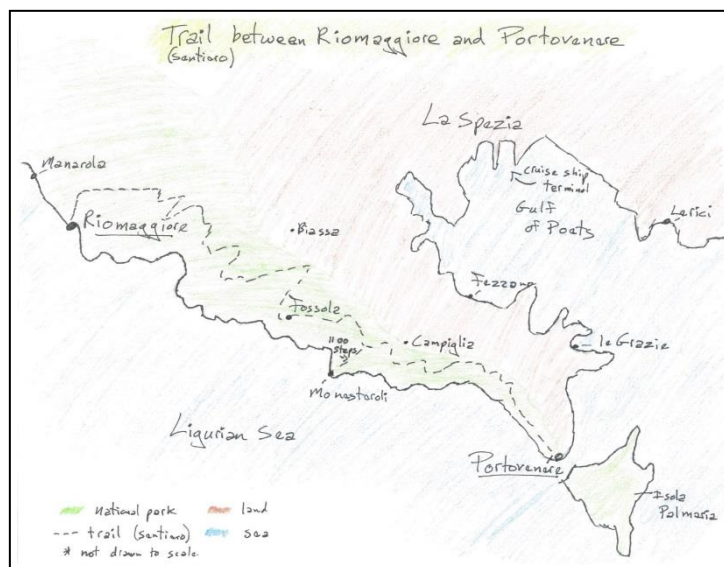


Fig. 42. A rough map of our walk. Drawing by j.e. yoho.

As autumn approached and the days became crisp, Sisu and I decided to hike an unpopular but visually stunning Cinque Terre *sentiero*. This particular trail snakes between Riomaggiore and Portovenere. Although not one of the official five Cinque Terre towns, Portovenere is included in the region’s UNESCO World Heritage listing. A thirteen-kilometer trek between the two towns, with altitude ranging between six hundred and six hundred fifty meters above sea level, the trail takes the average person about five hours to hike. It took us seven because we decided to include the Monesteroli stairs, one thousand one

<sup>57</sup> Solnit, *Wanderlust*, Chapter 5.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford, *Routes*.

hundred stairs to the sea that thread through a mostly abandoned village and then end above a secluded rocky beach.

Ascent: It's a shame

We rendezvoused at the Riomaggiore Train Station at 07:30am, deciding to grab an espresso and pastry before our ascent. The air was invigorating and cool. Our plan was to go to Sisu's favorite Riomaggiore bar, going past merchants on the way who were setting up shop for the day and delivery people who were dropping off supplies. Soon enough, we passed a raging man in a ratty baseball hat holding plastic takeaway coffee cups who was yelling at an embarrassed teenager. They were part-blocking our path to get coffee, and when we returned a few minutes later, they were still there. *"Hey! Excuse me!"* The man suddenly spoke to us in English as we went by. *"Do you know where we can throw these away?"* He lifted and shook his cup, as one might lift and shake a saltshaker to check the level of salt. *"Hmm,"* I responded, *"there's definitely a can at the train station or you could take it back to the bar where you got it."* The man looked surprised. *"Oh!"* he huffed, *"I didn't think you'd understand me. Nothing closer?"* This time it was Sisu who replied: *"Not sure, sorry – we don't live in Riomaggiore."* The man looked surprised at Sisu's response, but then shrugged his shoulders. *"Well, thanks,"* he grinned. The teenager with him rolled his eyes and looked away. Then, as if the man needed to make a definitive last statement, he added, *"These places really ought to have more trash cans. It's a shame."*

I smiled politely and turned my head to look at Sisu. I didn't want to engage in an early morning discussion about trash and Cinque Terre with a tourist. Sisu, however, decided that she was going to have the last word. *"Well, actually a lot of the cans have been vandalized over the summer, especially by unthinking tourists. We're doing everything we can to fix the situation with the limited resources we have."* Sisu looked directly in the man's eyes. *"One of my friends runs a project to fix infrastructure if you'd like to give a donation. We have*

*worked really hard to keep Cinque Terre beautiful despite the vandalism.*” Sisu fixed her gaze for a few more seconds, until it seemed that the silence was palpable. *“I have her business card if you’d like.”* She removed and then rummaged through her backpack to find the card. *“Sweet! I’ll take it,”* the teenager piped up. I couldn’t tell if he was truly happy to take the card or if he simply wanted to get on with his day. Perhaps he was delighted to see his guardian schooled by a stranger. The man nodded his head and simply said, *“OK.”*



Fig. 43. Riomaggiore. Waste bins with instructions in an Airbnb. Photograph by author.

As soon as we had moved out of their range of hearing, I quizzed Sisu about vandalism. She admitted that she didn’t really know the situation in Riomaggiore, but tourist vandalism in Monterosso definitely was a problem, so she assumed that vandalism was a problem in Riomaggiore as well. Plus she didn’t want anyone to think that the lack of trashcans was the result of Italian laziness. Sisu had told me on more than one occasion that *“we all work so hard and yet the stereotype about Italian laziness persists.”* She wanted the tourists to be aware that they might be part of the problem. She also wanted to give them a chance to be part of the solution. The thing she most wanted, though, was to make tourists aware that community members had been active in addressing the issues. *“We use what we’ve been through to educate people,”* she would often say. Her hope was to invoke change through association.

The signs to the correct path were sparse. Luckily, we both knew this part of the *sentiero*. About fifteen minutes from Riomaggiore, we encountered two German tourists in brightly colored matching Jack Wolfskin hiking clothes and walking poles. We were less coordinated. Sisu was wearing athletic shorts, a white t-shirt, and ankle-height hiking shoes, while I was clad in blue leggings, a yoga top, and high-top hiking boots. They asked for directions to the Montenero church, Riomaggiore's *santuario*, in English. We pointed out the way and mentioned we were also going there before continuing on to Portovenere. They expressed surprise that the hike to Portovenere was possible; they had thought there were only a few *sentieri* in Cinque Terre. We showed them our map and recommended they buy their own topographical map of the area. We exchanged a few more details before moving on. We quickly left them behind us. The sound of the sea gave way to the sound of birds and the wind. It became warm as we moved skyward. Once we had passed the *santuario*, we would have climbed about three hundred meters above sea level.

We were mostly silent as we climbed. The ascent quite literally took our breath away. We took numerous breaks. At each stop we were surrounded by terraces, most of which were in various states of disrepair (see Chapter three). We were both familiar with drystone walls and terracing, so the state of the walls was not a surprise to us. Often when walking more popular *sentieri*, we would overhear hikers casting aspersions about the walls. Inevitably someone would say that Italy should “do something” about the terraces. At this point in my stay, however, I knew that a chaotic looking wall did not necessarily mean an abandoned wall. Instead, abandonment was often indicated by what grew on top of the wall rather than the wall itself. If the top of the wall had heavy scrub growth, then it was likely to have been abandoned.

At altitude: How do you write this landscape?

Suddenly, we stopped climbing. The *sentiero* flattened out. We had finally reached altitude. Just as suddenly, we noticed that the terraces around us had been recently cleared. They looked naked. Some terraces had fresh straw lying on the top of them. Others just had turned-up soil. We had made it to Stella di Lemmen,<sup>59</sup> a newly established organic farm that has a sizable social media outreach. It had taken us forty minutes to walk here on foot and there was no access road: just like us, the caretakers must walk to and from the farm. The caretakers had re-terraced a substantial portion of the surrounding territory as well as had planted a variety of grapevines, olive trees, and vegetable crops. We were both thrilled to see the progress. I wondered aloud if the Stella Lemmen social media organizer was a love migrant because her online command of English was excellent. Sisu said she didn't know who the organizer was. Some Cinque Terre love migrants have built outreach careers where they manage social media for local businesses and organizations as their main job. Talking about the farm's social media and (possible) love migrant businesses then led us to talk some more about the network of love migrants in Cinque Terre.

We followed the *sentiero* downhill before crossing the two-land road to Cinque Terre from La Spezia. There was no traffic, but we scampered across just in case someone came around the corner too quickly. From the bar there were panoramic views of the sea and the mountains. Locals with cars and *apes* (a motorcycle with a two-seater car body) would often stop by here for coffee and pastries. Unlike in the towns below, the chalkboard menu was written exclusively in Italian. We grabbed espressos and locally made raspberry pastries. The bartender wanted to know why we spoke Italian. Sisu at first explained that she had lived in Cinque Terre for over a decade. The bartender responded with rapid-fire questions, at which Sisu laughed before answering. Yes, she was with an Italian guy. Yes, she originally came as

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<sup>59</sup> For further information on Stella di Lemmen, see <https://stelladilemmen.tumblr.com/>

a tourist. Yes, she knew the *straniere* who were working to change tourism. “*Thanks for fighting with us,*” he exclaimed, “*and for using your experiences to create change.*” He gave us free espresso.

“*That was so nice!*” I gush as we moved from the bar.

“*Yeah, I think with increased social media use, people are beginning to see the work us love migrants have put in.*” We had been discussing nomenclature recently, and Sisu had begun referring to herself as a love migrant because it was “a good fit.”

We turned from walking along the road to the tiny hamlet of Fossola. There were some *affitta camera* (room rentals) here, but most of most buildings were dilapidated. Many of the small villages away from the easily accessible towns of Cinque Terre were similarly ramshackle. Access here was only on foot or by car. As often happened, Sisu began to recount her integration experiences as a *straniera* in Cinque Terre. It was an experience she was still trying to come to terms with:

“*Most of us love migrants are all friends because we all have something in common. We’re all instant friends in a way, care for each other, and like each other, because we’ve all had to fight to be here – either against time, culture, immigration or whatever.*” Regardless of how she outlined her experiences in Cinque Terre, Sisu consistently described them in terms of a fight. The only thing that kept her anchored and fighting back was her love of Cinque Terre.



Fig. 44. Fossola. The sentiero to the hamlet. Photograph by author.

Sisu's voice trailed off. She seemed lost, deep in thought. *"You know, we get together for an aperitivo, you know, and bitch about our problems living in such a small town."* She laughed nervously, *"But it's not like we are all close friends."* Her hedging, as if searching for the right way to explain the situation, when talking about other local love migrants was understandable. She liked and appreciated her comrades, she said, but she also questioned whether they would have been drawn to each other if their respective living situations had been different. She felt an increasing loss of genuine connection, she complained, which she had never anticipated. That the emotional rift caused by moving away is equivalent to a kind of social death has been well documented, though there are few scholarly accounts that focus on the implications of this for North American love migrants in Europe.<sup>54</sup> Her resilience was in her adaptation to, her becoming with, the landscape and its people: *"I don't think when people move to a new place, they are often really aware of how important socialization is, how hard it is to develop that."* She again and again circled back to her connection with others - love migrants, her hometown friends and family, Fortunato, the landscape. She was unsure how to frame her experience. *"I still have my friends back home, but being able to just*

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<sup>54</sup> For an overview of the field of emotion and migration, see Boccagni and Baldassar, "Emotions on the Move."



*meet up with your close friends for coffee or something is just different here. That's why I blogged for so long - to keep in touch with everyone back home."*

Among the love migrants of Cinque Terre, the virtual world had helped to mediate a sense of displacement from the real one. By blogging and engaging with friends and loved ones online, Sisu maintained a connection, however tenuous, to those she had previously left behind. She also continued to use blogging as a vehicle for articulating the ambivalence of living in Italy as a foreigner. Her blog had not originally received much traffic, she said, but it was an important way to decompress and give expression to the emotions she left untapped in daily life. *"How do you write this landscape? It's impossible. You have to experience it."* Her declaration spoke to the difficulty of adequately expressing her continual becoming with Cinque Terre. How to recount how much a landscape has impacted you? Her personal blog detailed recipes, mishaps, and anecdotes that, in her recounting of them online, had helped her adapt to her new location. She had also gained a sense of purpose, she said, as her blog gradually won notoriety and became a source of information for tourists. What had started out as a means to vent her frustrations thus ultimately connected her to other people, with whom she shared her experiences.

As we walked on, Sisu began to recount when Rick Steves linked to her second-hand account of the 2011 flood on her blog (see Chapter one). She often talked about this: for her, the interaction with Steves seemed to be more pivotal than the flood itself. Sisu had used her personal blog at the time to spread the word: her emotional connection to Cinque Terre compelled her. Her plan wasn't well thought out, and she didn't have a marketing team or a communication strategy. She simply wrote what she thought was best. *"I wrote a dramatic story because it was dramatic and others also wrote dramatic stories. Somehow I knew drama sells, and it did. My flood posts still get the most traffic even though it was years ago*

*now.*” Rob Nixon argues that spectacle is a battleground of neoliberal globalization.<sup>60</sup> He suggests that extraordinary events tend to be framed as spectacles, but that the behavior and activities behind them, which are often sluggish or seemingly normal, are often forgotten or hidden as a result.<sup>61</sup> Although Nixon’s focus is primarily on the plight of the poor, his argument can readily be applied to elsewhere. The 2011 flood in Cinque Terre was, and to some extent still is, a spectacle to tourists. The ordinary people behind it are mostly lost to the past.

As we have already seen (Chapter one), in the years after the flood tour companies and media outlets, some of them spearheaded by Steves, continued to focus on the flood as a seminal event while routinely ignoring other issues, including mass tourism. Sisu had come to realize that she, too, was focusing on the spectacle at the expense of the ordinary: *“But with time I realized that I had ignored writing about the underlying causes of the flood – environmental degradation, mass tourism and other more hidden stuff – whisperers of harm. I was just like Steves, but I didn’t mean to be!”* For Sisu, wrecked cobblestones weren’t a cause of alarm; the real emergency was the atrophied state of the landscape. This was a slow-moving disaster, yet it was considered ordinary. *“As the emergency in the town became less of an emergency and then rotated to rebuilding and restoration, we realized again – what we already knew – that the true emergency, to this day, in Cinque Terre, is the territory.”*

Sisu had gradually taken notice of the discrepancy between the stories that others told and her own. *“So we started, us love migrants, started to tell our homegrown stories online. We talked about our experiences and linked it to our love of Cinque Terre.”* Politically, she said, the Cinque Terre National Park had long recognized a need for a more comprehensive solution that focused on recovering human and nonhuman relations on the land – particularly

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<sup>60</sup> Nixon, “Neoliberalism, Slow Violence,” 461.

<sup>61</sup> Nixon, “Neoliberalism, Slow Violence,” 460-462.

the restoration of drystone terraces (see Chapter three). Socially, there had been programs designed to restore the terraces, though many thought these to be ineffective. Social media had allowed the love migrants to bypass established structures.

At first, Sisu continued, she had blogged in order to feel connected to loved ones and to a broader community. But as time went on, she witnessed how social media and blogging could be commodified, *à la* Rick Steves (see Chapter one), and started using her story as a way to leverage support. In the anthropologist Michael Jackson's exploration of Hannah Arendt's work on storytelling, he writes that stories are always "the subjective in-between" straddling private and public interests.<sup>62</sup> Sisu might thus be seen as having turned her private life, her continuing battle to belong, into a matter of public interest, as part of a wider struggle for the common good.

At this point, we had been walking for over three hours. The sun was high in the sky. We had passed steep cliffs and climbed up and down countless flights of stairs. We had walked through properties with "For Sale" signs posted on the doors. Finally we had arrived at the top of the one thousand one hundred stairs to Monesteroli. The stairway was an old mule track and its sandstone steps were fixed without cement. The last section of the steps had been destroyed by a landslide. We scrambled down the last two hundred meters of earth to the emerald blue cove below. We parked our bags on the rocks and went for a swim. After hiking for hours, the water relaxed and reinvigorated our tired muscles.

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<sup>62</sup> Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, 11.



Fig. 45. The cove. The view before scrambling down the rocks. Photograph by author.

There were a few large sailboats anchored nearby, evidence of a different class of holidaymakers. Though we were in the same “secret” cove as the rich, our labor-intensive way of getting there set us apart. After our swim, we ate our packed lunches, careful to save water for our hike back up. Climbing the precipitous steps took us an hour, during which time Sisu kept saying, “*This is great!*” as if to convince herself that our cardio challenge had been worth it. We passed an Italian couple with hiking poles near the top of the stairs. “*How much further?*” they asked anxiously. They were the first people we had seen on the *sentiero* since the Germans earlier that morning.

We had another two hours of walking to do before arriving at Portovenere. As we set out, we mused about the people who had once occupied the surrounding landscape. What had their lives been like?

“*Look,*” Sisu pointed to the tree line: “*there are power lines, it can’t have been too long ago that people lived here.*” The intact power lines indicated human housing. It would be difficult to live here, yet apparently some people did. Was their connection to Cinque Terre also an emotive one like Sisu’s love? We wondered what the National Park area had been like before the roads and the railways. Here there were no roads at all, just the crude path we were walking on. Above us on the mountain ridge was the Roman *Via Alta* (high

road), but nowadays it was just another path, used by hikers and the occasional wild boar. We felt geographically isolated. La Spezia was a two-hour hike over the mountain and Riomaggiore was three hours behind us. Still, we were easily reachable by boat or helicopter should something go wrong. In fact, many tourists have had to be rescued by helicopter over the years, mostly from the *sentiero azzurro*. Somewhere to our right was a fenced-off area that was still land-mined from the Second World War. Sisu commented enthusiastically on the changing landscape: *“It’s so diverse. Look! The entire landscape has changed since we were in Riomaggiore.”* This prompted a discussion of Cinque Terre’s natural environment. *“Anyone who has been here for a while, knows that it’s the whole Cinque Terre environment that is in trouble and it’s not just because of flooding. I mean, what can a normal person do with land-mined property?”* We weren’t sure if the land-mined area was part of the National Park or not, but Sisu’s point was salient. What could people do with land that was mined?

By now the landscape had significantly changed. The *sentiero* had become rockier and the trees were different. There were no longer terraces, rather pine forest and abandoned saffron fields. Our *sentiero* was joined by other paths, which connected to La Spezia and other towns. Talking about land use prompted Sisu to return to our previous conversation about blogging. Increasingly, she said, more blogs and social media accounts were beginning to direct their readers to consider alternative activities in Cinque Terre, such as the hike we were currently taking, or ultra-marathons. We had recently heard that the Cinque Terre ultra-marathon was the inspiration behind a new Gulf of Poets mountain marathon, and that both races would use part of the Riomaggiore to Portovenere *sentiero*. Sisu speculated on the origin of the races. *“Undoubtedly the rise of social media helped to inspire us, well at least me anyway. It was this perfect moment for everything to fall into place.”* We returned to talking about blogging and social media. This time, though, Sisu transitioned from talking about her history with blogging to how she and others were using social media as leverage.



Fig. 46. An abandoned drystone building near the landmined area. Photograph by author.

*“And like, think about Stella di Lemmen,”* Sisu referenced the organic farm start-up we had passed earlier in the day. *“We’re all doing pushing back against problems in our own way, and doing it in a very public way.”*

Here Sisu was indicating the resistance part of resilience. The farmers were promoting themselves as temporary caretakers of an endangered landscape, entrusted to their care. Much of their social media activity was about overcoming the struggles of remote farming. As Sisu saw it, featuring their struggles to the public was their way of pushing back. The sociologist Erving Goffman might call this “front stage” performance, in which the actors (in this case the farmers) know that they are performing to an audience.<sup>63</sup>

*“But do you think everyone agrees on the problems in Cinque Terre?”* I inquired.

*“Like tourism? No, I don’t think everyone thinks it’s a problem. Same with the terraces. Some people think nature will take care of itself and that we should leave it alone.”* I had heard similar sentiments from others, both love migrants and other residents. What everyone seemed to agree on was that there were problems, and serious ones, in Cinque Terre.

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<sup>63</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*.

*“I guess that means we’re all resilient in our own way. For example, you know Margherita in Vernazza or the building group in Manarola?”* Like Stella di Lemmen, both Margherita and the Manarola group were combating environmental degradation by reviving agricultural land use (see Chapter three). The difference was that they were focusing on terrace viticulture rather than combination terrace farming. *“They’re rebuilding the walls as their way of being resilient against tourism and climate change. But those of us without land access, we’re also doing our thing be resilient.”*

*“So what is your specific thing Sisu?”* I asked.

*“You mean besides letting a researcher chronicle my life?”* Sisu teased. Although I knew she was joking, Sisu had a point. I was beginning to see how the telling of stories, especially the telling of one’s own story, could be a form of resilience, in part against other, more dominant narratives of life and the world.

*“Sure,”* I responded. *“Why not.”* We had started our descent to Portovenere. The downward switchbacks were just as taxing as our early morning climb. I was out of breath. Suddenly, after hours of only hearing the wind rustle in the trees, we could hear the ocean again.

*“Well, besides hosting you, one thing I’ve done is to be involved in some of the heroic agriculture campaigns. As much as I hate the whole “heroic” agriculture verbiage, it’s useful. We’re using our everyday resilience, being heroic, to recreate Cinque Terre.”*

In English and Italian alike, reterracing was labeled “heroic agriculture” because of the intense physical labor required. Many love migrants, including Sisu herself, had been directly or indirectly involved in the reterracing of Cinque Terre. It was through building walls and planting crops that Sisu physically enacted her continued love of Cinque Terre. By loving Cinque Terre, she changed it meanwhile she herself was also changed. Both were becoming

with the other. When she campaigned for funds for reterracing, she was ensuring that Cinque Terre would continue – another act of love.

