# Food, Place, Memory | Production, Plot, Story

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography

The University of Sheffield

March 2020

Statement of Originality

This is to confirm that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been previously submitted for an award at this, or any other university. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all sources have been acknowledged.

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Barley Blyton

Corona Virus

Due to quarantine I was unable to print and assemble this thesis in person. Two short sections ( 6 and 15) of this thesis should take the form of a concertina of unfolding photographs. They are represented in this version by a single photograph.

# A B S T R A C T

Food, Place, Memory | Production, Plot, Story

This thesis explores the relationships between food, place and memory, in particular, through production, plot and story. To do this it engages the individual voices of food producers—my research participants—working small pieces of land in the peripheral spaces of Venice's Lagoon and the rural fringes of Bristol.

The research offers opportunities to hear the ways in which food production matters, and how different means of sense-making are negotiated and storied through it, in everyday life. The study combines bodily practice with narrative—working alongside producers, and recording their life stories—demonstrating the importance, and interrelatedness of the storied with the sensory.

Paying attention to food production not only showed up areas of rupture, but also the creative strategies that producers employed to repair and narrate these disconnects and orientate themselves and others within the world. Following lines of tension emerging out of apprenticeship, this research challenges notions of tradition and argues that it cannot be reduced to one essential thing. Rather, multiple ontologies of tradition give rise to different enactments and effects.

Considering place in practice, this research shows how cultivation can be used as a means to craft different types of place. Understanding people, places and practices as still unfolding, and listening to these small stories, this study makes audible processes of becoming, knowing and relating.

Learning with food production, through its practicalities and narratives, this thesis contributes to current ethnographic and oral history literature in food studies, sensory geographies and ongoing conversations around individual experience.

# A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

It was my great privilege to have the opportunity to pursue this PhD. From before its foetal phases encouragement and help from Peter Jackson, The University of Sheffield, and the financial backing of the ESRC made this project real, gave me a home, set me up and have continued to support me. I couldn't and wouldn't have done it without them. Thank you.

Thank you to both my supervisors—Peter Jackson and Megan Blake—for your expertise and patience throughout this PhD, and for always helping me find my way back when I've strayed off the path.

To Emily and Neil, Bella and Ben, to Ernesto and Donatella, Maria-Sole and Stefano, Dario and Marco, and all of the members of *Laguna nel bicchiere*, thank you, for trusting me even when I wasn't sure where I was going, for teaching me so much and for giving a huge amount of soul to my life as well as to this thesis. Thank you for sharing your plots, your time and so much friendship with me. A privilege I had not foreseen was the opportunity to be both in conviviality and solitude in such beautiful places, your places. In particular, I will never forget my time alone on San Michele—tending the vines or punching down the cap after the cemetery had closed—on an island empty save for its ghosts.

Thank you to the staff and students of the SOAS MA anthropology of food who prepared me for the PhD process in the best possible way, in company and with curiosity. Thank you for the continuing sense of community. Thank you to Polly Russell at The British Library for your friendship and enthusiasm: it has been a pleasure following in your footsteps. And to Trevor Marchand who gave me invaluable life-advice when I was thinking of setting out on all of this.

Thank you to my tiny PhD cohort at Sheffield, Patience, Ingun, Sarah and Lauren. Particular thanks to Patience. Knowing you were out there, several countries away, living the same days as me meant I was never alone. And thank you to all the friends that put me up and put up with me. Despite not having been near my university you have kept me going.

I am also grateful for two additional lots of funding for two different three month periods from the ESRC /WRDTC. Firstly, a Difficult Language Training grant, in 2017 allowed me to immerse myself further into *Venezian*—Venetian Dialect, which was incredibly valuable for my relationships, both with my participants, and with the Venetian Lagoon itself. Secondly, an Oversees Institutional Visit grant, in 2018 allowed me to spend three months away from the central thrust of this thesis to learn more about Geography and Tourism in Catalunya and to begin to get to grips with *Catalá*—Catalan, a language which, oddly enough, has much in common with *Venezian*.