The social media outreach of reterracing commonly featured the life stories of Cinque Terre residents. In these stories, residents often leveraged their resilience to personal, social, and environmental hardships in order to promote Cinque Terre and raise revenue for its reconstruction. As Sisu had remarked earlier, many of these residents had started to tell their homegrown stories online. One such story, which I will briefly recount here, was about the recently formed annual Sciacchetraail ultra-marathon.

The ultra-marathon is named in honor of the prized *passito* (sweet) wine, *sciacchetrà*, which is made solely in the region. The race is fifty kilometers (thirty-one miles) long, winding its way through each of Cinque Terre’s five towns along the paths of its terraced vineyards, and covering about two thousand three hundred meters in up-and-down elevation. Considering that Cinque Terre’s elevation typically rises between three hundred to six hundred meters above sea level, the race is not just about tackling physical distance, but also about the mastery of altitude.

According to its advertising campaign, Sciacchetraail promotes the “hard effort” of heroic vintners and the “moral value” of the vineyard terraces through a love of the landscape and trail running.<sup>64</sup> Trail running and trail runners, or so the promotional literature claims, are favored by “territories that have understood that this discipline brings tourism sensitive to environmental issues and sustainability.”<sup>65</sup> The aim of the ultra-marathon, and trail running more generally, is to deseasonalize “tourism flows, and at the same time facilitating tourism more attentive to the territory and local hospitality.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “SciaccheTrail – Ultra Trail Cinque Terre,” np.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



Foodstuffs and wine are invoked at every step of the application process and at the after-marathon party. Promotion for the event is through running networks, locally based social media campaigns, and news outlets. Volunteers, including local love migrants and local vintners, staff the event. On the days preceding and following the race, there are local wine tastings as well as wine-related tours and activities for participants. A blind *sciacchetra* taste test is held, and panel discussions on wine and terraces are assembled.

At every point of the event, parallels between the vertical challenges of the runners and those of the vintners are invoked. Vintners as well as athletes must climb up and down the steep terraces, the difference between them being that the vintners do this regularly. The runners and the vines are both organic beings that, if given proper care, can produce amazing results. Local organizers insert their personal stories of gumption and persistence into the promotional materials. It is clear that both runners and vintners in the promotional materials and race are intended to represent resilient figures. After each race, participating runners are often vocal on social media about the need to protect the vulnerable Cinque Terre landscape. This flow-on activism suggests that the intended lesson, of fragility and the need for protection, is imparted during the event.

As we have seen in Chapter one, promotional materials detailing resilient feats in Cinque Terre have a very different character to more everyday resilient actions. Underneath the advertising and the narratives that are used to promote the event are different lived experiences. Event organizers, such as Sisu, might not be vintners (in fact only a few women in the region are) or even ultramarathon runners, but they confront challenges in Cinque Terre that also must be overcome. Sometimes the challenges are grand, sometimes the challenges are small. Still, they are resilient. As organizers, they know which stories will most resonant with outsiders. In Cinque Terre, however, they have discovered that they can

use their efforts to revitalize Cinque Terre, to bring resilience, to assert that they care about the landscape and thus they belong.

Descent: I love it

As we slowly descended from the mountain, steps instead of a path started to greet us. It was difficult to imagine *running* down the steps, yet the ultra-marathon participants would have to do just that. Furthermore, they actually *paid* to run the stairs. Some of the proceeds of the race were reported as going toward rebuilding terrace walls. For Sisu, the ultra-marathon was a product of homegrown storytelling about the resilience of both a people and a landscape. Her story, and others like it, contributed to the promotion of alternative forms of tourism in the region (see Chapter three).

Finally Portovenere came into view. We scrambled down the back of the headland. The town, built on a high rocky promontory that divides Cinque Terre from La Spezia and the Gulf of Poets, looked quintessentially Ligurian, with pastel buildings and rocky earth above the dazzling blue-grey waves. The late afternoon sun had cast a warm golden hue on the rocks and the sea.

*“It’s so beautiful,”* Sisu exclaimed. *“It’s when I see a Cinque Terre golden hour that I know that it is all worth it. I love it.”* Even after so many years, she continued to use love to describe her feeling about Cinque Terre.

*“It is indeed beautiful,”* I smiled. Unlike Sisu, I couldn’t quite muster the same feeling of love that so easily bubbled from her.



Fig. 47. Portovenere. The view from the sentiero. Photograph by author.

Upon arrival, Sisu took me to her favorite *gelateria* then stopped by to see a friend's shoe store. The shoe-store owner made leather shoes and bags in house. After browsing the latest leather designs together with the storeowner, we discussed the difference between the previous tourist season and this one. We thus ended the day, as we had begun it, by discussing tourism.

As darkness fell, we boarded the bus to La Spezia. It was a 30-minute ride along the water line of the Gulf of Poets. After disembarking from the bus, I walked with Sisu to the train station, where she would soon hop on a train back home to Monterosso. Most of the tourists had already retired to their respective abodes, so the train station was almost empty. As we parted, I realized that we had become fast friends. Just as Sisu had succeeded in pulling together a cluster of narratives into a coherent story of personal growth, resilience, and action, we had pulled together a friendship over the kilometers gained.

The environmental historian William Cronon suggests that it is above all the beginning and ending of a story that give meaning to environmental narratives.<sup>67</sup> According to Cronon, attention to the environmental stories told by humans, and the value judgments those stories

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<sup>67</sup> Cronon, "A Place for Stories," 1375.

hold, is the point of history itself. The beginning and ending of our hike were both entangled with tourism, just as the stories that Sisu shared on the hike were hedged about by tourism. Tourism matters in Cinque Terre. It is also clear that the entirety of Sisu's life is bound up with it. Tourism is what feeds and clothes her. Yet the beginning and the ending of her story also register a wider connection to the region. This connection, this becoming with Cinque Terre, is what Sisu showed me on our walk. It is her love that keeps her striving to make a place for herself in Cinque Terre. She will undoubtedly continue to use her resilience, and the love that it is based on, to legitimate her claim of belonging in Cinque Terre.

### Concluding remarks

As we have seen in this chapter, Sisu's story of her life in Cinque Terre moves from falling in love with Cinque Terre to fighting to belong in Cinque Terre, to finding a way to impact change in a landscape while also being changed by it, even subliminally. In some ways this is a typical tale: people often personalize their experience with their surroundings. But in Sisu's case, she has also used her story of resilience as a way to leverage her belonging to Cinque Terre, a belonging founded on love, and to ingratiate herself there. Resilience for Sisu is slow, bound up in everyday actions, and is the result of her love for Cinque Terre.

Although Sisu's experiences in Cinque Terre may not seem to fit the mold of the classic resilience story, I contend that we take such experiences seriously. Not only is taking her lived experience seriously the feminist and anthropological assumption upon which this thesis is based, but doing so also allows us to be open to the possibility that another's reality is different from our own. Here Sisu has acted on a sense of love to move continents and then to stay in place. She has adapted to her new surroundings, under far from easy circumstances. She has sustained her sense of self along with the landscape of Cinque Terre. She has bounced back from difficulties. She has resisted those that sought to ignore her or tear her down. She has involved herself in the retterracing and campaigns to combat the destructive

effects of recent mass tourism and decades of environmental neglect. In each of these things, Sisu has demonstrated resilience. In all of these things, she was anchored by her love of Cinque Terre. After putting in substantial time and work in Cinque Terre, she uses her resilience to assert belonging and provide legitimacy.

Moreover, this chapter contends that love, and undoubtedly emotion more broadly, influences resilience. As this chapter has shown, the environmental humanities notion of becoming with allows Sisu's claim of love to exist in relation to Cinque Terre. Moreover, becoming with also implies relationality on the part of Cinque Terre. Such relational entanglements will also feature in the next perspective, which presents the Cinque Terre landscape itself along with its vineyard caretakers.

## Chapter three: Drystone vineyard terraces and their caretakers

This chapter questions how resilience is *enacted* in Cinque Terre *from* the perspective of Cinque Terre itself: more specifically, from the point of view of the region's vineyard terraces and its caretakers. It presents the third stage and perspective encountered during my fieldwork. This chapter moves from the human perspective of "becoming with" the landscape of Cinque Terre established in the second chapter to explore the multispecies perspective of Cinque Terre itself. Through ethnographic and visual ethnographic methods combined with the environmental humanities tools of environmental history and multispecies studies, the chapter demonstrates how Cinque Terre does resilience in Cinque Terre. This exploration reveals that resilience is enacted over various time periods, by both humans and nonhumans.

Participants in the second and third stages of research would often attribute agency to the *terra* of Cinque Terre (*ie.* the drystone terraces, grapevines and the rocks) in its own resilience story. Because this thesis assumes that participants' experiences are valid, I believed their claims. It was after laboring in the terraces, however, that I came to understand

their perspective first hand. Paraphrasing the multispecies anthropologist Heather Anne Swanson, I came to understand that in order to attend to the voices of Cinque Terre, I would need to attend to the nonhuman socialities that anthropology, with its narrow definitions of the “human” and the “social,” has often neglected.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, this chapter is set in the *terra* of Cinque Terre and presents its perspective.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 48 Vernazza. Drystone vineyard terraces. Photograph by author.

This methodological decision was backed by multispecies studies emphasis on the “multitudes of lively agents”<sup>3</sup> that are forever emerging through entangled relations that include, but always also exceed, binary relationships such as drystone mason and stone. Anthropologists,<sup>4</sup> geographers,<sup>5</sup> and philosophers<sup>6</sup> have been in the vanguard of multispecies theory, while a pivotal question in multispecies ethnography addresses the issue of human becoming in the context of a multispecies world.<sup>7</sup> Although the term “multispecies” indicates a focus on entities that are labeled as species according to biological hierarchies, this is not

<sup>1</sup> Swanson, “Methods for Multispecies Anthropology,” 84.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to being central to the ethnographic data, rocks and grapevines as characters also serve to ground what might become an unduly abstract theoretical discussion in the material world.

<sup>3</sup> van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, “Multispecies Studies,” 3.

<sup>4</sup> For examples, see Kirksey, *The Multispecies Salon*; Swanson, Lien, and Ween, *Domestication Gone Wild*; Tsing, *The Mushroom*.

<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*; Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies*.

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Latour, *We Have Never Been*.

<sup>7</sup> Kirksey, Schuetze, and Helmreich, “Tactics of Multispecies Ethnography,” 4.

necessarily the case for the scholarship found under its wide umbrella. Instead multispecies studies, particularly those within the environmental humanities, trouble rigid classifications and invite destabilizations of what it means to have a life and to interact.<sup>8</sup> Thus the assertion that the drystone terraces, the grapevines and the rocks had agency has a scholarly foundation.

Multispecies ethnography here focuses on “contact zones,”<sup>9</sup> sites where the supposedly rigid lines between nature and culture are blurred, and where “encounters between *homo sapiens* and other living beings generate mutual ecologies and coproduced niches.”<sup>10</sup> I illustrate this entanglement through multispecies relations with humans. The overall goal is not to speak *for* the vineyard terraces or their parts; rather it is to demonstrate how the terraces are entangled *with* the human inhabitants of Cinque Terre. Their stories of enacting resilience are told with humans and nonhumans entangled together.

While most multispecies engagement has been between humans and other organic life forms, such as plants or animals,<sup>11</sup> I join others who include seemingly inanimate matter within this framework.<sup>12</sup> Placing rocks under a multispecies frame is still unorthodox, however I do this because rocks were conceived as having lives of their own by participants. Indeed, rocks, despite their apparent inertness, evolve over a long period of time and are host to a multitude of organic and inorganic entities; as such, they complicate what is considered

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<sup>8</sup> See Gillen, “Notes on Mineral Evolution Life.”

<sup>9</sup> The phrase “contact zone” occurs in this thesis from two different disciplinary perspectives. In Chapter one, I used literary theorist Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of contact zone as a social site where cultures and people meet (Pratt, “Arts of Contact Zone.”). Pratt’s use of the term is often cited in tourism and travel literature to address how people and cultures intermingle while on tour. Here, in contrast, biologist and cultural theorist Donna Haraway uses the term to indicate “how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other.” Contact zones are sites where relations are seen “in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 216). Haraway’s term is often used to discuss ecological interactions and intersections, particularly those involving human and non-human contact.

<sup>10</sup> Kirksey and Helmreich, “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” 546.

For examples, see Head, Atchison, and Gates, *Ingrained*; Locke and Münster, “Multispecies Ethnography;” van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, “Multispecies Studies.”

<sup>12</sup> See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 8, for theorizations for why rocks and other inanimate matter should matter.



to be “alive.”<sup>13</sup> Rocks were also the thing most present in resilience stories from an insider perspective. Furthermore, rocks themselves dominated the third stage of my ethnographic data collection. Consequently my guiding feminist and anthropological assumption on lived experience compelled me to include them. Rocks, and indeed the all parts of the terraces featured here, are important because they are important to participants.

Conversely, the grapevines also featured here, were equally present yet did not dominate fieldwork nor resilience stories. Yet, compared to rocks, grapevines seem more easily palatable as having a resilience story or, at the very least, having agency within one. This palatability is certainly the case for writing about rocks. This contrast echoes the challenge of describing things that occur outside of hegemonic narratives: it is difficult because the imaginations are not readily available nor are we readily primed to believe the words. Here, I tackle this challenge by relying on filmed ethnographic representations of landscape to “set the scene” wherein the parts of the Cinque Terre vividly emerge. This representation adds ethnographic triangulation to the claim that nonhuman Cinque Terre has an active part in resilience. I intersplice the filmed representations with two stories of how resilience has been and is being enacted. The first story positions grapevines as the central to enacting resilience in Cinque Terre. The second story troubles the position of grapevines by attempting to show the rock’s centrality to enacting resilience. The environmental humanities tool of environmental history is used within these stories and beyond in order to demonstrate the entangled temporalities of enacting resilience between humans, rocks and grapevines in Cinque Terre’s terraces. The environmental history used here asserts that Cinque Terre has always been a human and nonhuman hybrid.

The chapter is broken down into three parts. Like chapters one and two, the first part begins by introducing the perspective and establishing it within scholarship. Here I present

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<sup>13</sup> Root-Bernstein, “Things That Are Not.”

the vineyard terraces and rocks through the filmed ethnographic vignettes where they act relationally to human caretakers. The first vignette introduces the setting and the process of construction of a drystone vineyard terraces. It is followed by a geological and archeological description of what terrace is. The second vignette introduces rocks as an integral part of the vineyard terraces. This vignette establishes “rockly” agency and is then followed by linking the vignette to geological and environmental humanities scholarship.

The chapter then transitions to the second part. Here I move from establishing collective relationality to exploring how this relationality has produced a resilience has been enacted historically. I begin by establishing the last Cinque Terre terrace character: grapevines through the filmed vignette followed by botanical and multispecies contextualization. I then proceed with a vignette about the dominance of grapevine and wine narratives in Cinque Terre, followed by a brief environmental history of grapevines, wine, and phylloxera. Phylloxera is an introduced aphid that killed over fifty percent of the European grapevines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and irrevocably changed Cinque Terre’s terraces. Through this history, I establish that contemporary wine standardization practices can be interpreted as a form of resilience through revitalization. These practices allowed Cinque Terre to use its wine as a marker of worth, which in turn facilitated the growth of tourism and the local tourist economy. However, these practices were not enacted by humans alone but instead were part of multispecies efforts.

In the final part, we see contemporary flow-on effects of resilience to phylloxera and terrace abandonment in the context of a harvest festival and small-scale niche viticulture. Here I open with the final filmed ethnographic vignette. It shows the human caretakers who see both grapevines *and* rocks as central to their continued resilience, which is in contrast to the previous part’s emphasis on grapevines and wine in Cinque Terre’s history of resilience. I then proceed with two sequential vignettes that trouble the grapevine’s narrative dominance

as a central to Cinque Terre. Here rocks peep into the stories as quiet but foundational to Cinque Terre and its continued resilience. I demonstrate that the *terra* of Cinque Terre is the symbolic as well as material outcome of resilience as well as an actor in past and future resiliences in a repeated cycle of resilience. However, resilience here is not a happy panacea, but rather a protracted struggle that requires continual negotiation over time.

## Part one: Drystone vineyard terraces and their rocks

### Introducing: The drystone vineyard terraces

Vineyard terraces, Vernazza: July 2018

The drystone mason and I looked into the camera as we commenced filming. Behind us was a pile of rubble: rocks intermingled with dead grass, rusty mesh fencing, some orange plastic netting and a small water line beside a face of exposed earth. In front of us was a mature grapevine with a view of Vernazza and the Ligurian Sea below. Since the camera was filming in all directions from a central vantage point, the wall and the landscape in front of us were being filmed along with ourselves. In the early morning, the sea is relatively calm, before the daily incursion of scores of boats. In the distance we could see Punta Mesco, a promontory that separates Cinque Terre from the coastal town of Levanto to the west.

Margherita and I had decided we wanted the film to focus on the process of *building* rather than *dismantling* the wall. We believed that rebuilding would be more interesting for viewers, based on our joint experiences of fielding questions from tourists and her experience of attending landscape conferences. People were rarely interested in how the walls fell down or were taken apart. If there was interest at all, common questions presupposed disaster (such as floods or earthquakes) rather than the combined effects of gravity, erosion, wind, water, and time. Furthermore, just as “slow disaster”<sup>14</sup> (Nixon) is difficult to visualize and represent, so too is wall failure. Even if we had been able to capture it, the collapse of the wall would have been a nano-instant in a time-lapse film. Likewise, our clearing of the rubble on the first day would have been over in the blink of an eye. As it was, the eight days it took us to rebuild the wall sped by on film in just under four minutes.

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<sup>14</sup> See Nixon, *Slow Violence*. Also, see Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural.”



*Fig. 49. Vernazza. The first frame of the 360 film.*

We began our physical labor by separating the rocks from the dirt and other debris. This was where we established our contact zone with the nonhuman other. The earth released the smell of sulfur and lime, both of which are chemicals used in viticulture. Beetles and ants emerged from the freshly exposed soil. As we removed stones, discarded objects emerged: several small glass medicine bottles, some dark-orange clay roof tiles. Some of this debris had probably had other construction purposes, such as a hunk of white marble that Margherita believed had originally belonged to an old unconsecrated church.<sup>15</sup> We also found numerous plastic bottle caps, pieces of tarpaulin, and assorted wires and pottery shards. Archaeologists would have had a field day with our assembled jumble of artifacts. By the end of the morning, the terraced soil where the rubble used to be was bare. We then mined the earth along the bottom lip of terrace with yellow buckets in order to create a ditch. The sound of moving earth was a musical loop of thirds. First, there was the sound of dirt and small stones hitting the bottom of the bucket, then the sound of dirt on dirt as the bucket filled. Second, there was the sound of unearthing rocks as our gloved fingers scraped against them, then the ping of rocks hitting other rocks as we threw them behind us. Third, there was

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<sup>15</sup> Although white marble deposits are common in the region, it is not a typical building material for drystone walls.

crunching of dirt and earth under our feet as we moved the buckets from the wall to the dirt pile and back again, broken by a distinctly sharp thud as we dumped the earth from the buckets.

When the church bell struck noon, we stopped for the day. By this time, most of the rubble had been cleared. Giant piles of stones and dirt lay between the terrace face and the grapevines that had held the camera. The terrace face was bare: just exposed earth with nothing to support it. Despite our protective gear, we were covered in a thin film of light brown dirt. We gathered our equipment and walked downhill, over numerous other terraces, until we came to a padlocked gate. If gates are not properly secured, tourists tend to wander in, assuming that the terraces are part of the National Park. Technically the terraces *are* part of the National Park, but they are also private property. Locals often lamented that, “*Unlike Disneyland, people actually live here.*” Consequently, there were areas that landowners could designate as off limits to clomping feet and prying eyes. Even if some succeeded in trespassing, it was easy to become lost. The terraces were a mazelike jumble of walls, grapevines, trees and fences. With multiple property demarcations, one could not simply go up the stairs. Climbing the terraces required a sort of zigzag motion. Up one terrace, turn left, down another terrace, turn left again, and then go up five terraces, before turning right in order to go back down. Luckily Margherita knew the terraces by heart. We opened the gate to pass through, then locked it again behind us and trudged down to the *sentiero azzurro* and Vernazza below.

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This vignette establishes the feeling, sights and sounds of dismantling a drystone terrace wall in Cinque Terre before its reconstruction. The process is dirty, rough and long. Deconstructing a terrace wall reveals its parts: dirt, stones, debris and grapevines. But what of the terrace itself? A general definition of a terrace is a sloped surface, such as a mountain or a

hill, which has been cut into a series of successive flat horizontal surfaces or platforms, resembling steps. The steps can be a variety of widths and lengths depending on the character of the surface on which they are built. In Cinque Terre, the outward-facing part of the steps is kept in place by walls made of rocks. The rocks in the film are “drystone” constructed. Drystone construction refers to building without mortar, such as cement.



*Fig. 50. Vernazza. The vineyard terraces tower above the town. Photograph by author.*

Cinque Terre has over two thousand of kilometers (roughly twelve hundred miles) of drystone terrace walls<sup>16</sup> constructed on an elevation ranging from three hundred fifty to six hundred meters above sea level.<sup>17</sup> Anecdotally, many tour operators like to say that Cinque Terre’s terraces are longer than the Great Wall of China, though the analogy is inaccurate.<sup>18</sup> Because each region has its own particular method of building walls that is adapted to that region’s particular needs, drystone walls vary in appearance. As a result, drystone walls in Vernazza look different to those in Riomaggiore or Monterosso al Mare. Similarly, a drystone wall in the UK or Korea will look remarkably different to those in Cinque Terre. According to the landscape historians Petit Claude, Werner Konold and Franz Höchtl,

<sup>16</sup> This number is contested. Most estimates are under four thousand kilometers. See Terranova, “Il Paesaggio Costiero Terrazzato.”