Thank you to my parents Ticky and Paul for your kindness in all the ways you have supported and encouraged me, not just in this PhD but in everything. You have always nurtured my inquisitiveness and helped me follow it, wherever it has led me. And, thank, you, for, still, correcting, my, commas, in, good, humour.

And importantly, thank you Tom. Everything has changed in the span of this PhD, but wherever we've been, we've made it our home together. I'm sure living with a PhD student, in chaos and rubble, in a new language and a new country has not always been easy(!), but I can't wait to plant trees with you, and to explore the stories of these stony soils.

A mixed thank you to the dog, Petita. Thrashing around in the undergrowth looking for you whilst you sniff out *senglar* is probably a daily stress I could have done without, nevertheless you got me out of the house.

In loving memory of Raissa and tante Klare.

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# P R O L O G U E

All PhD theses must grow out of the coming together of various strands of a storied life. Explicit, or not, something gets us here. I can trace mine to my neighbour, an archive and an accident.

## | Raissa

My neighbour Raissa was a formative presence in my childhood. She grew up in Canada, born to a Greek father and an English mother, getting by on food that her father would steal from the restaurant where he worked. She moved to London in the 1950s and to Wales in the early 1990s. My Mum credits her with teaching me to eat. In her kitchen I moved from a limited diet of peanut butter on toast to the heady horizons of gooseberry fools, and, our favourite—and her signature dish—braised steak with onions. In a halo of Silk Cut smoke she also taught me little things: to anti-up with matchsticks, that everything my Dad believed about pouring a cup of tea was incorrect, and that beer is best sipped from a tall glass. Alongside those little things we explored the bigger questions of the world. When she died I realised that I had wrongly assumed she'd be around forever.

## | National Life Stories

It was around a decade ago that I read an article in the newspaper about a vast archive—National Life Stories—a trove of tapes, hours and hours of interviews held underground in the British Library (or so I imagined them when I 'called them *up*'). The archive is categorised by profession from 'Artists' lives' to 'Lives in Steel' but the collection that appealed to me was 'Food: From Source to Salespoint'. I went to London, got a library card, and began to listen, shut inside the little wooden carrels, bringing up voices past and current. One day I stumbled across Raissa's interview. No one had ever told me about it. She had been a photographer, and had come to prominence with her photographs of the women dancing on the nuclear silos at Greenham Common. She lay in the mud all night to get the photograph that you probably know, taken on the morning of 1 January 1983. The image of her there is so clear in my imagination and yet, sometimes I wonder if I've remembered that correctly. The first time I requested the tape of her interview I only managed to listen to a couple of minutes of it. It is flabbergasting the wells of emotion the human voice can evoke, the cadence of her voice, her turns of phrase, the way that she tells stories, pauses, chuckles, even the knee slapping. It's not just what is audible that is held in that interview but the smell of her clothes, her movements, the light in her kitchen, her squeaky green chair, black cane, white cloth gloves.

## | The Accident

When I was fifteen I fell off a cliff and broke my face. For more than four years I couldn't remember the hours of the accident. There was a hole in my memory, but it didn't draw attention to itself. And then I

began to remember. Or, at first I thought I was remembering. Each night I went to bed, and by morning I had gleaned a few more minutes. The hole was getting smaller. After five hundred nights all my memories of those hours had returned. And the de-stabilising, terrifying experience of remembering had come to a close. I felt as whole as when the surgeon had stuck my face back together. But then I realised that the pictures in these memories were all wrong. I wasn't looking out at a wonky view of rock from the floor, I was looking down at myself, the snow turning red around me, people scrambling down through the trees coming to the rescue—things I could never have seen. My body, it seemed, had given me a story to make sense of what had happened.

# 2

# INTRODUCTION

What has always stayed with me about Raissa's interview, is how powerfully (and audibly) food re-evoked experience, feeling. Raissa told her life story in photographic frames, describing scenes, but they are inhabited: sonorous, tactile, scented. Sensory experience was used to articulate meaning and show up the interrelatedness of things. The stories were not always positive but aspects of food always emotionally marked moments. The affect of these stories is alive in the telling, re-embodied. Raissa's account, like many within National Life Stories, made vivid a personal life. But it resists isolation. In the recounting, individual experience is storied within a place and a particular moment in time. That is, within a web of stories-so-far.

'Stories-so-far' is a phrase borrowed from Doreen Massey which animates much of this thesis (2005:9). Whilst Massey uses it to describe the interrelatedness, multiplicity, and ongoing construction of space (and subsequently, place) it finds foothold in this research in approaching ideas of self (memory), place (plot) and practice (production). Massey's main argument is that (space/)place is a temporal process, always unfolding, rather than fixed or closed (ibid). This thesis takes up these ideas as well as arguing that the self too, is always becoming (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). Exploring 'dynamic simultaneous multiplicity', unfolding stories-so-far are the central concern of this thesis (Massey, 2005:61).

Based in the blurry, peripheral spaces of Venice's Lagoon and the rural fringes of Bristol, this study looks at the relationship between food production, individual producers and plots of land: where bodies, soil, story and food come together. Whilst the questions that led into fieldwork remained intentionally open, they have resulted in particular tellings, of stories encountered rather than imposed.

The aim of this research is to explore food production through individual experience, and to make that everyday experience audible. The three questions that initially guided this undertaking were:

> What is the relationship of practice and story in food production?
> How are places experienced?
> What work does memory do in these productive plots?

Through responding to these questions, this study aims to hear and to understand what else is at stake for the individuals involved, beyond the purely commercial implications. And to show up the different means of sense-making that are negotiated through food production, in both narrative and practice.

As the field of food has exploded across disciplines (only increasing since the 'burgeoning' described by Murcott et al in 2013), the 'why food?' no longer needs such weighty introduction and justification. But as a focus on food does not stay neatly contained within food studies, but spills through the natural

sciences, nutrition, geography, history, psychology, agriculture, business, art, literature, through studies of consumption, valuation, and culture, around questions of food policy, food justice, flavour, or health… then, within this breadth, the which, how, why, to whom, and where need a little defining (see Murcott et al., 2013, for a thorough historical summary of the growth of the field). As one of my interviewees said of food production 'I dedicated myself to one thing—never mind that that "one thing" was thousands of different things' (Dario, Track 2).

This study initially grew out of an interest in further examining the dynamics between food, memory and practice. Despite an increasing tradition of food scholarship, in 2013, in her short essay which surveys the field of food and body, it is telling that Brembeck calls for more to be done on how the world is made sense of through sensory relationships (2013:32). Brembeck suggests that although a number of studies exist on the 'embodied nature of food and eating', this realm of overlap between food, body, memory and sensory sense-making remains under-examined (ibid: 31). (Key works include Seremetakis, 1994; Sutton, 2001; Stoller, 1989; Korsmeyer and Sutton, 2011; Heldke, 2016; Bell and Valentine, 1997; and West, 2013, 2014. There is also a plethora of food-centred texts that approach the links between food, memory, identity and migration such as Pavarti, 2011; Ray, 2004; Law, 2001; and Ben-Ze'ev, 2004). Important paths have been made through this terrain, directly and indirectly. More work, however, remains to be done exploring this realm of experience for producers and the way that sense-making plays into the production of place, foodstuffs and producer-identities; as well as more abstract concepts of tradition, artisan, heirloom and heritage foods all of which are often linked (if at times, still inexactly) to memory. This thesis responds to this by exploring these ideas practically—by working alongside food producers—and narratively, both through the narratives that unfold in place and in work, and through the recording of life story interviews. In this way it contributes to expanding what is audible.