<sup>17</sup> For reference, three hundred meters is two and one half times higher than the Great Pyramid of Giza or three times as tall as Big Ben in London.

<sup>18</sup> The Great Wall of China reported is over twenty thousand kilometers in length.

drystone terraces alleviate soil erosion, prevent nutrient losses, ease water shortages or water retention problems, and allow difficult land to be cultivated.<sup>19</sup> In a territory like Cinque Terre, and Liguria more generally, which is characterized by winter rains, steep elevation, and rocky landmass, drystone walls have many advantages over mortared walls. For instance, terraces allow humans to work efficiently in relatively small spaces without heavy machinery or large equipment. At its most basic level, all that is needed to build a wall is one pair of human hands and a whole lot of stones. The walls work because of the intersection of gravity, frictional resistance, and human handicraft. They also function to store heat. The stones transfer thermic energy from the sun to the soil and vegetation. In contrast to mortared walls, drystone walls have a significantly longer life span, as water passing through the wall does not fracture seams. Instead, water flows through drystone walls without damaging them. Ground movement and water effectively “lock” the wall more tightly together, as stones and earth “settle.” As drystone walls conform to their surroundings, becoming entangled with dirt and roots, they are also resilient to the effects of small earthquakes, moving with the earth rather than against it. Moreover, where mortared walls tend to break in large sections, drystone walls tend to fall apart in smaller ones. Repairs are often based on the re-use of stone and other found materials, making terraces “environmentally friendly” and relatively cheap.<sup>20</sup> Typically, human labor is the most expensive part of building a drystone wall. On top of the terraces, anything from grapevines to trees to vegetables can be grown. Buildings can also be constructed. Today the region’s terraces are a jumble of rocks, soil, debris, grapevines, weeds, olive trees, vegetable gardens, *sentieri*, and seemingly ancient houses.

Moving away from a more technical definition, Italian landscape historian Mauro Agnoletti, writes that a drystone terrace is an “interconnected self-regulating feature, [which]

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<sup>19</sup> Petit, Konold, and Höchtl, “Historic Terraced Vineyards.”

<sup>20</sup> This is not always the case. Some terrace reconstruction projects fly in rocks via helicopter, particularly if the wall has been severely damaged.



blends traditional human knowledge with hydrogeological and climatic factors that are integrated with the natural characteristics.”<sup>21</sup> The “traditional human knowledge” to which Agnoletti is referring here includes building techniques and rationales for terraced agriculture and settlement. Such knowledge is often a focal point of terrace discourses, as evidenced by a recent UNESCO designation that makes European terraces part of an “intangible cultural heritage of humanity.”<sup>22</sup> What both Agnoletti and UNESCO ignore, however, is the role that the landscape itself plays in creating the so-called “cultural heritage” of terraces. To ignore the landscape at the expense of human culture (and vice versa) ignores the enmeshed lifeworlds of both. The lifeworld of Cinque Terre’s terraces, for example, feature scores of plant and animal life, such as grapevines, olive trees, wild boars, domestic cats, and fungi. The occupational lifeworld of humans linked to the terraces includes caretakers, tourists, absentee landowners, and researchers. As such, terraced places are profoundly local and inhabited. They are also profoundly dynamic and interconnected. Elements that comprise the terrace structure, like rocks, grapevines, and human hands are central to this dynamism because they form a resilient triad that adapts, sustains, and resists while also aging in place. The fact that the terraces are resilient does not mean, though, that they do not falter. Even with the best of care, drystone rock walls collapse. Cinque Terre drystone masons claim that a robust drystone wall will last at least one hundred years before a section of it relents to the forces of gravity. Consequently, throughout Cinque Terre there are sections of fallen-down walls.

When I first began my fieldwork, I wondered if the collapsed or misshapen walls along the *sentiero azzurro* were evidence of the 2011 flood. These fallen rocks appeared to be, in the famous words of the anthropologist Mary Douglas, “matter out of place.”<sup>23</sup> And just as

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<sup>21</sup> Agnoletti, “Italian Historical Rural Landscapes,” 48.

<sup>22</sup> UNESCO, “Art of Dry Stone,” np.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

Douglas had written about power, order and the contravention of order, I had begun to think of the walls as rejected elements of a system of power. The tourists I initially came into contact with were similarly curious about the walls. Some took the time to complain about them on online travel forums with comments such as “*The government really needs to get its act together!*” or “*It’s a pity that the nature is in shambles.*” They assumed that broken-down walls were evidence of an ineffectual government: one that had dismally failed to match their expectations of the picturesque place they had imagined before actually arriving there. They, like myself at the time, were largely unaware that the rubble and debris along the main tourist *sentieri* were not the direct result of either a catastrophic event or an ineffective government, but were an inevitable consequence of the slow passage of time as well as other structural factors, such as abandonment due to industrialized agriculture or war.

With time, I realized that my initial interpretation was incorrect, or at least partially. The walls were not rejected elements of a system of power; instead, Cinque Terre’s terraced landscape was the central element in a system of power<sup>24</sup> that used (and still uses) it to claim heritage and political status. Writing about a UNESCO heritage bid for a terraced site in the Italian Alps, the political scientist Thomas Puleo suggests that local authorities act as parasites on the landscape in an attempt to force terraces “to evolve from a historic to heritage landscape,” consequently turning them into part of a global commodity chain of tourist and heritage goods.<sup>25</sup> Such a transformation had already happened in Cinque Terre. As I discovered, both the National Park and the wider community have become “parasitically” dependent on the heritage status of terraces in order to sustain their livelihoods. But however important the terraced landscape is as a heritage site, many of the *individual* terrace walls I

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<sup>24</sup> Although it’s beyond the scope of the thesis to detail the systems of power operating in Cinque Terre, examples include UNESCO, the Cinque Terre National Park, and national tourism agencies.

<sup>25</sup> Puleo, “Parasitizing Landscape for UNESCO,” 344.

came to know were various states of disrepair. At the micro level, that is daily care, life cycle, and stability, the terraces seemed to be ignored.

How could Cinque Terre's terraces be valued as a landscape while its individual elements were left to decay? In their work on the UNESCO Philippine rice-terrace World Heritage site, the environmental planners Rachel Guimbatan and Teddy Baguilat have shown that attention to terrace landscapes as a heritage site obscures real and serious threats to them.<sup>26</sup> In the Philippine scenario, local people have not been able to use or repair the terraces because of rigid heritage guidelines, so they have increasingly turned to tourism as a way to make a living, which in turn causes terrace abandonment. Guimbatan and Baguilat see this situation as having evolved from a misunderstanding, but in Cinque Terre it seems more of a deliberate political move: one that privileges the landscape-based tourism industry over the local agricultural livelihoods that rely on the proper maintenance of the landscape's working parts. Douglas argues that rejected matter can also be "in place" depending on its relation to systems of power. Applying this to Cinque Terre's terraces, abandoned terraces can thus be interpreted as "in place" where the overall terrace landscape serves heritage status, with their decrepit condition merely adding to the commercial value of "beautiful decay."

The attraction of real or perceived decay in the Italian landscape has a long history. As far back as the 1700s, when the Grand Tour<sup>27</sup> was gaining momentum, one of the great appeals of travel to the Italian peninsula was the chance to see its ruins.<sup>28</sup> The appeal, now often driven by heritage listings and social media commentary, continues to this day.<sup>29</sup> The anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has shown that the "ruined" aesthetic of historic places is used as an excuse for particular types of non-intervention, often to the detriment of those who

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<sup>26</sup> Guimbatan and Baguilat, "Misunderstanding the Notion."

<sup>27</sup> The Grand Tour refers to a period of foreign travel, typically through Europe, commonly undertaken by aristocratic and wealthy Europeans to complete their education.

<sup>28</sup> Kolb, *Azure Spell of Liguria*.

<sup>29</sup> Hom, *The Beautiful Country*.

live there.<sup>30</sup> A crumbling landscape offers an inducement to tourists while also providing a rationale for preserving that landscape as “heritage.” Cinque Terre’s terraced vineyards are positioned within just such a dual context of heritage value and physical decay.

*Materially*, Cinque Terre’s terraces are made of up dirt, stones, plants, and a myriad of other beings and entities, including humans. *Technically*, they are built to last around a century under good conditions. *Politically*, they are the foundation for the region’s UNESCO designation and its worldwide appeal as a tourist destination. *Culturally*, they provide the “essence” of what makes Cinque Terre. (I came to understand the local mantra of Cinque Terre as being that “without the terraces, we have nothing.”) The region’s classifications overlap, signaling a tension between two different worldviews on terraces. On the one hand, there are the techno-scientific and material aspects of terraces; on the other, there are their political and socio-cultural aspects. Scholarship on terraces, limited as it is, tends to focus on the techno-scientific side, with the majority of work being in the geological sciences, particularly on terrace landslides.<sup>31</sup> But as the vignette above has hopefully begun to establish, the terraces also have a strong *social* component. As the environmental historians Marcus Hall and Macro Armiero contend, people have been shaping the Italian landscape for millennia and, in that sense, Italian environmental history has never been “just” Italian.<sup>32</sup> Italy is better seen as an artificial homeland,<sup>33</sup> where nature<sup>34</sup> and nation, science and culture, are all bound up in each other. Applying these insights to Cinque Terre’s terraces, the landscape can be seen to have taken on hybrid characteristics that have been developed and etched over generations. This hybrid understanding of Italy in general, and Cinque Terre more

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<sup>30</sup> Herzfeld, “Engagement, Gentrification, and Neoliberal.”

<sup>31</sup> For examples of work by geologists on terraces, see Preti et al., “Dry Stone Wall Terrace;” Raso et al., “Landslide-Inventory;” Tarolli, Preti, and Romano, “Terraced Landscapes.”

<sup>32</sup> Armiero and Hall, “Il Bel Paese.”

<sup>33</sup> Armiero and Hall, “Il Bel Paese,” 3.

<sup>34</sup> Nature here is used in a wide, sweeping sense to refer to the natural world. For work on nature as a concept, see Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness;” Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*.

specifically, is one of my points of departure in this chapter.<sup>35</sup> Nor, as I will establish in the chapter's remaining vignettes, are the terraces "just" a human-made landscape; rather, they are made through multispecies encounters. It is these encounters, between rocks, grapevines, and their caretakers, that the following pages will be looking to portray.

### Introducing: Rocks

Vineyard terraces, Vernazza, Italy - July 2018

On the second morning, Margherita and I arrived at the locked gate to the terraces around seven thirty. Everything around us was still except for the beating of the waves below. Our mission for the morning was to finish digging out the foundation of the wall. We would also start filming our work.

Once we reached our work site, we stored our belongings along a standing part of the rock wall and pulled on our gloves. I attached the camera to the designated grapevine, pressed play, then we went to work digging. We took turns. Each person would dig for about fifteen minutes before the other one jumped in. Switching saved our strength. One would fill the bucket with dirt, hand it to the other, and she would dump it two meters to the side. As we sifted through the dirt, we ordered the rocks as we unearthed them. Each stone that we collected would be used in the new wall. *Ciattelli* (flat rocks) and *abballuttulai* (big round rocks) were placed around the grapevines. *Schegge* (long, thin, finger-like rocks) were dropped closest to the terrace face. *Schegge* would be used to fill gaps around *ciattelli* and *abballuttulai*. Margherita created a special pile for rocks with "pretty faces." These rocks were valued for their aesthetic symmetry, and the fact that one of their multifaceted surfaces was smooth. The smooth face would be placed outward, toward the sea, so that the stones

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<sup>35</sup> For a similar, but more thorough conceptual study on hybrid landscapes, see Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies*. Both Whatmore and Hall and Armiero focus on human and nature relationalities. I use Hall and Armiero specifically because of their focus on Italy and their ties to history as a discipline more broadly.

didn't pose a jagged threat to passersby. Over hours our contact zone with Cinque Terre increased.



*Fig. 51. Vernazza. A freshly laid drystone wall. Photograph by author.*

As we neared the bottom of the wall, we started to throw smaller unearthed stones behind ourselves without paying attention to the ordering. We would use these rocks first so there was no need to organize them. Because the foundation of the old wall carried the weight of the structure, the soil was packed like concrete around the stones. We used a pickaxe for this stubborn soil. The dirt would crumble under the pickaxe's punch, and the stones would reveal themselves. These foundational stones were large. We had to move them together, taking care not to crush our fingers or to drop them on our feet. Although we both wore closed toe work boots, a large rock could nevertheless inflict substantial damage to our feet if it were dropped. As it was, we had both had fingernail damage from working on previous walls. One could never be too careful.

Margherita often spoke about rocks as having a vendetta against her. Hyperbole aside, there seemed to be something to this. A few days prior, during another wall-building project, a small rock had fallen from the wall we were working on and hit Margherita squarely on her forehead. It left a deep gash that gushed blood. I quickly grabbed a scarf to tie around her head in order to stop the bleeding, but wasn't quick enough to prevent her face from being

covered in dark red. We both clambered down the mountain, then sprinted to the village doctor, who gave her three stitches. We must have looked like zombies, covered in dirt and blood, pushing our way through the morning crowds in the village. When we returned to the worksite the next day, there were blood splatters on the stones: evidence of the material mixing of builder and stone. Nor was she the only one who feared the consequences of rocks. I had previously slipped on a small *ciattello* while working on top of a wall during a terrace wall build. I only managed to save myself by grabbing a grapevine, which was anchored by its taproot into the terrace. Two meters below me had been large piles of jagged stones. Had I fallen the consequences of such a fall could have been grave. I walked away with bruises, rock-rash, a small cut on my torso, and a newfound appreciation for the terraces. After that experience and many like it, I was beginning to understand the vendetta that Margherita described. Were the terraces responding to us? Fighting us?

Writing about representations of rocks in medieval literature, the literary scholar Jeffrey Cohen describes the relationship between human beings and stone as one where the “stone provokes tangible connection, the thickening of relations.”<sup>36</sup> My own relations with the rocks were surely thickening the more I worked with them. I grew to respect them as well as to develop an increasing curiosity about them, noting recurring patterns and textures in the stones. Margherita, who had been working with rocks since her childhood, was even more “rock conscious.” Based on the feel of a stone, she could judge its density and how it would act when layered in a wall. “*There are no perfect stones,*” she said, “*just perfect placements.*” Knowing the stones meant knowing their temperaments and actions.

After a morning of moving rocks and dirt, we unearthed a large rock on the right side of the foundational trench. It was light gray and streaked with the kind of bright white that glitters like diamonds. It wasn’t just large; it was huge, looking like it could support the entire

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<sup>36</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, 164.

mountainside. We had already hit it with the pickaxe a few times, thinking it was a smaller rock. With each blow, the dirt fell away to reveal more and more solid stone. Margherita was unsure whether we should attempt to dig out the rock or leave it alone, so she called her father to help evaluate the situation. He was in his late seventies and had been building walls since he was a child. If anyone could move the rock, he could.

When her father arrived, he began by hitting the rock with the pickaxe, just as Margherita had done. As he lifted the tool above his head, he explained that one can tell a lot about a rock by hitting it. When he hit the rock with a mighty thud, nothing happened. He hit it again. Again, nothing. When Margherita was satisfied that not even her father could budge the rock, she instructed him to stop.

Her father, however, was not content. He wanted to ensure that the rock was not *“playing games.”* He continued to hit the rock.

*“Papa, it’s older than all of us combined”* she exclaimed. *“The rock is very serious about staying put. Trying to unearth it when we know it wants to stay would only cause trouble.”*

He made a rock joke I didn’t understand. Margherita turned to me to say that it was a stupid sexist joke *“told by old men with no humor.”*

The two of them then argued about whether such jokes were appropriate. He said that the stones *“didn’t mind”* his jokes. She replied that the stones were inherently feminist and they certainly did mind.

Ultimately, they agreed to leave the giant rock untouched and to use it as part of the foundation for the wall. The surprising part of their conversation was not their argument, they argued often, but their casual anthropomorphization of rocks. It seemed as though through their work with rocks, the rocks had taken on lives of their own. Each “rockly” characterization was relational to the speaker.



After this particular argument, we decided to call it a day. We had been working for over five hours and Margherita had another full-time job awaiting her in the afternoon. The rocks we had unearthed over the past two days now lay in large piles between the grapevine camera and the terrace face; I had to climb over the rocks in order to turn the camera off. In the coming days, I would stand on these rock piles, sorting through them methodically then, rock by rock, handing them to Margherita, who would then place them in the wall. We would return the next morning to begin building the foundation of the terrace wall with the rocks we had just unearthed.

On film, our five hours of work moving stones fly by in about twenty seconds. Margherita and I buzz in and out of the frame. Meanwhile, increasing amounts of rocks appear in front of the viewer until they make up the entire focus. In this way, rocks become the principal actors of the films, taking center stage, while we are relegated to stagehands, yielding to their demands. On subsequent days, the rock piles would remain the focal point, even though we were clearly moving them first to the rock piles and then from the piles back to the wall. In a 360 film, the viewer can change their focus in any direction. Yet, whatever the viewing direction, the rocks still have a substantial presence in the film. To the right or left, there are piles of stones. Below are stones. Above and behind are terraces made of stones, together with grapevines and the Ligurian Sea.

This filmic focus, together with Margherita's "rock talk," speaks to the prominence – the quiet magnitude – of rocks in Cinque Terre's terraces. Because Cinque Terre's terraces are built out of stone, noting this prominence may seem like stating the obvious. But as anthropologist Anna Tsing notes in explaining why mushrooms and mushroom pickers deserve scholarly attention, the "very stuff of collaborative survival" is often that which is readily observable yet rarely acknowledged.<sup>37</sup> Tsing duly calls for the "arts of noticing" as a

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<sup>37</sup> Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 20.

method for understanding the “multiple temporal rhythms and trajectories of the assemblage” of the social world.<sup>38</sup> In Cinque Terre, it is rocks that are the most conspicuous part of this assemblage, and rocks that contribute most to the region’s “collaborative survival,” as I will go on to explain in more detail below. Before moving on to this explanation, a better understanding of the role of rocks in Cinque Terre is required. I will begin with a definitional exercise.

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According to the *Dictionary of Geology and Earth Sciences*, a rock is a “consolidated or unconsolidated aggregate of minerals or organic matter.”<sup>39</sup> The minerals may be all of one type (monomineralic) or many (polymineralic). While the organic matter can be almost anything, the most common examples are plant and animal fossils. Rocks are commonly classified in one of three categories depending on how they were initially formed. These classifications are:

- *Igneous* rocks. These are made from magma or molten material. Granite, often found in kitchen countertops, is a common example of an igneous rock. A famous example of igneous rock is the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland.
- *Sedimentary* rocks. These are derived from fragments of preexisting rocks or materials, including fossils and organic matter. Limestone, the rock used to build the Great Pyramids of Egypt, is a common example. A famous example is Uluru in Australia.
- *Metamorphic* rocks. These are composed of either igneous or sedimentary rocks. Marble, used in monumental architecture worldwide, is a commonly known type

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<sup>38</sup> Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 24. Also, see van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, “Multispecies Studies.”

<sup>39</sup> Allaby, “Rock,” np.

of a metamorphic rock. The Himalaya Mountains are a famous large-scale example of metamorphic rock.

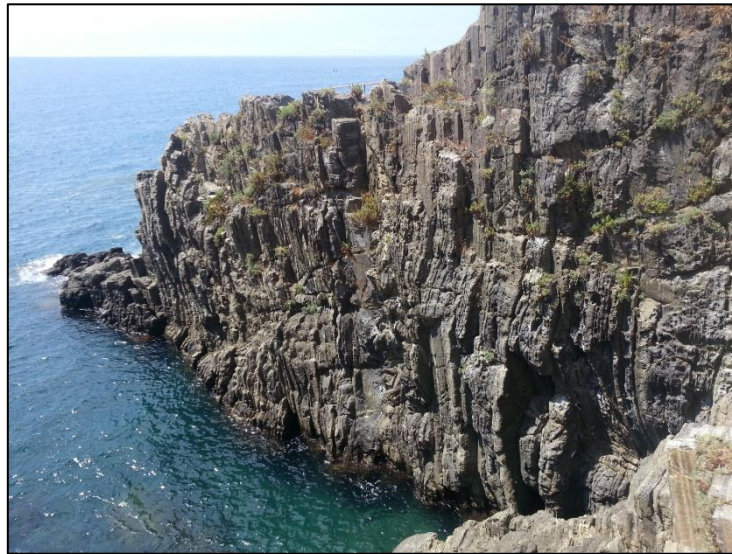


Fig. 52. Riomaggiore. Igneous rock layers. Photograph by author.

In Cinque Terre, there are four stratigraphic (rock layer) sections.<sup>40</sup> The first is the *Tuscany Series*, which is made up of sedimentary rock, namely sandstone and shale. The second section is *Canetolo Complex*, another sedimentary rock section comprised of clay and limestone. The third is the *Monte Veri Complex*, which consists of argillite, limestone, clay, and sandstone – all sedimentary rock types. The *Val di Vara Supergroup* is the fourth section. This consists of metamorphic rocks and includes serpentine rock – a rock used in many churches in Liguria and nearby Tuscany. Because there are so many sedimentary rock sections in Cinque Terre, large rocks in the region are often described as having layers, including wave shapes and various dipping angles, for example, lines at forty-five degrees that then switch to fifteen degrees.