## | Production

Notwithstanding the lexical contribution 'culture' makes to agri*culture*, the social science's cultural turn signalled a distinct orientation *away* from (food)production. This shift in attention brought a greater gaze to bear on consumption. Not just in the realm of food but more broadly, attention moved away from various forms of production, including food, and centred instead on ideas of identity produced through consumption (Miller, 1995). Twenty years ago the blurb on Miller's book described consumption as a 'very fashionable topic'. Interest in consumption, however, has remained prominent as a realm for exploring meaning and identity. Whilst Jackson and Thrift note that the study of consumption transcended traditional boundaries within geography (1995:203), and studies began to move beyond polarised accounts of consumption and production (for example, Jackson et al., 2000), a problematic divide between 'agricultural "production" sociology and the consumption "cultural" sociology of food' continues to be identified (as set out in Goodman et al., 2012:34, see also Whatmore, 2002, and Russell, 2003). This brings with it calls to 'bridge' these two areas of inquiry (Goodman et al., 2012; Brembeck, 2013b). This literature argues for looking at places of overlap between consumer and

producer in order to bring together 'how we "grow food" and how we "know food"' thus decreasing the asymmetry of academic labour on the 'two' subjects (Goodman et al., 2012:34.). This was where my initial research design focused its attentions, on collapsing this problematic space. But two pilot trips showed that within this call for bridging the gap another problematic divide was potentially being set up: that is, that to consider culture and agriculture simultaneously, we need to be looking at both consumer and producer. Whilst co-consideration of consumer and producer is necessary and important in demonstrating how these worlds are interdependent and inter-produced (for example how meaning is manufactured throughout the food chain, Jackson et al., 2010b), remaining assumptions that the cultural is the domain of the consumer and *not* the producer must also be addressed. We can only understand the relationships between producer and consumer once we see them not as linear but as overlapping webs of meaning, relationship and story (Whatmore, 2002). Whilst work on topics such as care or emotion are drawn in to studies of consumption, and how eating can be understood as 'constituting the human subject', these areas of attention also need to be incorporated into furthering our coming to know of production (Milne, 2013:67, also see Meah and Jackson, 2017).

Whilst not wanting to portray production as an 'autonomous "purified" categor[y]' (Goodman et al., 2012:34), this thesis returns to the producer: to know more about individual experience, story, practice, of how food is grown *and* known through production. Whilst a further direction of this work would be to widen it to include a closer examination of the consumer, in this thesis the concern is with meaning in the everyday realm of the producer. This thesis responds to calls for the inclusion of more 'bottom-up, descriptive, narrative approaches, which draw on lay discourses, as well as the top down, theoretical, explanatory approaches which have normally dominated' to explore agricultural livelihoods (Jones, 1995:47). It considers the practices of food production beyond their resulting, straightforwardly, in 'units of production' (Yarwood and Evans, 1998:159). Similarly whilst eating has been shown to go 'beyond its nutritional contribution to the self' to be key in both 'identity formation and its role connecting us to the past and to others, via memory, ritual and experience' this thesis shows these creative, connective potentials as they are encountered and put to work in production (Meah, 2013:62). I suggest that the 'growing distance between producers and consumers' is increased by a sound-bite economy, where calls for transparency (unintentionally or otherwise) lead instead to the marketisation or fetishisation of the producer which reduces rather than expands understanding of their experiences (Belasco, 2013:x). Life story interviews—existing at the other end of the spectrum from 'the sound bite'—work to counter this.

Whilst many studies around production have tended to focus on the commercial implications, the 'alternativeness' of non-mainstream production, or the production of the consumer (for example: Luetchford and Pratt, 2011; Krzywoszynska, 2015b; Watts, Ilbery and Maye, 2005; Allen and Kovach 2000; Guthman, 2003; Klein, 2009), this study takes the experience of the individual food producer as its central concern. This seemed to be most lacking at the point where producer and soil met. The sites in this thesis sit 'outside of the mainstream' but it is not their 'alternativeness' that I seek to study (Goodson et al., 2012:174). It is important, however, that this form of small-scale production is considered both 'vital' and 'precarious', and is becoming considered key in attempts to resolve the

overall precarity within a global food system (ibid). As Jones, states, we need to know more, qualitatively, ethically, experientially about the things we claim need 'saving', or whose plight 'we choose to ignore' (2014:127). Whilst in her doctoral work Jones found that sheep farmers in Wales consider their work in the production of food as divorced from the production of landscape (ibid: 128), this research found that there was far more of a relationship between the production of food and the production of plot and place. This is the experience that I explore in this thesis.