Because rocks are created and move and fall over vast stretches of time, their formation outstrips most human and nonhuman lifespans. For example, mountains turn into the rocks that can be used for terraces through a process called “weathering.” This typically happens to rocks near the Earth’s surface. As the name implies, weather is one of the major causes of

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<sup>40</sup> These layers are reported in O’Neill and Ceresoli, “Rapporto Sui Forum Del Progetto Life P.R.O.S.I.T.”

weathering. The process of weathering is similar to erosion, but not all weathering is as slow as the word “erosion” might imply. For example, when water trickles into pores of rock, then freezes, the volume of the water increases, breaking the rock.<sup>41</sup> In addition to weather, plants and animals are also responsible for the breaking down of rock. In a similar fashion to water freezing, the roots of plants can grow into and around rock, while the pressure of the expanding root can then break the rock into smaller sections. Large animal feces and small burrowing animals’ acids can also chemically break down rock, leaving gaps in the stone for the elements to work their magic. Meanwhile, humans contribute to rock weathering through mining, construction, and agriculture. Consequently, the terrace stones seen in Cinque Terre today have been shaped by generations of humans and animals as well as the elements.

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As mentioned earlier, techno-scientific descriptions are just one way of accounting for the Cinque Terre landscape; social descriptions are equally significant. In addition to being the backbone of mountains, rocks are also the stuff of walls, houses, and ancient Roman roads. In their crushed form, they form the sand on beaches. Some rocks have lines, while others have colorful dots. Rocks can be rough, smooth, or punctured with holes. Despite their myriad forms and foundational nature, rocks tend to be described as inert objects. A physicist might describe them as composed mainly of silicon. A historian might see them as the hallmark of the Stone Age. A child might imagine a large rock as immovable. Such contemporary descriptions differ, however, from their historical counterparts. Jeffrey Cohen traces how rocks featured prominently in European medieval writing,<sup>42</sup> demonstrating in the process how medieval authors attributed agency to rocks. Cohen argues that attention to rocks, and the material world more generally, can demonstrate what he calls “rockly agency,”

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<sup>41</sup> This same water expansion technique was used by the ancient Romans to cut marble from nearby Cinque Terre in the famed Carrara mountains of modern Tuscany.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, *Stone*.

revealing a material soul<sup>43</sup> that “becomes with” other entities.<sup>44</sup> Before examining Cohen’s assertion in the context of Cinque Terre’s terraces, it is important to establish that he is not alone in his consideration of rocks, nor in his claim of “rockly agency.” Indeed, the assertion that rocks and other inert beings have lives is found under the rubric of multispecies studies in the environmental humanities.<sup>45</sup>

“Rockly agency,” for Cohen, is a manifestation of a rock’s force. Cohen describes rock’s force in terms of its “compositional and interruptive agencies,” which are “abstruse, dense (they do not surrender themselves to easy comprehension) and yet provocative, invitational.”<sup>46</sup> His synonymous use of force and agency indicates that “rockly agency” is aligned with existence and with having creative capacity.<sup>47</sup> This should not be mistaken for meaning that a rock “thinks.” Rather, it means that a rock exists in certain ways and has certain characteristics. The environmental philosopher Val Plumwood describes a rock’s agency in similar terms, as being akin to how human beings describe their own agency. As she writes, “We already have much of the vocabulary of natural agency: ‘That stone doesn’t want to come’, says the mason of one that is indeed a being thoroughly embedded in the context and mysterious history of its place, and which anyway says ‘no’ to our endeavors with its weight.”<sup>48</sup> Here, the rock’s force is pitted against that of humans. A rock acts like a rock, humans act like humans, and together they affect each other. For the environmental anthropologist Hugo Reinert, evidence of “rockly agency” can also be found in stories about rocks. Based on stories of rocks acting in self-defense in order to protect themselves from

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<sup>43</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, 164.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> For examples, see Reinert, “About a Stone;” Gillen, “Notes on Mineral Evolution;” Turner and Somerville, “Composting with Cullunghutti.”

<sup>46</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, 165.

<sup>47</sup> This conception of agency as creative capacity, while increasingly accepted in environmental anthropology and the environmental humanities, contrasts with how agency is often viewed in social science and humanities scholarship. For examples of definitions, see Brown and Westaway, “Agency, Capacity, and Resilience;” Bryant and Schofield, “Feminine Sexual Subjectivities.”

<sup>48</sup> Plumwood, *Feminism*, 136.

threats, Reinert argues that rocks “enter [into] relations and transact” and that these interactions are the stuff of “rockly agency.”<sup>49</sup> Although some of the wording used to describe the agency of rocks may seem stilted,<sup>50</sup> each scholar points to the fact that rocks have a social world that influences and is influenced by humans as well as by other entities.



*Fig. 53. Portovenere. Local rocks, including white marble, in the thirteenth century church.  
Photograph by author.*

Returning now to Cohen’s argument about “rockly agency,” he writes that “stones are rich in worlds not ours, while we are poor in their duration. We therefore have a terrible problem communicating with each other.”<sup>51</sup> By Cohen’s account, humans cannot fully communicate with, or even comprehend, rocks because we operate on different time scales. This difficulty in understanding rocks is not limited to those without geological training. A still-cited geology paper from the mid 1900s argues that “rock record is difficult to unravel, it is locally incomplete, its thickness bears little quantitative relation to time, much of it is

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<sup>49</sup> Reinert, “About a Stone,” 104.

<sup>50</sup> For scholarship on the inadequacy of nomenclature that challenges human dominion, see Crist, “On the Poverty.”

<sup>51</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, 249.

concealed from view, it lies in rocks of varying types from place to place, it has been frequently confused by erosion and by alterations which have occurred subsequent to genesis.”<sup>52</sup> In a contrasting, more poetic, argument, the Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli asserts that rocks are like kisses because everything from kisses to rocks are a chain of events over various time scales.<sup>53</sup> Despite the confusion that rocks inspire, one way to understand the agency and interactions of rocks, as Reinert suggests above, is to investigate their stories, one of which I will recount below.

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In Vernazza, one such story is about a monster that lives in the rocky caves along the coastline. Her name is Mamoonia. She lures disobedient children into her lair and eats them. Meanwhile, the same disastrous fate lies in store for those who seek her out. I am unsure of the story’s provenance, but after investigating some of Cinque Terre’s coastal caves by kayak, I can well imagine how such a story might come into being. The caves along the coast tend to be narrow and filled with water. The waves hitting the rocks can seem innocuous, but given the undertow and swirl of the current they can be deadly. As anyone who has ever been trapped between rocks and waves might attest, it is not the waves to fear but the rocks. The waves will knock you down, but it is the rocks that will knock you out. Historically, the rocky Cinque Terre coastline with its narrow caves and steep cliffs did not shelter villagers from invading pirates or other dangers; safety lay above, in the mountains.<sup>54</sup> Stories like that of the Mamoonia monster may serve as a local memory in Cinque Terre that the coastal caves are unwelcoming, and that they are dangerous places to hide because the rocks “hurt” those who dare to enter the jagged waterline. Similarly, Margherita and her father’s aforementioned argument about what the rocks “want” is the product of a lifetime of interacting with rocks

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<sup>52</sup> Hedberg, “Earth History,” 99.

<sup>53</sup> Rovelli, *The Order of Time*.

<sup>54</sup> For a history of Vernazza’s safe haven from invaders, see Allegri and Garbarino, *Vernazza*.

that has produced many stories of its own. Each has brought their own subjectivity to their interactions with rocks, and each has worked with different rocks that have in turn inspired different actions. It is therefore through the stories that are told about the rocks that their “rockly agency” becomes evident.

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In this part, I have established the hybrid, multispecies nature of Cinque Terre’s landscape composed here of drystone vineyard terraces and rocks. Stones are players in this rugged landscape, acting in relation to the entities around them. In the terraces, the rocks interact with human hands to become walls. These same hands plant vineyards, which the rocks then protect. Together, the rocks, the terraces and the humans all form Cinque Terre. In these and other ways, the human and nonhuman exist and “become” together, though not necessarily in harmony, nor necessarily for all time.



## Part two: Grapevines

### Introducing: Grapevines

Vineyard terraces, Vernazza, Italy - July 2018

On the fifth day of building and filming, Margherita and I were joined by Bess, an American love migrant (see Chapter two), who lived close to, but not directly in, Cinque Terre. Margherita and I were already in the terraces by the time Bess arrived in town, but I scuttled down the mountain to meet her on the *sentiero azzurro* and then led her to our work site. Even though I hadn't given her explicit instructions on what to wear, she was wearing suitably sturdy closed-toe shoes, an old t-shirt, and gardening gloves. After living in the region for years, she was acclimatized to the demands of the terraces.

On the way to the work site, I had taken a wrong turn in the labyrinth of walls, which forced us to backtrack. Luckily, Bess was a good sport and laughed off the extra steps. When we finally made it to the wall we were both winded, but there was no time to rest. I quickly introduced Bess to Margherita. Margherita doled out instructions and I turned on the camera.



Fig. 54. Vernazza. Rows of terraces grapevines. Photograph by author.

Bess was tasked with carrying dirt-filled buckets to the wall and then, when requested, with dumping the buckets on top of the newly laid rocks. During the previous days,

Margherita and I had been in a flow of work. I would pass her rocks and dirt. She would build. Now with a third person, the work was less physically intense. Before long, we began talking about mutual acquaintances and sharing local gossip.

During one lull in conversation, Bess asked Margherita, *“What’s the name of your organization, again?”*

*“Tu Quoque. It’s the last words that Julius Caesar said to his friends”*

*“It means ‘and you’ in Latin, right?”* I asked. *“Surely he didn’t actually say that!”*

*“Well, of course not. Caesar spoke Greek!”* Margherita countered. We all laughed.

*“So deep!”* Bess sarcastically chuckled. *“I love your humor and your symbolism.”* She unloaded a bucket of earth on Margherita’s freshly laid rocks while I found the next stones to be laid.

Margherita was becoming pensive, however, and she dropped the rock she was holding on top of the wall. *“We’re all at fault. That’s why I chose the name.”*

*“So you think we all caused what’s happening in the world. What about the corporations? Aren’t they more to blame for things than you or I,”* Bess asked.

*“But we allow the corporations! We’re all messed everything up. Look at climate change! Look at Trump!”* Margherita was clear in her own mind about who was accountable.

*“I don’t think I’m personally responsible for climate change or Trump,”* Bess retorted.

*“It doesn’t matter if Caesar actually said any of it. What matters is the blame. I blame everyone.”*

I watched them play verbal ping pong about social and political culpability as I laid out stones for Margherita to build with.

*“More dirt!”* Margherita barked, just as I reached the wall with another stone.

As I handed her a bucket of dirt, I interjected, *“What can we honestly do then?”*

Margherita loved political jokes. She made one by saying, “*I build walls – good ones, not like those stupid American ones.*”

As Americans, Bess and I understood her joke immediately. Once again, as with her conversations with her father, Margherita was using her humor to indicate more serious subject matter. Indeed, anthropologists have long pointed out the subversive and identity affirming properties of humor. In short, humor is serious.<sup>55</sup>

“*In all seriousness,*” Margherita qualified her previous statement. “*I do think we’re all at fault - those of us who live here anyway. Even nature fights back. We should fight back too.*”

“*Fighting with boxing gloves?*” Bess asked.

“*If only!*” Margherita laughed. “*I mean that nature adapts and resists, so should we. Think about everything grapevines have been through for example.*” She had paused building again to speak.

At such moments in the film, it might seem that we were discussing the finer points of the wall’s construction, when in fact we were usually discussing politics, the landscape, and society at large.

“*What **have** the grapevines been through?*” Bess snorted. She was incredulous to any hint of anthropomorphism.

“*I don’t mean they have feelings,*” Margherita said. “*I mean they’ve been through stuff. Ah my English!*” Margherita had trouble finding words, in English and in Italian, to describe the lifeworlds of grapevines. She was much more comfortable speaking about rocks.

“*Humans tamed them, bugs ate them, the sun burned them, yet they’re still here. The bug that killed most of the grapevines...*” Margherita was trying to describe a small aphid

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<sup>55</sup> Parkhill et al., “Laughing It Off?”

from the Americas that killed approximately two-thirds of European grapevines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>56</sup>

“*Phylloxera?*” I ventured.

“*Yes! Such a similar word.*” Margherita was happy that the English word was close to the Italian *filossera*. “*So that bug killed the grapes and we didn’t grow grapes here for a long time and now grapes are popular again. People want to buy wine. The grapevines went through a rise and fall of cultivation. Now we call the grape growers heroes. That’s ‘stuff.’*”

“*OK. I see what you mean.*” Bess was coming around to Margherita’s description. “*So, how we use them has changed?*”

“*Yes, and their essence has changed too. Their bottoms are American.*” Margherita was describing the fact that most grapevines in Italy were grafted onto American rootstock. Like so many parts of the Italian landscape, grapevines were literally hybrids.

The morning continued with lively conversation about the terraces, the grapevines, and the small matter of our human responsibility to the Earth. By the end of the work session, Bess had agreed to return the following morning to help us further build the terrace wall.

When watching the film of this day, as of the previous days, there was substantial overlap between our conversations and our filmic rendition of drystone wall building from the grapevine’s perspective. As in previous days, the stones and the drystone wall tuned out to be the most immediate and important actors. Insofar as a viewer is able to grasp the grapevine’s perspective, she is likely to see that drystone walls form the effective scaffolding of grapevine life. This is because, since the film is from the point of view of a grapevine (the 360 camera was positioned *in* a grapevine), the viewer sees what a grapevine might see, and the film – however amateurishly made – supplies a “grapevine narrative.” This story, as will be seen, counters dominant narratives about Cinque Terre’s terraces, notably those revolving

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<sup>56</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*.

around the region's "heroic vintners." But before unpacking the story, another definitional exercise is warranted that gets to the heart of the grapevines themselves.

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Grapevines are composed of a root system, trunk, flower buds, tendrils and leaves, the visible parts of which climb as they grow. The root system anchors the plant in the ground, thereby obtaining nutrients for the plant's survival. The trunk is the "woody" part of the grapevine, extending from the roots to the tendrils and flower buds beyond. Depending on how it climbs, the trunk often branches into arms, from whence the fruit will eventually form. Flower buds are the sex organ of the grapevine. Each bud usually produces two or three clusters of grapes. Tendrils are opposite the leaves and are used to support the plant's growth by twining onto available support structures. Depending on the species, the leaves have various shapes and hues of verdant green. As with all plants, grape leaves are responsible for photosynthesis, which transforms solar energy into the carbohydrate "food" the grapevine needs in order to grow and produce grapes. The canopy describes the visible parts of the grapevine, above the soil. The canopy can take different forms, depending on how the vine is attached or "trained" on its support structure. Grapevines typically flower and produce fruit only on one-year-old woody growth. For domesticated grapevines, severe annual pruning of the trunk is how vintners ensure new fruit. Depending on the type of grapevine, spring pruning removes about eighty percent of the canopy. Consequently, by autumn most of the grapevine that has grown has been produced since spring pruning.

Most species of grapevine originate in the northern hemisphere, with cultivars typically being subdivided into European types, American types, Muscadine, and French hybrids. Within cultivar types, grapevines can be further divided into groups depending on how the fruit is used. Fruit uses typically fall into four categories: wine, juice, jam, or ready-to-eat. The color of the skin varies remarkably, including green, purple, red, white, and yellow. A

rootstock is the root, or underground part of a plant, from which a cutting or a bud from another plant is grafted. The rootstocks that are commonly used in grape cultivation are either tolerant of or actively resistant to pathogens and adverse soil conditions. However, despite the use of rootstocks to prevent many common problems, grapevines are still susceptible to animal and insect damage, drought or overwatering, and fungal diseases.



Fig. 55. *Cinque Terre*. White grapes await la vendemmia. Photograph by author.

Many accounts of viticulture tacitly assume that grapevines and winemaking go back to time immemorial, but this assumption does not square with either historical or present-day winemaking practices. According to the open access horticulture database *The Plant List*,<sup>57</sup> there are over four hundred fifty species of recorded grapevines, with seventy-six of these having scientifically documented heritage “legitimacy.”<sup>58</sup> What the database demonstrates is that since grapevine recording began over a century ago, the vines have evolved significantly. Since the mid 1900s, three white grape varietals, *Alborola* (“of the forest”), *Bosco* (“woods”), and Vermentino (“red”), have been used for the production of “authentic” Cinque Terre

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<sup>57</sup> The Plant List is a collaboration between the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom and Missouri Botanical Gardens, United States. A publically accessible working list of known plant species, it has been developed and disseminated as a direct response to the UNGlobal Strategy for Plant Conservation. It can be accessed here: <http://www.theplantlist.org/1.1/browse/A/Vitaceae/Vitis/>

<sup>58</sup> Legitimacy here is the standard viticulture term for genealogical tracking. Such standardization includes listing the species’ author name as well as the place and date of original publication of the species’ name.

(DOC) wine.<sup>59</sup> These varieties comprise the region's signature wine, which is mainly sold in Cinque Terre and La Spezia, although some nearby villages also sell it. The other grape varieties are also increasingly found in Cinque Terre, although they are still relatively rare. In addition to wine, Cinque Terre also produces a *passito* called *sciacchetra* that is made from the raisins of white grapes.

Owing to Cinque Terre's steep terrain, *la vendemmia* in the region demands arduous physical labor in a small window of time, often two weeks or less. Grapes are handpicked then carried in baskets to small, mechanized trolleys that transport them to pick-up locations above or below the terraced vineyards. Alternatively, they are carried out of the terraces on foot. Due in part to the tremendous human effort required for *la vendemmia* in Cinque Terre, a heroic aura surrounds the region's vintners. This manufactured heroism is central to promotional narratives about the region, with heroic resilience stories increasingly codified as markers of touristic value (see Chapter one). For example, one coffee table book about Cinque Terre wine states that "heroic winegrowing" is the heart and soul of the region.<sup>60</sup> Another example is a tourist-centered non-profit called *Grapes & Heroes*, which sells Cinque Terre touristic experiences such as cliff-side picnics and "meet-the-vintner" wine tastings in an effort to raise money for terrace restoration.<sup>61</sup> This discursive focus on grapevines and vintners stands in stark contrast to the visual narrative of the 360 film and its associated vignette (see above). In the film and vignette the landscape is made, literally and figuratively, of rock, whereas in much of the tourist-focused discourse, it is grapevines, wine, and vintners that form the dominant feature. How might we understand this disjunction between the visual narrative – and lived experience – of rocks and the discourse of grapevines?

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<sup>59</sup> DOC refers to the regional appellation of origin wine, entitled *Denominazione di Origine Controllata*, which is a designation governed by a quality control committee from the *Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali* (National agriculture, food and forestry ministry).

<sup>60</sup> Unger, *Cinque Terre*, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Found here: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/grapes-heroes--2#/>

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One reason for this “disconnect” consists of the human-centered narratives that privilege some species over others. As the anthropologists Marianne Elisabeth Lien, Heather Anne Swanson, and Gro Ween point out in their introduction to a recent volume on multispecies domestication, a focus on plant and animal domestication genealogies has been foundational to creating a “politics of human difference...historically inscribed in landscapes and seascapes.”<sup>62</sup> In this formulation, rocks literally “fall out” of domestication narratives because they are deemed to be ungovernable. Conversely, grapevines are largely considered to be tamable, while the product of their domestication, wine, is often thought to be “proof” of civilization.<sup>63</sup> Lien and her co-authors argue that while linear “rise-of-civilization” narratives have largely been discredited by scholars, such discourses continue to haunt the ways the world is seen and understood. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, wine, as a symbol of refinement and traditional civility, is certainly no exception to this. In the same volume, anthropologist Anna Tsing argues that hegemonic forms of domestication, particularly those driven by profit, make it difficult to imagine different forms of multispecies life.<sup>64</sup>

Following on from Tsing, the discursive focus on grapevines and wine in Cinque Terre is driven by a profit motive that brings together local viticulture and visiting tourists’ desire for wine. This seems to be recognized by Margherita in the vignette presented above, both in her interpretation of her own lived experience and in her perceived complicity with the regional tourism industry, with which her work is closely aligned. However, her personal attention to rocks rather than grapevines as a way to “fight back” indicates that she favors the materiality of rocks over the discourse of grapevines. This is not to say of course that she

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<sup>62</sup> Lien, Swanson, and Ween, “Naming the Beast,” 2.

<sup>63</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*; Lukacs, *Inventing Wine*.

<sup>64</sup> Tsing, “Nine Provocations,” 246.



discounts winemaking's importance to Cinque Terre, or that does not admire the grapevines' capacity to adapt to their surroundings. As the geographer Hannah Pitt suggests, "knowing" plants occurs by being shown them, by learning their names and histories, and, most importantly, by engaging with them first hand.<sup>65</sup> Pitt's view supports Margherita's consideration of grapevines as having "been through stuff," which in turn demonstrates her relationality to them. How might we reverse the flow here by investigating grapevines' relation *to her*?

Like that of rocks, the grapevine's creative capacity, its agency, operates according to its own rhythms and logics, in ways that are strikingly different to human agency.<sup>66</sup> The geographers Lesley Head, Jennifer Atchison and Alison Gates argue for scholarly attention to *plantiness*, which they define as "an assemblage of shared differences of plants from other beings."<sup>67</sup>



Fig. 56. Cinque Terre. An overhanging grapevine stalk. Photograph by author.

<sup>65</sup> Pitt, "On Showing Being Shown."

<sup>66</sup> For other examples of plant agency, see Jones and Cloke, *Tree Cultures*; Kohn, *How Forests Think*; Wright, "In the Shadow."

<sup>67</sup> Head, Atchison, and Gates, *Ingrained*, 27.

Similarly, according to the anthropologist Diana Gibson, “planty agency” is visible to humans who watch, work with, and live among plants. What matters for plants can also be seen in watching plant and human interactions. In Cinque Terre, my own life among plants consisted of the time I spent with the grapevines. These are typically grown along drystone terrace walls of the kind that Margherita and I that were busy rebuilding. Their roots cling to the salty topsoil for decades after planting, and their branches are pruned every spring, which causes them to fruit in the summer. Thereafter, their leaves and grape bunches are tenderly checked and rechecked for signs of rot or disease. The vines are strong in the sense that they often hold the earth back in the event of, say, flooding or rockslides, but the grapes they produce are still vulnerable to being smashed by clumsy or prying hands.

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Now that I have add a key additional multispecies character, the grapevines, I now move on to how resilience is enacted by the multispecies characters alongside their human caretakers. These are entangled stories. They are full of history and competing interests. They are stories from a human point of view, but featuring the nonhuman. In each vignette and ensuing historical and social contextualization, each character is present, although sometimes hidden in plain sight.

### Viticulture, phylloxera and wine magic

Vernazza, Cinque Terre: August 2018

*“Give me some of those stones - one by one,”* Margherita ordered.

*“Which ones do you want, flat ones or what?”* I ask.

*“The pretty ones are fine.”* She motioned toward a bunch of *schegge*. At this point, I understood what she meant as we had developed our own code. She thought certain rocks were prettier than others.

This particular terrace was shallow. There was maybe a meter (three feet) of space on the top of the terrace “step” between the wall that we were reconstructing and the ledge. Sharing the space was a row of grapevines and, to make movement even more complicated, the vines were trellised on overhanging crisscrossed wires. We had to walk stooped over; at some points we had to crawl. Between the wire and the wall was about thirty centimeters (one foot) of space. It was in this tiny space that Margherita was positioned, building. My job was to bring rocks and buckets of dirt to her. As we worked, we entered into a sort of flow state, immersed in the rhythmic moving of earth and stone to the sound of the waves below.

On the terrace below us, a man appeared. “*Buongiorno* (good morning),” we called. We waved.

He waved back. He said he had seen Margherita’s bright blue hair above the grapevines and was happy that we were fixing a neighboring wall.<sup>68</sup> He explained that he was checking grapevine rootstalks and grape bunches for mold or pests on his properties. He would spend most mornings walking the terraces to monitor his grapevines. Most of them were pruned in the winter, sprayed for phylloxera in the spring, and checked during the summer before *la vendemmia* in September. Just as repairing walls followed a circular pattern, so too did tending to grapevines.

After our chat, we returned to “walling,” Margherita’s term for building walls. Now that we were both awake, warmed by the sun, and in a construction groove, we finally began to talk.

We had just read *Il Selfie del Mondo*, an Italian book critiquing global mass tourism. Margherita had found it on an Amazon book list and wanted to read it to understand how academics theorized modern mass tourism. I decided to read it with her, both as a means to brush up on the literature and to improve my Italian language comprehension. To my mind,

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<sup>68</sup> In Cinque Terre, landowners own the wall behind their step platform.

the book was quite similar to John Urry's work on tourism, with a bit of pop-psychology thrown in. For Margherita, reading the book provided an outlet of comparison between the examples given in the book and her lived experiences of growing up and working in a famous tourist landscape.



Fig. 57. Vernazza. Walling on a narrow terrace. Photograph by author.

We began discussing a section of the book about a single, often stereotypical, photograph on social media serving as a representation of an entire country. At our first meeting, I had ventured the view that, for many people in the English-speaking world, Cinque Terre had come to stand in for Italy.<sup>69</sup> Today she used my comment from months ago as a springboard for further conversation.

*“I think you’re right about Cinque Terre,”* she said.

*“What do you mean?”*

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<sup>69</sup> At some point during my fieldwork, I realized that a Google image search for the word “Italy” returns with Cinque Terre in one of the first five images. I have asked friends around the world to repeat this experiment. Those who have their browsers set in English have had the same results.

*“About Cinque Terre representing Italy for tourist imaginations. Although I don’t think we Italians made the Cinque Terre representation, I do think we made Tuscany popular with tourists.”*<sup>70</sup>

*“Like with cinema?”* I was passing her stones as we spoke, careful to not damage the grapevines that surrounded me.

*“We constructed it!”* Margherita blurted, collecting her thoughts. *“Like with wine and marketing. One hundred years ago, no one drank Italian wine and now Tuscan wine competes with the south of France as the best of the best. Some people wanted to make Italian wine famous with the DOC and now it is famous.”*

It was difficult not to speak in generalizations when discussing complex issues on the fly. Margherita was referring to the standardization processes, like the *Denominazione di Origine Controllata* or DOC, through which Italian wine became well-known (see below).

I had stood up too quickly as she was talking and bumped my head on a post that held the trellis wire, pulling a bunch of grape leaves off of the tendrils as I steadied myself. Such fumbling was a common hazard in the tight spaces of the vineyard terraces. Margherita faced the wall so she didn’t notice my tumble.

*“With the wine, the landscape became famous,”* she continued. *“It’s the opposite here. Landscape fame came before our current wine fame. I don’t want famous wine. I want the rocks to be famous!”* She turned from the wall when she noticed that I had stopped handing her stones.

She quite literally looked down at me, *“You know you have some leaves in your hair?”*

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<sup>70</sup> This is assertion of Tuscany’s popularity is often country and language dependent. For example, local accounts suggest that the Lake Garda region in northern Italy is a German-speaker’s “must see” Italian destination. Here we were generally speaking about Anglophone tourism.

“So, what about the grapevines,” I asked, amused and proffering grapevine leaves that I had been clutching. “What do they want?” In retrospect, I was being facetious, as is often the case when something embarrassing happens.

“The grapevines just want to live, not be killed by some crazy American falling over.” Margherita laughed at me. “They know that they will be replaced when tastes change. Just ask their friends the mulberry tree. The rocks don’t care. They know they will outlast us all.”

Although Margherita was laughing at my antics, her earnest answer took me off guard. She used the word “friends” seriously to describe the relationship between grapevines and mulberry trees. I was reminded of the geographer Anna Krzywoszynska’s claim that farmers’ experiential knowledge can reveal new insights into environmental collaborations.<sup>71</sup> This was the first time I had heard about the mulberry trees, though I knew that other agricultural plants had once been widespread in the region. I later learned that mulberry trees used to be prevalent in Cinque Terre. They were used to feed silkworms whose silk threads were used in textile production. Saffron also had its heyday in Cinque Terre. The easternmost end of the National Park had once had acres of it.

Margherita continued: “The emphasis is now on grapevines when half of agriculture here used to be lemons and olives. Remember that Montale’s poems were about lemons,<sup>72</sup> not grapes.”

“I hadn’t thought of it that way,” I said, as I listened and nodded my head. I recalled one community meeting at the National Park Office in Manarola, where many attendees had openly expressed their frustration at the park’s emphasis on wine at the expense of other local products, such as lemons.

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<sup>71</sup> Krzywoszynska, “What Farmers Know.”

<sup>72</sup> Italian poet Eugenio Montale won the prize for literature in 1975. His poem entitled “I limoni” or the lemons is about Monterosso al Mare, where he spent summers as a child into his adulthood. To my mind, the poem is more about La Natura or Nature (intentionally written with a capital letter in the poem) and the natural world than lemons explicitly.

*“I do it myself in the shop,”* Margherita admitted. *“I emphasize what sells.”* Although she didn’t sell wine, Margherita’s shop sold adjacent items such as corkscrews and wine themed tchotchkes. She also sold lemon- and olive-themed items, but these weren’t as popular. Apart from postcards depicting the terraces, she didn’t sell terrace- or rock-related objects.

I had recommenced giving rocks to Margherita and she had recommenced building. I listened to her monologue.

*“I want to change that, you know, by focusing on rocks. We have to admit that right now people don’t come for the terraces.”*

*“Who is ‘the we?’”* I asked.

*“The people that live here, me, you - all of us.”* Margherita paused to wipe sweat from her brow. When she turned to face me, she had a dark smear of dirt across her forehead. Her interest in terraces and rocks was quite often literally marked on her person, in traces of earth, rocks and grapevines that often found their way on to her. *“We have to understand what is happening now, and what has happened, in order to hope to change tastes. People come for an ‘Italian experience’ and wine is part of that. Wine is in.”*

Wine was indeed “in.” One locally produced Cinque Terre book marketed to tourists had recently stated - somewhat misleadingly - that “winemaking runs like a golden thread through the history of the Cinque Terre [and] the cultivation of grapes has made the Cinque Terre what it is now – a unique landscape between sky and sea, created and kept intact by the work of human hands.”<sup>73</sup> While a golden thread of wine provides a beautiful turn of phrase, as Margherita pointed out “it was all constructed” (as in fabricated or invented). Constructed or not, wine was an integral part of my time in Cinque Terre. It was part of nearly every lunch and dinner I attended. I had come upon countless tourists in search of “authentic” and

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<sup>73</sup> Unger, *Cinque Terre*, 8.

“traditional” wine. On the other hand, I had never met a tourist looking for “traditional” terraces. In fact, some tourists expressed surprise that there *were* terraces,<sup>74</sup> though no one seemed surprised that there was wine. Among residents and workers, nearly everyone I knew had a friend or relative who supplied them with *vino da tavola* (table wine). As with tourists seeking authentic Cinque Terre wine, locals also discussed *vino da tavola* in terms of authenticity and tradition. In practice, local *vino da tavola* hardly seemed traditional because it was often bottled in giant plastic jugs containing liters of wine. Although it was “local,” it wasn’t always tasty, and some of it wasn’t even *from* Cinque Terre. The wine I drank most often wasn’t local at all. There were exceptions of course, but in general I drank cheap Tuscan or Sicilian wine that I bought from the grocery store: a much more economical choice at three euros per bottle, compared to thirteen euros for a bottle of Cinque Terre wine. Many residents had similar habits. In addition to consuming regional *vino da tavola*, most locals either made their own small-batch Cinque Terre wine or bought other wines at the grocery store or specialty wine shops. While wine was an integral part of daily life for both locals and visitors, there seemed to be a gap between the product and its terrace origins.

As Margherita indicated with her remark on Tuscan wine, Italian wine in general and Tuscan wine in particular now enjoy an international reputation for quality. There has been significant scholarship on Tuscan grapevines and wine, and on their joint importance in constructing a tourist imagination of an Italian “rural idyll” landscape.<sup>75</sup> The historian Dario Gaggio notes that: “Tuscany’s landscape was not simply preserved but constructed through conflicts, negotiations, and compromises.”<sup>76</sup> Gaggio gives the telling example of a now-famous countryside villa that, instead of having “simple” country roots, was the product of

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<sup>74</sup> Surprise from tourists that Cinque Terre is a terraced landscape is a well-noted phenomenon among locals.

<sup>75</sup> For examples, see: Agnew, *Places Politics Modern Italy*; Gaggio, *The Shaping of Tuscany*. For the rural idyll in particular, see: Figueiredo and Raschi, “Un’ Immensa Campagna Avvolta;” Hom, *The Beautiful Country*; Wilbur, “Back-to-the-House?”

<sup>76</sup> Gaggio, *The Shaping of Tuscany*, 282.



fascism. (The site had been a farm that sheltered a communist uprising before it was destroyed and repurposed as a nationalist property.) Neighboring Liguria shares several similar stories, particularly about the Italian nationalist reinvention era of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>77</sup> During this time, the landscape and its harvest were narratively transformed so as to celebrate a national sense of identity, a national sense of place that continues to this day.<sup>78</sup> As Margherita was effectively suggesting, a specific narrative of wine and wine heritage has been cultivated in Cinque Terre - one that renders other entities, such as rocks, mulberry trees, or even the faces attached to the “work of human hands” largely invisible. Notwithstanding, the history of how wine became prominent in Cinque Terre, and in Italy more generally, offers a resilience narrative organized around the figure of the grapevine. Some broad historical background is needed to support this, which I will now supply.

#### A brief history of viticulture in Italy and Cinque Terre

Humans have been cultivating grapevines for consumption, particularly for wine, since time immemorial. As historian Paul Lukacs points out, for many ancient cultures wine was a magical liquid which, with appropriate fermentation and due supplication to the divine, would eventually transform into either an intoxicating liquid or (if the gods were unfavorable) a sour vinegar.<sup>79</sup> Fermentation is a natural process, yet because oxygen exposure leads to rapid bacteria growth and grape skins are small vessels for fermenting grape juice, fermented grapes spoil rapidly. Consequently, wine as the drinkable liquid result of grape fermentation needed (and still needs) careful human intervention. Grapes do not easily ferment alone, so there must have been a great deal of trial and error among ancient

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<sup>77</sup> For a thorough environmental history of how the narrativized landscape “made” modern Italy, see Armiero, *A Rugged Nation*.

<sup>78</sup> For examples on the landscape history of Italy, see Hom, *The Beautiful Country: Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy*. Agnew, *Places and Politics in Modern Italy*. Kolb, *Azure Spell of Liguria*. For work on the cultural imagination of Italy, see Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*.

<sup>79</sup> Lukacs, *Inventing Wine*. It wasn’t until the late 1800s that the process of fermentation was understood. Before then, there were many different hypotheses as to how fermentation worked, including the mystical.

cultivators. In this and numerous other ways, grapevines and humans have been linked for millennia, although human intervention in ancient times probably looked, and the products of it tasted, very different than they do today.

Although relatively little is known about the origin of wine *per se*, the origin of wine in Italy is relatively well documented. The historian Valentina Iacononi dates the initiation of viticulture in Cinque Terre to the Roman occupation of the Luni valley (present day Magra River valley between Liguria and Tuscany).<sup>80</sup> The technique of drying grapes, either on the vine or on mats, started in Italy around this time. The finished product was a sweet, thick wine: the precursor of modern sweet wines that are still made from dried grapes (raisins). In Cinque Terre, a sweet wine called *sciacchetra* is produced in small batches, either for sale or for private use. Because the grapes need to be of the juiciest variety, *sciacchetra* is typically only made from exceptional harvests. Because of the exacting harvest conditions and long fermentation process, the yield is small. The cost of a four hundred milliliter bottle of Cinque Terre *sciacchetra* starts at around sixty euros.

Thick wine took on religious symbolism with the spread of the early Christian Church because its messiah, Jesus Christ, compared wine to his own blood. However, with the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, wine practices and wine changed. Vineyards spread with the Christian Church, especially with the establishment of monasteries devoted to grape cultivation. By the mid-medieval period, wine was a central part of everyday life because of its ubiquity, which was largely due to the Church, and perhaps most importantly, because drinking wine was safer than drinking water. It was during the medieval period that the terraces of Cinque Terre<sup>81</sup> began to be constructed for grapevines (instead of other crops) and, consequently, for wine production. It was also around this time that terracing in Italy

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<sup>80</sup> Iacononi, "Popolazione e paesaggio."

<sup>81</sup> Elements of the history of Cinque Terre were taken from: Allegri and Garbarino, *Vernazza*; Agnoletti, "Italian Historical Rural Landscapes;" Agnoletti, "Rural Landscape Nature Conservation;" Contessa, "Terraced Landscapes in Italy;" Iacononi, "Popolazione e paesaggio;" Moreno, "Liguria."

became widespread, in large part thanks to the Benedictine monasteries that administered the land and public works, including deforestation for agricultural purposes and terracing improvements. Subsistence farming practices in this period included the cultivation of olives, wheat, and citrus alongside grapevines. Instead of growing on stakes or other artificial methods, Italian grapevines during this period snaked up trees or trailed along the ground, depending on where they were planted. Grapevines were planted close together, in order to maximize space and intermix varieties. Consequently, Cinque Terre's terraces must have looked vastly different than their current appearance.

Although vineyards had already become widespread in Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, accounts from the medieval period suggest that wine tended to be sour as overall grapevine quality decreased after the Roman era. The name for this sour drink was *Latin wine* because of its association with the Romans. As an alternative to Latin wine, Genoese and Venetian merchants marketed dried-grape wines, like sweet wine, to the elites of the Italian city states and beyond. The result of their marketing was the centuries-long popularity of dried-grape wines. In Liguria, the dried-grape wine at the time was called *vernaccia* (a contrasting name to today's *sciachetrà*). In the 1440s, Jacopo Bracelli, historian of the Genoese Republic, described Cinque Terre's terraces as so steep that "even birds barely manage to fly across them;" covered with thin, ivy-like grapevines, these precipitous slopes were already producing wine that was famous across Europe.<sup>82</sup> As the Renaissance period began, European regions beyond modern-day Italy began developing new ways of producing wine, including new techniques for grapevine husbandry. The result was a significantly better tasting wine, which broadly became known as "fine wine." Like the dried-grape wines, fine wine was only affordable to the moneyed few. It was not until the Industrial period of the 1800s that

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<sup>82</sup> As quoted in Contessa, "Terraced Landscapes in Italy," 27.

grapevines and wine, in Italy and beyond, would change significantly. Probably the most significant catalyst was a tiny American louse.

### Phylloxera

American grapevines were documented along with the first European conquests. Over time, American grapes were deemed to be stronger and more productive. During the Industrial period, on both sides of the Atlantic grapevine-growing techniques innovated quickly, with vintners becoming more selective about grape varieties and the method of their growth. The resulting wine increased in quality and taste, while advances were also made on preservation techniques. With the rise of faster transportation across the Atlantic, American grapevines made their first journeys to Europe. Along for the ride on these grapevines were various American parasites and fungi.



*Fig. 58 Riomaggiore. Grapes drying on wire racks. Photograph by author.*

Once introduced, the acclimatization of these multispecies hitchhikers was a huge success - at least for them. One insect in particular adapted exceedingly well to its new environment: phylloxera. Phylloxera was first observed in Europe during the mid-1860s in French vineyards, where the grapevines and the fruit seemed to be rotting without cause. Every year thereafter, the strange rot increased its radius but the cause continued to be

unknown. Eventually, most of the vineyards of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and today's Spain, Italy, and Portugal were affected, albeit at a much slower pace than in France. Although phylloxera was observed in the rotting vineyards, most scientists refused to believe that an insect could cause such widespread plant death. This was largely because phylloxera did not conform to the then standard model of disease progression.<sup>83</sup> The scientific debate between phylloxera believers and doubters raged for over a decade, taking on almost religious overtures with the embedded conviction on both sides. Meanwhile, phylloxera made itself at home in more than half of the vineyards in France.

The newly formed Italian Kingdom<sup>84</sup> attempted to profit from France's rotting viticulture by encouraging grapevine planting and cultivation as part of a national agricultural initiative. In a twenty-year period, Italy effectively doubled its grape production.<sup>85</sup> By the 1880s, a significant portion of the Italian population was making a living in relation to vine growing, winemaking, and wine trading. Eventually, however, Italian vineyards also became home to phylloxera. After its arrival in Italy, vineyards were burned to prevent the spread of phylloxera, which in turn prompted peasant riots in protest.<sup>86</sup> Liguria's terraced viticulture was not spared. Farmers turned to alternative crops, such as olives, lemons, or saffron, and adapted the drystone terraces to suit the new crops.

The answer to phylloxera lay not in obtaining a "diagnosis" from squabbling scientists, but in grafting European grapevines to American grapevine rootstocks. As the aphid originated in the Americas, the American grapevine rhizome had developed immunity to it; even if infected, American rootstalks did not rot. Even today, many European grapevines are still grown on American rootstalks because phylloxera continues to be happily living well in

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<sup>83</sup> Gale, "Saving the Vine."

<sup>84</sup> Italy as a single country did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century consolidation of states known as the Risorgimento or Italian unification. Italy became a Republic in 1946.

<sup>85</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*.

<sup>86</sup> "Riots in Italy."

Europe, Cinque Terre included. Out of the one hundred hectares of active vineyards in Cinque Terre today, only a few vines claim Italian roots.<sup>87</sup> The rest are Italian-American hybrids. This grafting is a material manifestation of literary scholar Stephen Abblitt's argument that iterative multispecies "becomings with" (pace Haraway) are similar to grafting.<sup>88</sup> Here grafting is between two taxonomically similar species, accomplished by humans and sparked by aphids, where all three (phylloxera, grapevines, and humans) "became with" each other, with devastating effects.

These effects fundamentally changed the entirety of Europe's wine-growing regions, including Italy. The Cinque Terre region was no exception. Although most analysis of the effects of phylloxera focuses on its devastation to wine production specifically and the economy more generally, it is important to acknowledge that such large-scale agricultural change undoubtedly had complex and multifaceted repercussions, for plants, animals and people alike.<sup>89</sup> The contact zones between human and nonhuman would have been in flux.