The 'everyday', where this work is situated, is a realm of life 'mythicised as the atopic and as the repository of passivity precisely because it harbours the most elusive depths, obscure corners, transient corridors that evade political grids and controls. Yet everyday life is also the zone of lost glances, oblique views and angles where micro-practices leak through the crevices and cracks of official cultures and memories' (Seremetakis, 1994:13). Producers are uniquely positioned in that they share in the everydayness of how food matters to humanity (to human bodies and identities, individual and social), but their everyday relationship with food is particular, in that it is also configured through the practices —bodily and narrative—of production. Similarly this thesis explores ideas of place and memory but grounded in the particularities of the relationships between individual producer and plot. The 'everyday' is a rich polytemporal realm where memory is key to storying and giving meaning to our sensory perception. Whilst I set out to specifically grapple with the nitty gritty of memory in daily life, part of this came to be about understanding *what else* was at work, where memory collaborated with the imagination or narrative. Being involved in the practices of all my fieldwork sites for over periods of between four and nine months allowed me to experience the everyday as a domain always made up of a different gathering of materialities, weathers, emotions and practices. Whilst I argue that skill is inherently storied—meaning, matter and narrative are all caught up in, and produced through, practice.

| Sensory and Narrative "Thickness"

As a realm of study, 'a realm of knowledge' (Goodman et al., 2012:44), food production calls for methodological and theoretical explorations that engage with bodies *and* stories. If practices are embodied (Ingold, 2011), so producing food is an embodied practice. If food is as much symbol and story as it is substance (Wilk, 2013:376; Heldke, 2016), then to make inquiries of food production calls for engagement that acknowledges this and interacts with the pungent stuff of food *and* the metaphors, narratives and practices within which food unfolds.

Whilst ethnography and life story interviewing are frequently treated as two distinct methodological and theoretical strands, this thesis shows how the narratives and practices encountered by combining these two methods, are enmeshed in experience.

By working alongside food producers, participant observation allowed me to feel and experience the practicalities of the everyday, to come to know through the body. This study was a sensuous scholarship, an engagement with sensuous geographies through sensuous ethnography (Stoller, 1997; Rodaway,

‘As the zones of amnesia and the unsaid expand in tandem with the increasingly formulaic and selective reproduction of public memory, the issue of narrativity becomes a zone of increasing political and cultural tension’ (Seremetakis, 1994:19).

1997; Pink, 2009). It takes seriously the ideas put forward by phenomenology: that by being in touch with the world we grasp it, that sense is made out in the world, intersubjectively, emerging from our movement through and our participation in different assemblages (Jackson, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1968); that ‘learning is understanding in practice’. (MacDonald et al., 2005).

At the same time this study asserts the importance of stories in all forms, that stories are bound up with this becoming in the world. They matter and are the matter of our meaning making (Jackson, 2002; Portelli, 1990, 1991; Merchant, 2013). The recording of life story interviews with the producers with whom I worked allowed for another layer of storying. There are many storied aspects of this study: the storying of practice, of place, of self (Smith, 1993; Somers, 1994), and my own creation of storied places in ethnographic writing (Pink, 2009). But as will be demonstrated through this research, life stories open up a particular space for stories to unfold, offering an interesting way in to a past constantly shaped by, and put into a working relationship with, the present. Of course there is much that goes unsaid in life stories. A life story interview is a singular telling, contingent on the moment of the recounting, however, they offer an important reference point for understanding how, what we experience in practice, is contextualised and related within the stories of self that we navigate by.