One result was that European grapevines were now considered suspect. Of the wines available, fraud was rife and many "wines" did not contain grapes. Consumer confidence in Italian wines, and in European wines more generally, fell sharply. By the end of the Second World War, grapevine cultivation in many parts of Italy was effectively null and void, and between landscape devastation and the lack of skilled vintners due to the causalities of the war and emigration, many vineyards were abandoned. To make matters worse, in the post-war period wine fell out of favor drastically due to increases in sanitation and refrigeration.<sup>90</sup> Substituting wine for water was no longer necessary. If Italian wine was known at all, it was known for being of poor quality and bad taste. Only the poor continued to drink it regularly.

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<sup>87</sup> Terranova, "Il Paesaggio Costiero Terrazzato."

<sup>88</sup> Abblitt, "Composite Lives."

<sup>89</sup> Lidström et al., "Invasive Narratives" argue that there should be more attention to invasive narratives because of the complex repercussions they entail that are largely absent from stories about how science conquered (or not) an invasive species.

<sup>90</sup> Lukacs, *Inventing Wine*.

Reflections on post-war resilience do not typically conjure images of wine or vineyard terraces. However, the reintroduction of Italian wine as a commodity can be viewed precisely in this way – as a means to revitalize the land and its people. Some food anthropologists have called this revitalization and the narrative swirl that propelled it, “wine magic.”<sup>91</sup>

### Wine magic

The magic began in France. In an effort to combat wine fraud, which was rife at the time due to the lack of grapes, the pre-war French government set standards for French wine production. The same government also started designating appellation systems based on geolocation. A well-known example of this system is the French region of Bordeaux, with its Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot wines. These standardization initiatives led to an interest in collocating the notion of place (*terroir*) with notions of national French identity and belonging.<sup>92</sup> Wine historian Kolleen Guy explains how *terroir* narratives came to describe distinctive yet “holistic” environmental properties as well as the “soul” of both the vintner and France itself as the “guardian of supreme spiritual values.” Neither of these could be reproduced elsewhere – a formidable attribute for a commodity.<sup>93</sup> *Terroir* narratives therefore helped to create a timeless, authentic “French-ness,” which transformed rural wines and local foodstuffs into material embodiments of place.

With time and marketing, the concept of *terroir* became increasingly codified in the wine world as a signifier of quality and refinement. As the anthropologist Amy Trubek has argued, while the natural environment influences appearance and flavor, it is culture that determines the taste of place.<sup>94</sup> Subjective determination separates the good from the bad, the worthy from the unworthy; a wine might thus be associated with the quality of the place

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<sup>91</sup> Picard, Moreira, and Loloum, “Wine Magic.”

<sup>92</sup> Demossier, “Beyond Terroir;” Demossier, *Wine Drinking Culture*. Also, see Guy, *When Champagne Became French*.

<sup>93</sup> Guy, *When Champagne Became French*.

<sup>94</sup> Trubek, *The Taste of Place*.

where it originates rather than with the taste of the wine itself. The anthropologists David Picard *et al.* argue that this social construction of wine is “magical” in that “it perpetuates its presumed qualities and powers in the material culture of wine drunk thousands of kilometers from the source.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, despite the lack of chemical or other telltale differences between French and other wines, the narrative emerged of a mysterious place (aka France) that gave certain wines cachet as superior markers of civility. To drink this wine was to be cultured and sophisticated, embodying the height of modern civilization while also giving credence to heritage and tradition. This “magic” soon generated considerable economic, social, and cultural returns. Other countries took note and rapidly followed France’s lead, including Italy.

As the historian of labor Marta Macedo has demonstrated, wine regulation allowed people in southern Europe to adapt land, and narratives about land, in ways that facilitated an increase in both agricultural production and tourism.<sup>96</sup> As a direct response to France’s success, quality control and regulation in Italy began in the 1960s.<sup>97</sup> Today the *Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali* (Ministry for Agriculture, Food, and Forestry) oversees Italian wine accreditation. Day-to-day management proceeds through semi-public/private accreditation authorities that grant specific export and labelling permissions. Permission is based on adhering to regional appellations of origin, called *Denominazione di Origine Controllata* (Authority for Origin Control) or DOC. As in France, the authorities strive to conform to established local wine traditions that, in ensuing years, have become codified into law. Also as in France, many of the supposed “local wine traditions” may only date to the period before quality control commenced. For example, one of the grapes in the Cinque Terre DOC wine was only introduced in the early twentieth century. However, in order for the wine to be an official Cinque Terre DOC wine, this grape must be present in a

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<sup>95</sup> Picard, Moreira, and Loloum, “Wine Magic.”

<sup>96</sup> Macedo, “Port Wine Landscape.”

<sup>97</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*.



specified quantity. The grape in question has been codified as having a long traditional history, when in actuality the tradition is less than one hundred years old. As we will see in the last section of this chapter, such invented traditions are at the heart of many heritage discourses that serve to celebrate food and mark the resilience of people and place.<sup>98</sup>

The Italian accreditation authorities test adherence in laboratories that comply with European Union (EU) law on quality policy with protected geographical designations of origin (PDO) or protected geographical indication (PGI) labels. Because the Italian and EU designations are administered in parallel, typically if a wine is PDO or PGI, it is also DOC. While there are wines that follow similar winemaking practices, unless the maker follows a specific, often exclusionary, protocol, then the wine cannot have the same name as the controlled wine. Specific types of Italian regional appellations typically fall into the following four categories:

- ***Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG)***: This label is a type of DOC that indicates that the vintner followed strict regulations, based on historic wine making practices, to make the wine.<sup>99</sup>
- ***Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC)***: This appellation scheme is similar to the DOCG and it is generally known by the DOC acronym.<sup>100</sup> The Cinque Terre DOC and the Cinque Terre Sciacchetrà DOC are included under this appellation.
- ***Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT)***: This label was created in the 1990s to accommodate growers outside the DOC or DOCG regulations but who were

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<sup>98</sup> See Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, for work on heritage and the invention of tradition.

<sup>99</sup> Typical rules governing the production of DOCG wines are based on the permitted grape varieties, yield limits, grape ripeness, winemaking procedures and barrel/bottle maturation. There are approximately seventy Italian wines that qualify for this status, including the more internationally renowned Chianti from Tuscany and Asti in Piedmont. No wines from Liguria are DOCG.

<sup>100</sup> There are over three hundred Italian wines that qualify for this status. Like the DOCG, the rules governing quality and authenticity are strict and are controlled by the Ministry; however, the rules are more forgiving than those of the DOCG. For example, in the viticulture zone permitted grape varieties and/or wine style might have greater breadth than that of the DOCG label.

producing wines based on their own regional specificity.<sup>101</sup> Many argue that this designation was created with Tuscan wines in mind in order to capitalize on their success.<sup>102</sup>

- ***Vino da Tavola***: This label is a catch-all for everything that is not included in the designations mentioned above. It is considered the “lowest” classification of wine.

The wine historian Paul Lukacs argues that the Italian wine appellations were largely political and at first did not mean much to the vintner or the consumer.<sup>103</sup> The food anthropologist Rachel Black argues along the same lines that the regulations were more a reflection of large commercial interests than the specific needs of most Italian vintners.<sup>104</sup> Regardless, such large-scale classifications codified what Amy Trubek calls “taste of place,” an interpretation intended to invoke a symbiotic relationship between place and flavor.<sup>105</sup> Establishing that there were tiers of wine quality gave Italian wine legitimacy, which over time translated into a marker of distinction.<sup>106</sup> Such foodways have long been recognized by scholars to be embedded in wider socio-economics systems,<sup>107</sup> with substantial impact on tourism promotion.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> When the Italian DOC appellation system was first introduced in the 1960s, it was narrow in scope, mainly because the designations were based on status quo rather than best practice or innovation. Many Italian wine producers found the new rules too restrictive. Some producers, notably in Tuscany, continued making wine as they desired. Many of these “rebel” winemakers became successful in producing high quality wines. The Tuscan rebel wines in particular enjoyed enormous financial success despite not having the a DOCG or DOC classification; these wines became known as “Super Tuscans.” As the designation name suggests, classification focuses on the region of origin, rather than grape varieties or wine styles. The IGT category is used only in Italy. At a European Union-wide level, it corresponds to IGP (*Indication Géographique Protégée/Indicazione Geografica Protetta*).

<sup>102</sup> Filiputti, *Modern History Italian Wine*; Lukacs, *Inventing Wine*.

<sup>103</sup> Lukacs, *Inventing Wine*, Ch 7.

<sup>104</sup> Black, “Vino Naturale.”

<sup>105</sup> Trubek, *The Taste of Place*.

<sup>106</sup> See Black, Rachel E., *Porta Palazzo*; Demossier, *Wine Drinking Culture*; Guy, *When Champagne Became French*, for additional histories on the modern legitimation of food and wine.

<sup>107</sup> Giovine and Brulotte, “Food and Foodways.”

<sup>108</sup> Giovine, “The Everyday as Extraordinary.”



*Fig. 59. Monterosso al Mare. A wine store marketing sciacchetrà. Photograph by author.*

Seen through the lens of enacting resilience, the story of how European wine went from a lowly, distrusted product to a marker of refinement and national identity is a remarkable example of “bouncing back” resilience. European wine as a product faced obscurity, but due to protectionism and marketing it was able to become the force it is today. The history of wine transformation in the early twentieth century has had tangible effects in Cinque Terre, and in other wine-producing regions of Italy. Not only is Italian wine now considered to be good, but its negative historical associations have also been erased. That wine is “in” in Cinque Terre’s tourism industry can be read as a direct result of this history. Returning to Margherita’s comment at the beginning of the section that “it’s all constructed,” we can now see how her statement is rooted in historical trajectories that continue to have tangible effects on the ground. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this foodway in its full complexity, Margherita’s commentary demonstrates how the invention of wine heritage has seeped into narratives of Cinque Terre’s authenticity and “place-ness” (see also Chapter one).

Furthermore, the construction of wine speaks to the “ongoing practices of domestication” in which humans “relate, transform, and are themselves shaped by their other-

than-human surroundings.”<sup>109</sup> For example, the 2017 Cinque Terre harvest took place about a month earlier than normal due to adverse climatic conditions. Vintners with grapes intended for DOC designation consequently had to undergo a lengthy permission process from the *Ministero* to allow for an early harvest and, subsequently, an early fermentation of grapes.<sup>110</sup> Similar bureaucratic hurdles have frustrated many over the years. Due to rigid guidelines and lengthy processing times, many vintners in Cinque Terre, and Italy more generally, are turning away from the DOC designation process. This suggests that while the DOC has given Italian wine legitimacy over the years, it has also created roadblocks, sometimes to the extent that it is no longer considered useful. Critics argue that the designation only profits a select few at the expense of the many.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from wine aficionados, the majority of tourists and locals I met were not concerned about the precise appellation of the wine. Instead, drinking Cinque Terre wine in a Cinque Terre restaurant or wine store was enough to fabricate a sense of “staged authenticity” that supported the feeling of a genuine experience.<sup>112</sup> Many tourism researchers suggest that it is useful to consider tourism in terms of ritual: as being driven by narratives that animate myths about authenticity and recreate an idealized social order.<sup>113</sup> Wine ritual (and the promotion of “wine heroes” – see Chapter two) impresses upon the tourist the inherent value of Italian wine. The terraces and grapevines that produce the wine either function as a prop to the wine industry or are ignored entirely. As the landscape historians Claude Petit *et al.* note, “a lack of awareness, appreciation and knowledge” about terraced viticulture signals that there is a danger that terraced viticulture will disappear completely.<sup>114</sup> While Cinque Terre’s

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<sup>109</sup> Lien, Swanson, and Ween, “Naming the Beast,” 4.

<sup>110</sup> See Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali, Cinque Terre Sciaccheta modifica temporanea vendemmia. Part of Cinque Terre’s DOC designation mandates that fermentation cannot start before 1 Nov. An early harvest necessitates early fermentation because otherwise grapes would rot.

<sup>111</sup> Demossier, “Beyond Terroir.”

<sup>112</sup> MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity.”

<sup>113</sup> See MacCannell, *The Tourist*.

<sup>114</sup> Petit, Konold, and Höchtl, “Historic Terraced Vineyards,” 7.

terraces will not disappear any time soon – and while people like Margherita are working to prevent their disappearance – viticulture on the terraces could easily vanish in the long term. Given that the narrative of Italian wine is now cemented as truth in larger discourses and social imaginaries, the original foundation of the narrative – the re-cultivation of grapevines and the standardization of wine in particular – no longer serves its function. Now, it appears, the mastery of grapevines for wine production is often associated with claims of heritage that are in turn being used to generate profit. Cinque Terre, in turn, has become part of the heritage narrative that is sold to tourists and consumers; a narrative it indirectly had a hand in creating. When the narrative about wine or the translation of landscape changes, another revitalization will be needed.

While this is a story of wine, it is also a story of environmental change. The history of phylloxera in Europe is an example of anthropogenic environmental change through the unintentional introduction of an invasive species. That people and the land survived such sweeping environmental change is also a story that provides inspiration: one that might easily find its way into volumes about the power of modern science in struggles against environmental devastation.<sup>115</sup> However, absent in much of this history are the vineyard terraces and other landscapes as well as the vintners, wine businesses, policy makers and consumers that facilitated making European wine as it is today. At the Cinque Terre community level, focus on the golden thread of wine and heroic vintners comes at the expense of other actors involved in creating Cinque Terre wine, including phylloxera.

Returning again to Margherita's statement about the grapevines, "*They know that they will be replaced when tastes change,*" we can say that tastes have indeed changed, but they are now more focused on the fruit of the grapevine than on the nature of the grapevine itself.

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<sup>115</sup> There are significant parallels between the techno-scientific "savior discourse" of fighting phylloxera in the late 1800s and fighting climate change today. This is an avenue that merits further research.

Grapevines in Cinque Terre, and Italy more broadly, now exist largely as hybrids. They have American roots and European trunks. Their continued existence, their resilience, has demanded hybridity. To borrow the words of environmental humanities scholar Thom van Dooren, writing about crows with changing crow features: “Far from any singular telos, individuals and species are engaged in multiple forms of becoming, all of them reiterative and ongoing, all of them co-constitutive and collaborative (even if unequal).”<sup>116</sup> The grapevines and the terraces upon which they live are in a perpetual state of collaboration between species but also between the natural world and the cultural world. It is upon this collaboration that resilience is able to be enacted in Cinque Terre. Without such collaboration, the outcomes of past resilience would look much different in the present. It is the present to which we next turn.

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In the final part, we will see how the past grapevine-centered resilience manifests in present-day Cinque Terre. Here we see the tension between the fact that resilience through wine worked in the past and the probability that resilience through wine might not work in the future. We also see knowledge that the historical key to past and potentially future resilience is rocks.

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<sup>116</sup> van Dooren, “Authentic Crows.”

## Part three: The human caretakers

### Margherita & Gaspare

Vineyard terraces, Vernazza, Italy - July 2018

Our last day of building and filming was a short one. Bess had joined us again, so the time went quickly. The fruit of our collective labor was finally coming together: a repaired section supporting the still-standing old wall. We hoped it would last for at least a few generations, but even if Margherita had read the rocks correctly and placed them well, then the wall would still only likely stand for some decades. We spent most of the time placing smaller rocks on top of the wall and packing them with dirt. Margherita, stone enthusiast that she was, was giving rock histories as we worked. Earth was less precious than stone, so we piled it on top of the wall in abundance without much attention. Our hope was that the stones and dirt would quickly become compacted. “Quickly” was a relative term, though, as the compacting process would happen in geological rather than human time. Margherita thought that by next spring the wall would have shifted into its permanent place, but as she cautioned, “*stones have a mind of their own.*” The stones would have to do their own job of settling: she couldn’t do it for them. By next summer, the grapevines above the wall *should* have spread their leaves above the ledge and produced fruit, something that hadn’t happened this year because the vintner hadn’t been able to access the vines. The terraces were indeed interconnected in myriad ways.



Fig. 60. Vernazza. Margherita lifting a “pretty” stone. Photograph by author.

As we put the finishing touches to the wall, Margherita’s father arrived to check up on us. We wanted to include everyone who had worked on the wall in the film’s final scene, so we decided to finish filming while he was there in the shot. The three of us leaned against the wall and waved to the camera. Margherita’s father waved from the ledge above us. As soon as we had finished, a young vintner named Gaspare stopped by to chat. One of the elderly landowners in the area above us, taking her morning constitutional, had just cornered him on the terraces and demanded to know why he wasn’t rebuilding more walls. Although he had explained to her that building walls takes time and that he had other jobs to pay his bills, she had berated him for being lazy. He was fuming, and having spotted us from above, he now wanted to vent to Margherita. Her stone-centered advocacy often meant that people went to her with terrace-related complaints. Bess and I both introduced ourselves to Gaspare. It turned out that Bess had worked *la vendemmia* with him a few years earlier. They exchanged pleasantries before Gaspare noticed the weird-looking camera stuck to a grapevine. After considering our explanations for a moment, he declared that: “*Cinque Terre can be la merda* (shit). *Glad you’re representing the terraces as they are.*”

The young vintner apologized for his strong language, but insisted that he was speaking the truth. Such vitriolic discontent, and the colorful language used to describe it, was not



uncommon in Cinque Terre. Agreement on what should be done, as well as when and how, was a contentious topic. As in many places, the only agreement was that something *should* be done. Focusing on tourism or on grapevines and wine was often the “something” that locals did, whereas terraces, though essential for the landscape, received significantly less action but, as evidenced by the disgruntled old lady, significantly more ire.

Margherita was sympathetic to Gaspare’s concerns. “*Yeah,*” she confirmed, “*the locals think only about earning money while spending as little as they possibly can. Hanno le manine corte,*” she retorted (They have little hands).

Margherita used a comic gesture, often used in reference to Ligurians, which consists of holding one’s arms to the side of the body with elbows up beyond the back, so that the gesticulator’s arms look like the foreshortened talons of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. The gesture indicates that a person’s arms are too short to reach into their pockets for money. The use of this stereotype is reflective of a perceived material and moral reality that separates the generous (us) from the stingy (them).<sup>117</sup>

Our little group proceeded to discuss the tensions between earning money to live and caring for the terraces. Bess, Margherita, and Gaspare swapped stories about instances where they had provided free manual labor that someone else had profited from. While wall builders were reimbursed for their labor from the National Park and other bureaucratic entities, the process was complicated and the payment was often retrospective.

“*The park profits from us all*” was the consensus. And while there was “*no Cinque Terre without the terraces,*” those who worked the land tended not to be the same people who received compensation from the tourism industry.

After Gaspare left to go on with his day, Bess asked, “*Did he move here for you? Is he a love migrant?*”

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<sup>117</sup> Herzfeld, “The Hypocrisy of European Moralism,” 13.

There were a few remaining piles of stones, which were precious in Margherita's opinion. Stones are never simply left behind. Consequently, we had to carry them in buckets to the next wall project, which was several hundred meters above us. We worked on transporting the stones as we talked.

*"Yes, actually, but not for anything romantic. Well, maybe romantic, because he loves the land a lot,"* Margherita replied.

*"How did you meet him then?"* Bess seemed curious. While many love migrant women claimed to have moved for love of Cinque Terre, it was rare to meet a man who had moved to Cinque Terre for the landscape.

*"When I first met him, he was visiting with friends from a natural wine cooperative in Piedmont,"* Margherita explained. *"I told him, 'All of this could be yours,' meaning the then untended terraces - the ones I had access to but hadn't done anything with. He decided that moving was worth a try."*

Gaspare had been part of an exchange where he pruned grapevines in exchange for hospitality, including room and board. When Margherita had heard about the exchange, she had had the idea to start something similar.

Margherita described how the two of them realized her idea. *"He moved here. I introduced him to people. Found him a place to live. He revitalized terraces in exchange for taking care of the grapes. Sometimes he planted new grapes. He makes wine. The wine is pretty good! It's an exchange type thing."*

Like the Cinque Terre love migrants (see Chapter two), Gaspare was also viewed as an outsider or *foresto*. He had moved to Cinque Terre over five years ago. Although he had many contacts, without a few local gatekeepers like Margherita vouching for him, he would have struggled to find land to work or to secure affordable housing. Instead, he would have had to join the many other workers who commuted to Cinque Terre and rented elsewhere. As

a vintner, this would have been more than just an inconvenience; it would have prevented him from working entirely. In summer especially, the trains to and from Cinque Terre are filled to capacity. Moving tools, equipment, and supplies in and out of the village would have been a challenge for him. While locals have strategies for escaping the crowds, commuters must regularly fight for space on trains and for places to park if they can face the driving. This last is hazardous and time-consuming. For example, during the tourist season it is not uncommon for an entire lane of traffic to reverse up a section of a mountain road in order to accommodate large vehicles approaching in the opposite direction. As a result, delays and accidents are common.

It wasn't just Gaspare who had to gain acceptance, though. Margherita told us it had taken years before she was accepted as a drystone mason in the community, and that many people still didn't accept her or her work. It was only after her work with rocks became routinized – day in, day out – that it was considered legitimate. Even now, she said, people still acknowledged her based on her family standing rather than on the reputation she had cultivated for herself through years of backbreaking work. The vintner, meanwhile, was only conditionally accepted into the community. Only when he started to produce wine would he be more fully included.

Both of them understood that their labor in Cinque Terre was a way of demonstrating their commitment to the region. They also understood that their success was linked to the collection notion that, if given housing and assets, young people could and would work the land. As a result of their precarious standing in the community, the everyday lives of Margherita and the vintner had become a form of public ritual. By habitually working the land and making that work visible, they hoped to secure their futures and the future of the terraces within the larger community. Yet, as I came to learn, making their work visible to the people of Cinque Terre was not enough for them. They hoped to make the vineyard terraces

visible to the world through small-scale, niche agriculture. Gaspare's focus was on viticulture whereas Margherita's was on the terraced drystone walls (especially the rocks); together, they wanted to create the conditions for change.



Fig. 61. Vernazza. Moving buckets of stones. Photograph by Margherita Ermirio.

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The human caretaker is just as much part of the terrace vineyard as rocks and grapevines, but in a multispecies chapter where she is the youngest inhabitant, it seems fitting that she is discussed last. Especially when compared to rocks, human beings are a relatively recent addition to Cinque Terre. Humans have *become with* rocks and grapevines, evolving alongside them just as much as, if not more than, the rocks and grapevines have evolved with them.

The particular human caretaker in this chapter is the previously mentioned Margherita, who claims that she is who she is today because of Cinque Terre's grapevines and rocks. Born to an Italian father and an Austrian love-migrant mother, Margherita grew up in Vernazza. Her father's family lineage can be traced back to the early Republic of Genoa, and her extended family owns a substantial portion of Vernazza's terraces. After completing high school, she obtained a fine arts degree in Florence. After university graduation, she traveled the world for a time before returning to Vernazza, where she now owns and runs a souvenir

shop. When she returned to Vernazza after traveling, she and friends created a non-profit cultural association called *Tu Quoque*. The association strives to educate local youth about the region's agricultural heritage. According to their mission statement, they seek to "keep ancient knowledge, create awareness about social processes and landscape, and jump into the future with art." Profiles of her drystone terrace work and *Tu Quoque* have been featured in major national newspapers, including the *New York Times*<sup>118</sup> and Italy's *La Repubblica*,<sup>119</sup> along with various television programs about Cinque Terre.

Because of her upbringing in a tourist enclave and her education in the arts, Margherita was keenly aware of how Cinque Terre was imagined by tourists and how this imagination materially affected the landscape she so dearly loved. In response, she told me, she was using *Tu Quoque* as an awareness-raising tool to resist the massification of Cinque Terre as well as to draw public attention to the region's landscape, especially its drystone terrace walls. Through her own labor, she was seeking to transform the landscape, ushering it into a future where rocks would garner as much attention as grapevines. Through her almost constant interaction with the landscape, her body had been changed. As I saw for myself, Margherita's body bore numerous cuts and bruises, direct results of working in the terraces. But it wasn't just her physical self that had been shaped by the terraces, but her subjectivity and her mental world as well.

It is easy to be skeptical of Margherita's view that the rocks "had it in for her," but many scholars have said something similar, arguing that the earth "talks back" to humans, if not always in a language that we can readily understand. For example, the tourism scholars Edward Huijbens and Martin Gren have argued that in the Anthropocene it is crucial for us to consider the Earth's response because it speaks through "urgent emerging encounters."<sup>120</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Pianigiani, "Save Its Cliffside Towns."

<sup>119</sup> Bompani, "Il sogno di Margherita."

<sup>120</sup> Huijbens and Gren, "Tourism and the Anthropocene." See also Gren and Huijbens, "Tourism and the Anthropocene" (2016).

various encounters in which Margherita imagined the rocks “speaking” to her were also ones in which she learned about how rocks “act.” This raises questions about the role of translation.



*Fig. 62. The last frame of the film, showing the finished drystone wall.*

Recall the argument between Margherita and her father. She translated the rocks as “wanting” her father to use words that aligned with her ideas, while he thought that the rocks were compatible with his own. However silly the conversation, it highlights that landscapes are read through the lived experiences of individuals which are then translated. This squares with Shiho Satsuka’s previously mentioned notion of “nature in translation.”<sup>121</sup> Using the example of Japanese tourists and tour guides interacting with the Canadian Rockies, Satsuka argues that nature is always being translated and that its translation affects all facets of existence, for humans and nonhumans alike (see Chapter one). In attempting to draw public attention to rocks as the foundation for Cinque Terre, Margherita was translating; and as I will illustrate in the following pages, she was far from alone in her task.

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<sup>121</sup> Satsuka, *Nature in Translation*.

## A weekend of celebration, harvest and terraces

Vernazza, Cinque Terre: September 2018

Most grape harvests in the northern hemisphere occur annually between September and October. In Cinque Terre, the harvest happens for approximately two weeks in September. After a sweltering summer of building drystone walls, “walling” had stopped in order to harvest grapes for *la vendemmia*. On a weekend in the middle of harvest, Winifred, a friend and medical doctor from Australia, came to visit me. I gave her two potential itineraries: the standard tourist repertoire on her own, or fieldwork with me. She jumped at the chance to join *la vendemmia*. Before medical school, she had obtained a doctorate in microbiology and was keen to “talk to the Italian plants.” I was likewise glad to have a microbiologist’s opinion on Cinque Terre’s landscape and grapevines. Before we had a chance to commune with the plants, however, I took her to the Bescantà festival in Vernazza to take part in the festivities. One local had summarized the festival as “*a night for drinking and being merry.*” Another told me, “*It’s when everyone pretends to be poor and medieval.*” Still others said it was a traditional wine harvest festival aimed at celebrating the region’s heroic vintners.

Bescantà has its roots in the Catholic pre-Lenten festival of Carnival, the final festivity before the annual forty days of abstaining or fasting. According to local histories, during Bescantà commoners would don disguises in order to demand money from the wealthy, under the threat of violence or blackmail should they not offer coin. As with Carnival, the event had traditionally been held during the early parts of the year, at the advent of spring. It had stopped during the inter-war period in likely response to fascist edicts banning peasant “nonsense.” Bescantà was restarted as a tourism spectacle in the 1960s in order to regenerate and revere Cinque Terre’s “local” and “authentic” cultural roots. Now it was seen as an annual one-night event that promoted camaraderie, good food, and local wine among residents.



*Fig. 63. Cinque Terre. A local man serves wine dressed as Bacchus, the Roman god of wine.  
Photograph by author.*

Although I could not find direct links between the rebirth of Bescantà and the Italian recalibration of wine during the same period, the timing seemed to indicate a potential correlation. That both were aimed at revitalizing “tradition” for a wider audience also suggests a connection of some kind. The anthropologist Michael di Giovine has noted a similar link between food revitalizations and the renewal of saint’s day festivals.<sup>122</sup> Giovine argues that as a mode of revitalization, such festivals acknowledge past processes through future-oriented and local representation that is geared to outside understanding.<sup>123</sup> Essentially, such festivals need to be seen by outsiders as connected to the past, yet working toward the future. The past in Bescantà is a double reinvention, of a festival and of wine heritage, both of which revitalize the community as it continues. Seen as a revitalization similar to the rebirth of Italian wine, Bescantà today offers an example of the flow-on effect of enacting resilience by “bouncing back,” adapting and sustaining old traditions as well as resisting changes from

<sup>122</sup> Giovine, “The Everyday as Extraordinary.”

<sup>123</sup> Giovine, “The Everyday as Extraordinary,” 83.



outsiders. The following section of this vignette understands the experience of Bescantà today as having developed from past resilience.

### Bescantà

We arrived in Vernazza before sunset. The town was buzzing. Normally the Cinque Terre towns are relatively quiet in the evenings because tour groups and cruise ships have left for the day, but now the town was full of people. Winifred and I wandered for a while before meeting up with Margherita and some of her friends. Everyone had a bottle of wine, and they were all eager to share. Because Winifred did not understand Italian, we took turns translating the festivities for her. Although everyone in our group could speak English, this particular night was a reversal of English-language dominance.

Suddenly the town was inundated with people wearing lemon peels as glasses. These people were “invading pirates” from Monterosso. This supposedly refers to Cinque Terre’s medieval past as a destination for pirate raids during the Republic of Genoa (1005–1797 AD). The invasion also signaled that Bescantà had begun! I had seen such lemon-wear before at other events. Rationales for its use varied. Some people told me that the lemons were in homage to the once abundant lemon groves. Others said they were a reference to Cinque Terre’s past poverty, when villagers could afford clothes, but not glasses or shoes.

We joined a group procession of eventgoers who were singing loudly as they moved from shop to shop toward the sea. At one shop, a skit about cuckolding unfolded. At another, the shop owner was berated for making too much money from hapless tourists. Regardless of the stop, each shop provided wine to attendees in exchange for singing, although in practice the wine flowed liberally regardless.

As far as I could understand, there were a lot of verbal jabs aimed directly at the rich along with the tourists. The actors used a bricolage of Italian and local dialect (which I don’t understand), perhaps to ensure that tourists didn’t notice that some of the festivities were

directly criticizing them. It seemed that one point of Bescantà was to make the mighty seem weak.<sup>124</sup> I was reminded of the ritualized reversals of Carnival: an example of staged liminality where people are free to transgress the bounds of normal conduct, and lines are blurred regarding what is expected and accepted and what is not. Men wore dresses. The rich and powerful, or in this case tourists – anyone perceived to have too much money – were verbally battered. Instead of eating fruit, one wore it.

The event's participants came from Vernazza and Monterosso. Many were dressed in dark clothing with coal smeared across their faces. Some came as pirates, while others wore smocks that looked decidedly medieval. After the performances, there was a fake wedding procession with two men, one dressed in a modern black suit, and the other dressed in a modern white wedding dress. The happy couple was chauffeured around town, both standing out of the sunroof of a small Fiat. Although the event had been restarted to promote Cinque Terre culture, and perhaps Cinque Terre wine, it seemed it now principally served to publicly air grievances and create alternative order.

Winifred and I lost our companions during the wedding procession. When we found them again, they were sitting down at an extraordinarily long table, which appeared to have materialized suddenly in the street. The table was laden with food in enormous, professional-sized crockery. There were also enormous plastic jugs of local *vino da tavola*. I had my eye on a pan of *Tegame*: a Vernazza specific layered casserole-like dish with potatoes, anchovies, tomatoes, white wine, olive oil, and herbs. It was clear that wine and food were as much a part of Bescantà as the performances.

One local man at the table called out to me: *“Eat with us! Eat! There’s plenty! You’re working la vendemmia. We take care of our own. Try my wine!”*

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<sup>124</sup> Another point of Bescantà worth noting is that it served to keep local dialect alive.

I smiled widely at what I perceived to be his clear signaling of reciprocity: food for help working on the terraces. Although neither of us would be working his vineyards the following day, he had included us. His offer, however, had undertones of social control. After all, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has famously averred, culture “is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns - customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters - as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms - plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call “programs” - for the governing of behavior).”<sup>125</sup> Our instruction to join in was just such a way of governing our behavior, if a benign one. Because we were working *la vendemmia*, we were included. Although several other people had walked by and inquired about the feast, no other *stranieri* were invited.

I turned to Winifred to say, “*Welcome to Vernazza.*”

“*If there’s free wine involved, then I’m in,*” she replied.

We joined the others at the communal table. Glasses of wine were thrust into our hands. Winifred was questioned in Italian about who she was and her presence there. These questions were a way of demonstrating interest in an unexpected guest. Explaining that she was an immunologist proved difficult: I didn’t have the vocabulary in Italian, and Winifred’s interlocutor didn’t have much English either. Eventually we settled on her vocation as a plant scientist, a personal friend of mine and thus also a friend of Margherita’s.

Despite the initial confusion, the response from the table was positive. “*You’ve come to help us with our grapes! Wonderful! We’re more than people think! We’re more than just touristic place.*”

“*Thank you so much,*” Winifred grinned.

Copious amounts of food were being passed around the open-air table as the questions continued. We took what we wanted and passed it on. The dishes seemed inexhaustible.

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<sup>125</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 44.

“Since you’re a plant scientist, maybe you can help us with our growing?” one person asked.

“Yes! Do you know anything about grapes?” another person inquired.

Winifred shook her head, “I don’t know much, I’m afraid. You probably know so much more than I do. Can you tell me about your grapes?”



Fig. 64. Vernazza. The Bescantà wedding procession.

Note the man with a drum behind the car wears lemon peel glasses. Photograph by author.

Luigi, the ringleader, began telling Winifred about *sciacchetrà* in half-English and half-Italian. In the end, though, he focused on the terraces. Like Margherita before, he was also translating from his lived experience. This switch from grapevines to terraces often happened in private conversations. While the staged spectacle and our food reward were based on notions of the grapevine harvest, the foundations of our conversation were terraces and stones. It was as if grapevines were the subjects discussed with tourists, and terraces the subjects discussed with friends and family. Enmeshment between the three (grapevines, stones, and terraces) was ever-present if not always apparent. As Luigi said, without the terraces there would be no Cinque Terre, yet without the stones there would be no terraces.

Luigi's relation to stones and terraces seemed more emotionally realized than his relation to the grapevines. Perhaps this was because, as Margherita had previously said, wine was "in" now: in other words the grapevines were at the whim of taste.

Luigi explained how the rocks were the "same as a thousand years ago." He poetically described how each stone on his terrace had been handled by his grandfather's grandfather. His fervent hope was that his grandchildren's grandchildren would be handling the same stones in future. Because the stone was everlasting, he said, it was imprinted with all those who had come before and all those who would come after.

*"Without the terraces, we wouldn't have Cinque Terre,"* he again admonished.

*"Remember that. No one loves Cinque Terre for its wine."*

Everyone ate until they had had their fill. We stayed, chatting with our table-mates, until after midnight. There was only one train left to return us to La Spezia, so we began to take our leave in order not to miss our way home. The same man who had invited us to join decided that we needed food for the morning's harvest. I thought he was joking about eating the leftovers for breakfast because Italian breakfast tends to be small and sweet, but he was insistent that we take food. It seemed the role reversals of Bescantà applied to the extent of overturning the normality of breakfast. Not wanting the food to go to waste, we agreed to take some leftovers. He piled our arms with paper plates laden with food. The food on each plate would have cost well over thirty Euros in a restaurant. While walking toward the train station, he quickly ran after us in order to add a plate of wedding cake to our goodies. We left with enough food for at least another meal. I felt extremely grateful for such generosity.

*"Wow! What a welcome!"* Winifred commented as we caught the last train to La Spezia.

Our welcome, although greatly appreciated, was an outlier. Drawing on the sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of everyday life, Bescantà had a "front stage" open for everyone to

view and a “back stage” only open to a select few.<sup>126</sup> The front stage was being used for a spectacle that displayed a wide array of cultural references to a real and imagined past. Outsiders looking at this spectacle were being enjoined to take in colorful stories of tradition, wine, and resistance to poverty and pirates. In Goffman’s terms, this outward-facing presentation might be described as akin to a “rite of intensification” that continually revitalizes the identity of the group presenting the rite against pressure to become acculturated.<sup>127</sup> Here, however, the acculturation in question was not from migration, but rather from a terraced way of life that was in danger of becoming obsolete. Also on the front stage was a subversive thread of resistance against the audience in which the rich and powerful become the fool. By contrast, the dinner was the back stage, to which outsiders were not invited and where the performers could reveal their innermost selves. Had we not had a tie to the community through the harvest, we would not have been so readily welcomed. It was here that stones and terraces were shown to be at the heart of the performance, albeit not disentangled from the grapevines or their wine. It is this mutual entanglement between terraces, rocks, grapevines, and humans, the ostensible subject of this chapter, that follows next and that appropriately brings the chapter to an end.

### La vendemmia

The next morning we arrived in Vernazza shortly before seven. The morning was crisp and breezy. The waves below us sounded rough, possibly churning from a storm out at sea. Compared to the previous night, Vernazza’s main street was empty. We walked toward the sea before turning right to enter a tight stairwell between buildings. We climbed four flights of narrow gray slate stairs, turned left, and then climbed another flight of steps before arriving at the back door of Margherita’s building. We said hello to a cat lounging on a stoop

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<sup>126</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*.

<sup>127</sup> Chapple and Coon 1942: 398–426 as described in Giovine, “La Vigilia Italo-Americana,” 183.

– there was always a cat – and enjoyed the view of the sea while waiting for Margherita to descend from her apartment. Winifred had to catch her breath and sat on a stone step.

Despite the climb, we were still in the village and would have to negotiate additional flights of stairs to reach the beginning of the terraces. From there we would have to climb for about twenty minutes to reach our harvest site. While we waited, I pointed out that the infrastructure around us was all made of stone. From here the vineyards were not visible; there was just a rock wall at our back, the sea and houses in front of us, and a *sentiero* to either side. Once Margherita joined us, we began the climb. After another few flights of stairs, the terraced vineyards came into view. We could already see harvesters moving along the rows above us.

“*All of this was abandoned?*” Winifred asked, pointing to the vineyard terraces above us.

“*Not all of it,*” Margherita explained. “*Near this path (the sentiero azzurro) has mostly been kept active. The mountaintops are still abandoned. The middle bit is where changes happen. That’s where we’re going.*”

“*Up where exactly?*” Winifred looked concerned, realizing that the middle of the mountain was a long way up.

Margherita smiled, “*You’ll be fine. It’s not that far.*”

“*We’ll take it slow,*” I interjected.

“*No worries then. What you’re saying is that I won’t need to exercise for a week,*” now Winifred smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

“*If you can run these steps, you’re good to run any marathon,*” Margherita replied.

Like other long-term residents, Margherita was acclimatized to the stairs and had the calf muscles to prove it. She said the constant feeling of stone against her limbs kept her grounded, quite literally. Her art and her drystone wall work were alternative living

expressions of how she embodied the stone that she encountered everyday. Perhaps because of this particular embodiment, she sometimes forgot that others were not as “stone-aware,” nor able to traverse them as easily. Margherita quickly left us in the dust.

We finally caught up to her at a tiny gully where we needed to use ropes to cross.

*“What took you guys so long? La vendemmia will be over by the time we get there!”*

Margherita joked.

We took a few minutes to rest, until our breath came easily again. While we waited, Winifred had questions about the climb. *“How can you tell if a terrace is abandoned?”*

*“The hallmark is when you look at the mountain and you can’t see a defined wall. If you’re closer, you can also tell by the type of trees growing or if it looks wild.”* Margherita’s definition of “wild” was a relative one. One person’s wild could be another’s cultivated. The drystone terrace walls were a case in point. Many thought the seemingly unordered walls indicated abandonment when in fact the seeming chaos was an un-mortared wall feature.

*“Which plants? Are they native?”* Winifred’s plant background began to reveal itself. Coming from Australia, a country rife with invasive plant and animal species, she was keenly interested in plant biodiversity and invasiveness.

Margherita began to read the landscape to Winifred as we crossed the gully and started a steeper and slower ascent. The prolific cacti (*Cactaceae*) and sisal (*Agave sisalana*) were native to the Americas. They had apparently been around for centuries and were often considered by locals to be part of the “natural” landscape; the cacti were even part of Italian cuisine nowadays. The stone pine (*Pinus pinea*) originated in Italy, but we were not clear about the other pine tree types. I had heard that many of the shrubs were not indigenous and caused weight problems on many drystone walls; however, neither Margherita nor I could name any. Instead, we pointed out the herbs we knew. Sea fennel (*Crithmum maritimum*), a native aromatic herb used in “folk” (or hipster) dishes was abundant. All around us was an



assemblage of introduced and native plants living in a hybrid landscape. From the point of view of many of these plants, life was probably good.

“*All of the grape rootstalks are American, so they’re not native!*” I teased. I thought it would be an appropriate joke considering *la vendemmia*.

“*Neither is the tomato,*” Margherita added. “*Imagine Italy without the tomato!*”

Tomatoes were also cultivated on the terraces. Like grapevines, tomatoes were largely considered to be Italian or at least “in place.” Yet, just like the “wild” vegetation, the domesticated plants were also an assemblage of indigenous and introduced lifeworlds. As the environmental humanities scholar Kate Wright posits, invasive histories can be woven with other histories to create “hopeful, collaborative futures” where spaces for “resistance and reclamation” can be built.<sup>128</sup> On the terraces, the collaborative creators included American/Italian grapevines, terraces, humans, and a diverse array of surrounding vegetation. A hopeful, collaborative future was being built today through our multispecies participation in it. We were still to pass through several contact zones before reaching our destination however.

“*Why isn’t there a footbridge over that gully we passed?*” Winifred asked.

Margherita, ever the educator, proceeded to explain about Cinque Terre’s socio-environmental history, which had first led to terrace and other infrastructure abandonment then later resulted in the last footbridge being destroyed in the 2011 flood. Due to various social and political issues, the footbridge had never been repaired. Margherita faulted social issues for the lack of footbridge rather than the flood itself.

As Margherita narrated, I was reminded of Sisu’s description of the multiple factors, both material and immaterial, that had transformed Cinque Terre as well as the issues she had had to overcome in order to remain in place (see Chapter two). Although Margherita had also

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<sup>128</sup> Wright, “In the Shadow,” 86.

had to deal with several issues, relating in her own case to land-use bureaucracy rather than immigration, she nevertheless had shown the resilience to continue living in Cinque Terre. The very terraces we were climbing to were evidence of her success.

When we finally arrived at our destination, we were greeted by Gaspare and two of his male family members were there to greet us. Gaspare was the vintner I had met when filming the 360 video (see section above). Our work was to take place on land he had re-cultivated in exchange for the grapes – an exchange originally facilitated by Margherita and made possible by re-terracing as well as care of the grapevines. It was here that a multispecies perspective was especially relevant, as the assemblage this perspective produced was the literal and metaphorical fruit of their collective labor.