In bringing together participant observation and life story interviewing I hope to fulfil Gubriem and Holstein’s ‘need for narrative ethnography’ (2008:241). As Gubriem and Holstein point out, narrative is not formed in a vacuum but produced in concert with, and mediated through (rather than simply reflecting) relationships out in the world (ibid). In experiencing the daily present of production, therefore, I also, inversely, bring more understanding to what can be heard in the life stories interviews recorded.

I have written more on different aspects of life stories in section 12. In brief, however, life stories are long[1], tangent-tolerant, detail-rich and largely interviewee-led interviews, in which individuals give a biographical account of their experiences. Whilst the form is loosely chronological it jumps and loops and makes narrative slides of association. Although it is a performance preserved, there is nothing determined about the telling of a life story: it is both elaborate and necessarily partial, contingent.

Stories, this research suggests, cannot be so easily disentangled from how we come to know and interact with the world as bodies. ‘We tell ourselves stories in order to live’ (Didion, 1979:11). Story and body are not separate, they intermingle and draw upon each other, they don't adhere to Cartesian dualism but are permeable and contribute one to the other. This thesis does not privilege the body or the narrative, or try to rearrange hierarchies of perception, rather to flatten them. It looks instead to the ideas of Trevor

[1] Often more than five hours in length but can be as many as twenty hours per individual. The majority of the life story interviews undertaken for this research fell between five and eight hours of recorded material per producer.

Marchand of the ‘indissoluble relation between minds, bodies, and environment’ (2010). This research explores different ways of listening and what can be heard.

‘The thickness of the body’ Merleau-Ponty says is ‘the sole means I have to go unto the heart of the things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh’ (1968:135). Whilst the thickness referred to here is corporeal, I want to think about the thickness of the body both as textured and sensing flesh and organ, but also as having narrative thickness: bodies made up of nerves, memories and stories.

Both the listening, and the doing, of this research represent an ontological standpoint which does not choose between narrative or practice but values both, and the interaction and overlap between the two. When Massey introduces her concept of place as multiple stories-so-far she tries to lever ‘story’ away from its connotations (2005:12). By story, she says, she wishes only to ‘emphasise the process of change in a phenomenon’ (ibid). She wants to reject the narrative aspects of story, of something told or interpreted, and yet, these aspects of stories: crafted, shared, made out of words with the power to conjure, are an integral part of the unfolding of place and personhood. It is with a desire to focus on the political power of different conceptions of place that Massey turns away from these more ephemeral aspects of story. And yet, as Michael Jackson argues, storytelling—something told—can be a political, critical, relational and creative act; a ‘vital human strategy’ of transformative potential, actively working upon the world (2002:34). Importantly, stories allow multiplicity.

Even as oral history ‘creates’ narratives that will last: recording them, archiving them, making stories and people audible, it is not uncommon for these narratives to emerge from very short term relationships (Morley, 2018). Often, the interview-interviewee relationship is bound up, discreetly in that recording. Whilst this is not the case in oral history projects carried out within communities, Morley says of his interviewees, for instance, that they know almost nothing about him and they may never meet again once the interview is over (2018:np). The scholarly work carried out from interview material alone, understands the world and identity in narrative terms and is able to engage with the visceral only as it is described or re-embodied by the speaker. But some things, as Marchand reminds us, ‘can only be fully grasped in the doing and with long practice’ (2016:4).

As Pink says, by paying attention and participating in the practices, lives and plots of these producers I could not ‘directly access or share their personal, individual, biographical, shared or “collective” memories, experiences or imaginations’ (2009:40). Nonetheless by ‘aligning’ my body and story with theirs I became entangled in the ‘trajectories to which they relate’ (ibid), shaping them as well as being shaped by them: part of ‘a simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005:9). Taking part was an invaluable aspect of understanding the contribution of the sensory to sense-making, of understanding how words are enriched through doing, and how some coherences can only be found in the marriage of language and movement. This is a practical coming to know, an ethnography of food production that explores how stories are ’done’. But it is also an oral history project that engages with bodies and plots and extends our hearing of food production beyond the established to the precarious.