*Fig. 65. Vernazza. Margherita demonstrating how to cut grape bunches. Photograph by author.*

After our instructions from Gaspare, we each grabbed a red crate and went to work. Gaspare’s revitalized grapevines were a mixture of red and white grape varieties (not the “traditional” white grapes of the Cinque Terre DOC wine). Gaspare had also planted new rows of grapevines nearby, but it would be years before they would bear fruit. We cut each

grape bunch with about two and half centimeters of the stem left intact, then carefully laid it in the plastic grape crate. Each crate was lined with grape leaves to protect the fruit bunches. The crate was only to be filled halfway. The depth of the grapes had a two-fold importance: so as to ensure that the grapes weren't crushed, and so as not to overload the human transporter. We would have to carry the heavy fruit-laden baskets up the mountain. Before the heavy lifting, however, we moved along the ground, cutting and chatting as we went.

Winifred was surprised that some of the grape bunches had spots of rot on the inside of the bunch rather than the outside. Gaspare replied that this was due to climatic and growing conditions, but also to his treatment of the plants. He said he adhered to a "bio" way of growing grapes, ideologically aligned with the Slow Food movement.<sup>129</sup> He consequently rejected the wine authorities because they didn't allow "innovation or best practice." Best practice, for Gaspare, was both technological and environmental. Like Margherita, he believed in the ever-intensifying effects of climate change, and this had prompted him to act in "environmentally responsible"<sup>130</sup> ways. That he had rejected a past revitalization for a different way forward indicates that resilience is also about knowing when to let go - when things no longer serve a useful purpose.

*"Plus, the old wine was shit,"* Gaspare declared, tongue only half in cheek. *"I don't want to recreate the past."* He was adamant that the "old ways" had caused many contemporary problems. Moreover, he thought modern wine was the best it had ever been.

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<sup>129</sup> The slow food movement, known officially by the name "Slow Food," is an ecological and gastronomic movement that seeks to promote eco-gastronomy. It seeks to promote locally produced food, preserve gastronomic tradition, and promote networks between small producers. Its headquarters are based in the neighboring region of Piedmonte. Many see the movement as an antidote to mass tourism, but as scholars have demonstrated, the increasing global popularity of Slow Food means that it is vulnerable to overexploitation (for example, see Nilsson et al., "'Cittáslow' Eco-Gastronomic Heritage.>").

<sup>130</sup> The notion of individual environmental responsibility has received much scholarly attention, too numerous to recount here. For a classic work on the topic, see Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*. See also Chapter one.

*“You don’t want to go back to the Black Death or die from a splinter”* Winifred joked in response. She was referring to historical pandemics and once common causes of death, such as contracting tetanus from a seemingly innocuous yet deadly small piece of wood.

Gaspare laughed. *“I’m thankful for modern medicine,”* he replied. *“I just want to make tomorrow better instead of worse. We’re killing the planet.”* His words reminded me of the well-intentioned platitude: *“Be the change you want to see in the world.”*

Margherita joined in on the conversation. *“Come on! We’re not killing anything. Blame the corporations or our ancestors.”*

The subject of culpability was a constant topic. Just as we had discussed blame during wall building, it also featured during *la vendemmia*.

Gaspare retorted, *“You come on! You always say how we’re all at fault.”*

Margherita and Gaspare both laughed. It was evident that they had a good working relationship and that politics was a harmoniously discussed topic between them.

Winifred asked, *“Does it matter who is at fault? I mean, when I have a patient who’s sick, sometimes it does matter who created the sickness but most of the time it doesn’t.”*

Gaspare thought for a moment before responding: *“I think it depends on how we see time. If it’s straight (linear), then no. If it’s circular, then yes. Here, on the terraces time is circular.”* It was clear that Gaspare’s preferred time frame was more attuned to the rhythms of the terraces. According to circular time, if a problem occurred during *la vendemmia*, then it would be best to fix it before the next one.

*“I think fault matters if you want to hold someone accountable,”* Margherita opined, *“but I don’t think we have the power to actually do that. I mean, look at the 2011 flood! God and nature were blamed, not the jackasses who paved over the stream.”*

Margherita was referring to the legal inquiry into the causes of the 2011 flood. Although the verdict would be announced a year later, it was clear to her then that no one

would be held culpable. The wording of the 2019 decision reads: “The flooding event was exceptional. Therefore, all experts concur that the man-made infrastructure to contain and regulate rain, however constructed, would not have prevented the disastrous effects of the flood.”<sup>131</sup> Based on this ruling, the ten people accused with neglect, including former mayors and government officials from the numerous the towns affected, were not charged.

*“Margherita was telling me about the terrace abandonment on the way up here,”* Winifred stated. *“It sounds like no was held accountable for that either, eh?”*

Gaspare replied, *“You could blame the government, but really it happened over generations. You see similar all over Italy. Waste in Naples. Pollution in the Po River. Shit happened over generations and we’re only now realizing the consequences.”*

By the time the sun reached its zenith, the conversation had turned increasingly political. It was clear that the disasters that had most affected the lifeworlds of Margherita, Gaspare, and the terraces themselves were not as dramatic as a flashflood, but were connected instead with slower, structural forms of violence – pollution, poverty, inequality, lack of opportunities, war, industrialization - and the everyday resilience required to combat these (see Introduction and Chapter one). Regardless of blame, there was agreement that “something” had to be done; and for both Gaspare and Margherita, that “something” was working on the terraces.

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<sup>131</sup> Alluvione 2011 Nelle Cinque.” Translation my own.



Fig. 66. Vernazza. Margherita cutting grapes during la vendemmia. Photograph by author.

As Margherita explained, “*We only have a few choices. We do nothing, we leave or we work with what we have.*” Her own tools of choice were rocks. For Gaspare, it was grapevines. Their choices speak to their relation to and perspective to Cinque Terre. As an insider, Margherita has known her entire life that the rocks matter. Therefore she focuses on rocks. As an insider-outsider, Gaspare has brought his outside knowledge of grapevines to be applied in Cinque Terre. Neither choice is more right or wrong. Their choices merely reflect their perspective. Their perspective is how they know how to enact resilience in/of the Cinque Terre.

Although they felt that they couldn’t do much on a societal level, they could enact change on the community level. Together and separately, they worked with these tools to create a future for the community as well as for themselves. Their work in the terraced vineyards is reminiscent of “slow hope,” as described by the German environmental historian Christof Mauch. Mauch recently coined the term to highlight the kinds of undemonstrative yet positive change that can sometimes hide in plain sight. Rather than expressing an unbridled optimism that willfully ignores or downplays the magnitude of contemporary problems, slow hope provides counter-narratives, full of creativity and courage, which

attempt to address pressing issues.<sup>132</sup> Against a hegemonic discourse that privileged profit, especially the gains to be made from mass tourism, it took a tremendous amount of creativity – and a tremendous capacity for resilience – for my participants to imagine a multispecies future where rocks and grapevines could bring about change. Yet, as history demonstrates, rocks and grapevines could indeed be involved in change in Cinque Terre. What had happened once (wine revitalization) could happen again. However resilience, the resistance and adaptation, the bouncing-back and sustaining, probably would not happen the same way. Regardless of the way it happens, resilience here is cyclical in that it happens again and again. The resilience of one era creates the conditions that necessitates the next resilience. Perhaps it is that knowing that resilience has been enacted before that creates hope for the future.

Once we had finished cutting the grape bunches, we created a human chain up the mountainside to transport the crates to the road above us. The view from the road was magnificent. The terraces were in full view. The sea shimmered. The bright sunlight bounced off grapevines, illuminating the hive of human workers below. After six hours of work, we were exhausted and desperately in need of nourishment. Gaspare and his family took the harvest home: they would start working with the grapes after a light lunch. The three of us descended the mountain, returning the same way we had come. Upon arrival in Vernazza, Margherita, who never seemed to tire, went to work in her shop. Such was life during *la vendemmia*.

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<sup>132</sup> Mauch, “Slow Hope.”

## Concluding remarks

This chapter has asked how resilience as an object is enacted from the perspective of Cinque Terre's vineyard terraces and its caretakers. In a multilayered way, I have shown that resilience in Cinque Terre is enacted over various temporalities with both human and nonhuman involvement. These places of involvement were contact zones, where all mingled and shaped each other. Resilience through wine was necessitated by a post-war depression and was enacted by the rocks, grapevines and traces of human hands that now compose the terraces. Resilience to mass tourism and the monoculture of grape cultivation remains to be seen.

Philosopher Serenella Iovino argues that our current epoch reveals itself in embodied layers, both above and below ground.<sup>133</sup> Cinque Terre's terraced landscape, as I discovered, is layered as well, representing an interleaving of nature and culture. Its parts, the rocks and the grapevines, are layered as well and entwined with humans. In order for this landscape to survive, it needs human intervention. In order for the human inhabitants of Cinque Terre to survive, they need the terraces. Both are bound to the other. Yet, as I have shown, Cinque Terre's landscape continues to be built out of multiple layers of material entities and discursive translations, involving a mixed cast, a multispecies assemblage, of human and nonhuman builders. Grapevines and stones construct the material layers. The wine and heritage industries currently provide the discursive ones. Here, resilience in all its different forms, adapting, resisting, sustaining, bouncing back, is enacted through everyday rituals and maneuvers, and in the slow, hopeful relations that develop between the different multispecies actors on whom the future of Cinque Terre depends.

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<sup>133</sup> Iovino, "Italo Calvino."



Resilience, seen this way, is “a product of our embedded relations - the complex life of assemblages, associations and relationships - through which we are attached to the world.”<sup>134</sup>

The maintenance of these relations is key to enacting resilience as a form of multispecies interaction. With assistance from each other, human and nonhuman actors do things they could not do by themselves. Rocks become drystone walls. People become drystone wall builders. Both rocks and people support grapevines. There is mutual becoming, and a kind of mutual trust, both of which are at the heart of resilience, in Cinque Terre

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<sup>134</sup> Chandler, *Resilience*, 181. It should be noted that Chandler later argues against post-humanist approaches because, as he claims, it robs humanity of meaning. However, he fails to account for the post-humanist approaches, like multispecies, that account for the type of embedded relations between humans and the world that he here argues is the product of resilience.

## Conclusion: On resilience

### Lingering thoughts

Vernazza, Cinque Terre: February 2019

Before I left Italy in early 2019, I asked Sisu if she had any lingering thoughts about resilience in Cinque Terre. As usual, we were enjoying *aperitivo* in a local bar. We were sitting on a rock wall along the waterline, near the church, surrounded by a mix of locals and tourists doing the same.

*“Like, how are we successful?”* She asked.

I nodded. *“Sure.”*

*“We literally took baby steps.”* She had started to wave her hands at this point, in the way that many foreigners imitate Italian hand gestures, with slightly over-dramatic movements. *“It’s always because there’s a series of little tiny baby steps every day.”*

Sisu paused to say hello to her neighbor who had just taken a spot on the wall nearby.

*“But one of the things I realized is that we have – as a group and as individuals,”* she

gesticulated to her neighbor as she spoke: “...all of us have a lot of fortitude, and what’s the word: *Like, we don’t give up?*”

“*Tenacity?*” I questioned.

“*Tenacity! Thank you.*” She grinned. “*Extremely tenacious, which is the only way to build something, or to change.*”

I nodded again.

Sisu continued: “*Sometimes those little steps are hard and it’s never overnight. Some of the hardest working people aren’t considered the most successful. So I don’t think resilience is a success story. Resilience is a tenacity story.*”

Bess jumped in. “*The other thing is that being resilient is just a label. Sorry, but what’s the difference between me coming here and an “illegal” immigrant? How do I “get” to be resilient yet they don’t, because some people think they’re criminals?*”

There had recently been right-wing political rallies in nearby La Spezia featuring anti-immigrant sentiment, particularly against refugees. The rallies had raised tension in the region. In Cinque Terre, where most people had connections to foreign tourists or workers, the tension was palpable, and Bess’s comparison was rooted in current events. At this particular moment, though, her comparison wasn’t about migration, but about motivation and living one’s life.

“*Exactly!*” Sisu exclaimed. “*We both wanted a different life. We’ve both faced hardships and we’re both in Italy, making it work. Getting up each day, hoping for the best. We’re resilient in our situations, but it’s the different situations that matters.*”

Never one to shy away from politically charged topics, Margherita dryly remarked: “*The difference is money and skin color. And power.*”

“*Of course it is! That’s the point.*” Bess was speaking again. “*That’s what I mean by “just a label.” Refugees are resilient. I’m resilient. What matters are the things around*

*resilience, like access to things, like water, or your gender or religion sometimes. Those are the things that get you a label.”*

The swirl of topics and wine made for an increasingly passionate conversation. This particular topic had clearly struck a nerve.

A local woman sitting nearby chimed in: *“Usually telling anyone to be “more resilient,” like those nut job politicians do, is like telling them to grow a money tree. You get the label of resilient because you have money and resources.”*

And then, after a brief pause and another chug of wine, Sisu said something that cemented the foundation of this thesis: *“Telling people to be resilient is redundant. People are already resilient. The terraces are resilient too. Their resilience will look different than mine. We’re all resilient because we’re all fighting and pushing and here. We’re resilient because we’re here, on Earth.”*

From this conversation, and many others like it, I noted a disjunction between how resilience was used as a label and how it was described in lived experience. At times the label was used to deny help. At other times, as Bess had implied, it was used as a reward. The lived experience of resilience, however, was different. Although it was sometimes operationalized to justify belonging (see Chapter two), resilience also seemed presumed, inherent. Resilience was a poor fit with privilege, which inevitably affected outcomes; nor did it appear to be restricted to humans, because many participants asserted that the Cinque Terre landscape and its parts were resilient as well. Resilience didn’t seem tied to particular events either; instead it was more diffused, slower. As my time in Cinque Terre went by, my project turned into an investigation of how participants understood and lived resilience. My aim instead became to examine how resilience was experienced and understood “on the ground.” In order to achieve this, I had to consider resilience as an object with its own characteristics to be described by

participants. I had to ask how resilience was imagined, how it was used and how it was enacted in Cinque Terre.

### *Prospetto*

This thesis has sought, accordingly, to put forward three different perspectives on resilience in/of Cinque Terre. It achieved these perspectives, and their descriptions, through interdisciplinary conversation, focusing primarily on anthropology and the environmental humanities. It also incorporated many other disciplines in order to triangulate the ethnographic data and to situate each perspective within scholarly discourse. This interdisciplinary approach created a cacophony of literatures that ultimately served to bring each perspective's stories to life.

In the first chapter, I examined the “outsider” perspective of tourists looking at Cinque Terre. I asked how resilience in Cinque Terre was imagined by outsiders looking in. Resilience emerged here as an individual or community-level response to water-related disaster. This perspective aligned with broadly neoliberal understandings of resilience, where heroic individuals and communities are imagined as being responsible for what befalls them and wider structural issues are ignored. My reading of the travel guidebook work of Rick Steves also revealed it to be an extension of the American Dream abroad, with hard work seen as the sole means to achieve good outcomes: a view complicated, if not contradicted, by material contingencies, such as access or not to funds. This complication demonstrated that resilience in Cinque Terre is not so neat nor straightforward as hegemonic discourses may imagine it. Consequently, this chapter served as the foil for the next resilience perspectives in Cinque Terre. As a foil, the chapter revealed my contention that resilience is not solely a disaster response.

The second, “semi-insider” perspective I examined was that of female love migrants living and working in Cinque Terre. I asked how resilience is used by love migrants in

Cinque Terre. Here I demonstrated that the love of a landscape constituted a powerful motivation to migrate. It was also a motivation to stay put and be resilient. I showed that these participants' claim to resilience lay mainly in their fight to belong in Cinque Terre. The love migrants used their resilience as a way to legitimate their continued presence in Cinque Terre, and to reconfirm their love. Here resilience took on a quotidian essence, composed mainly of small decisions and actions that together created a resilience story born of love and paced out on the ground. Based on the emotion and action of love that underpinned their resilience, I contend that love, and perhaps emotion more broadly, influences resilience.

The third, "insider" perspective, was that of Cinque Terre's drystone terraces, composed of rocks and grapevines, and their caretakers. Adopting a multispecies approach triangulated with environmental history, I illustrated how resilience was enacted through various "intra-active" human and nonhuman combinations and mutual "becomings." Resilience emerged here one last time, not as an extraordinary reaction, but in the repeated performances rooted in the everyday by humans and nonhumans over various time periods. This human and nonhuman presentation of resilience underscored my contention that resilience is enacted by multispecies. Here the resilience enactments mingled and overlapped, demonstrating that yesterday's resilience can be today's need for resilience. I also demonstrated that although rocks and grapevines both comprise parts of the terraces, grapevines are often seen as more integral (and easier to tell stories about), whereas, in fact, rocks are their literal foundation and possible future. This demonstration speaks to an overarching yet implicit argument of this thesis: perspective matters.

In Chapter three, had I ignored participants' adamant inclusion of rocks as essential to resilience in Cinque Terre, the chapter would likely have been uniquely about grapevines and wine. As I illustrated in that chapter, the focus on grapevines and wine in Cinque Terre is largely due to modern tourism and past agricultural policies – a largely outsider perspective.

However, by attending to and believing the perspective of participants, I understood that rocks were seen as essential to past and future resilience actions. It is similar with resilience. Each perspective on resilience reveals different realities. In Chapter one, Rick Steves' perspective on how resilience in Cinque Terre is imagined fit American and hegemonic resilience narratives. Had I then proceeded to investigate how Rick Steves used resilience in Cinque Terre, the exploration would have undoubtedly focused on money. Instead, staying true to the many voices that I recorded, I choose to present their perspectives. Together, these perspectives, in the order that I presented them here, guided me to a different understanding of resilience than I had had at the outset of my research journey. Presenting resilience differently, as participants understood it, is the point of this thesis.

Overall, these chapters have demonstrated that resilience in Cinque Terre can be understood as a sequence of daily performances that are integrated into everyday life. Resilience is a part of life, and one of the challenges in trying to account for it is that it is often a slow or hidden process. Perhaps one reason resilience tends to be depicted in grandiose terms, with heroes and epic gestures, is because the everyday "stuff" of resilience can often be banal. For example, I discovered in my fieldwork that the perspective of the terraces and their caretakers was one of gradual adaptation to changing tastes and introduced species. My recognition of this was met with correspondingly *longue durée* concepts: slow violence, slow hope. What is at stake for Cinque Terre, land and people, during resilience processes, I would suggest, has been to maintain a familiarity with their land, place and space, albeit in different ways. How will Cinque Terre, in all its configurations, adapt, resist, sustain and bounce-back in future? What the "everydayness" of resilience points to is the importance of structures (eg. political, social, economic, physical) that render people and nature more or less successful in their endeavors. As discussed in above vignette, the label of resilience is often about the availability of resources rather than working hard. For Cinque

Terre, likewise, future positive outcomes depends on Cinque Terre's context and availability of resources more so than resilience; resilience will already be there.



*Fig. 67. Riomaggiore. A resource-limited (monoculture) mountaintop. Photograph by author.*

My work has specifically contributed to both anthropology and the environmental humanities by troubling the disaster/resilience nexus, a nexus which neither field has yet had much engagement. This revealed that resilience is not necessarily dependent on what most people would understand as “disaster” at all nor do ethnographic descriptions of resilience look or feel awe-inspiring compared to more hegemonic resilience narratives. In Chapter one, I brought anthropology and environmental humanities together to contrast environmental disaster guidebook narratives with ethnographic lived experience of the same event. In Chapter two, both were in conversation about Sisu's love of and becoming with Cinque Terre. In Chapter three, both anthropology and environmental humanities showed that resilience is not limited to humans while also demonstrating how multispecies approaches that include inert beings, like rocks, might be applied.

Methodologically, my work illustrates that an ethnographic object approach opens a myriad of potential future research trajectories. This is due to the interdisciplinary triangulation needed to position each ethnographic description. In Chapter one, the connection between travel writing, guidebooks, tourists and travel outcomes is one possible



future research direction. An investigation on the use of hegemonic narratives in the travel industry is also needed. In Chapter two, the theorization of emotion in migration and international relationships merits substantial future investigation. Additionally, the narrow colonial, sexist and Western conceptualizations of love and migration need to be dismantled. The notion of love of place is also ripe for future research. In Chapter three, the histories and lives of the drystone vineyard terraces merit future work as does investigation on lively and entangled multispecies entities such as drystone terraces. Work on Italian wine history and future directions of niche viticulture is also needed. I am sure that readers of this thesis could note any number of other potential research paths from the work contained here. These potential research directions speak to the productive outcomes of interdisciplinary work in general and an ethnographic object approach specifically. It is through interdisciplinary collaboration that creative and/or novel findings often emerge.

Above all, I have taken my *participants* seriously. As a methodology based on feminist and anthropological assumptions, taking people, especially women, seriously can be an act of disruption when it lifts voices that have been marginalized or ignored. In the face of a contested object like resilience, this was no easy action. Yet, it was a necessary one. In taking participants seriously, I confirmed the authority of their lived experience and knowledges which in turn pointed to an understanding of resilience against the grain: one that was slow, complex, and embedded in the everyday.

It is my sincere hope that the stories and descriptions of resilience found here will be of interest to scholars and others working in the cognate areas that form the many Anthropocene assemblages in my work.

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