Detailing the ways in which the Arts and Humanities Research Council 'explicitly incorporated aspects of human geography within its purview', Driver compliments geography for its ability to be 'interpretative, imaginative and creative' (2001:443). '[H]uman geography in particular' he said 'has never simply been a social science: let us make the most of the opportunity to show why' (ibid). This thesis grapples with how to write about researching food production, experimenting with how to show research as emplaced, peopled and vibrant with aspects material and ethereal.

## | Producer Audibility

### *National Life Stories*

National Life Stories is a formidable undertaking. And an important exception to a lack of attention given to the individual voices of food producers. It is an extensive oral history project and record of everyday and professional experience. Whilst I have already commented on the discovery of the National Life Stories archive as a key point in my arriving at this research, I also went on to work directly with the collection in two ways. Firstly through an internship with the curator for food and feminist studies at The British Library—Dr. Polly Russell, and then through a joint fellowship that Polly and I undertook with the archive itself in a project called Food Matters. This project worked to find 'ways in' to the huge volume of the interviews, and to introduce new listeners, advocating for the value of the narratives preserved by the life stories. The interviews in English recorded for this research will also be deposited in The British Library as part of the National Life Stories archive.

The collection 'Food: From Source to Salespoint' alone makes audible the stories of over two hundred individuals working with food, from biscuit makers and butchers, farmers and factory workers, restauranteurs to retailers (see British Library Sounds, nd). The stories recorded recount the last century from many corners of the UK food industry. Whilst some, such as Sir Dominic Cadbury, or chefs Michel and Albert Roux have become household names, many of the other accounts are less likely to be recorded or enshrined in other ways, risking being 'forgotten' in the broad brush strokes of 'history'. And yet, these narratives are valuable in giving voice to individual experience within national and global shifts. They help to humanise and complicate more straightforward accounts of the past. Because these are stories around food they relate to the lives of whole clusters of people. In this way, the experiences they recount entangle individual and collective experience.

### *Precarious Professions*

The stories attended to in this research, however, represent another under-heard group. They are not being interviewed at the end of their careers when their consistent work history labels them neatly 'food producer', nor have they been chosen because they are prominent in their field. Some of the producers heard in this thesis juggle producing food with yoga, bar work or teaching physics. Others are in food production 'for the moment'. Nor have they always been food producers but have come to production

'It occurred to me there is no manual that deals with the real business of motorcycle maintenance, the most important aspect of all. Caring about what you are doing…' (Pirsig, 1974:27).

from occupations such as cleaning trains, building houses, or working for the council. These voices are related because they are food producers *right now*, but they contribute to a frequently inaudible group. They share a certain precariousness, and so, both through their spoken stories, and their day-to-day work we hear them at decision making junctures, within the flux of their businesses and professional identities: currently viable but with futures largely uncertain. Whilst this might not be the extreme precarity so many must endure, especially outside of the global North, as Tsing states, precarity is an 'earth-wide condition' (2015:19), it is the 'condition of our time' (ibid: 31). We need stories that narrate from within positions of instability and fluctuation if we are to make these states audible and to hear how this experience is grappled with, and made sense of. This thesis contributes to that project. This is not straightforwardly a financial precarity but an existential one: of belonging, or as some feel, a precarity of knowing.

Geography speaks a lot of displacement, movement, and dwelling, but Tsing stories a sort of belonging in precarity, if I can put it like that, a somewhere in between. For Tsing, precarity means 'work[ing] with what is available', being open to possibility whilst 'not being able to plan' but the producers in their thesis do not have that luxury (ibid: 252). They must plan, even if those plans will never be realised. These stories are not whole. I don't know what happens, what the ending is, and yet, I think there is huge value in listening now, in the thick of it, in the middle, in the everyday project that we are all engaged in: figuring it out. If 'the legitimacy of narratives, as well as that of identities, does not come from the past, but from the contemporary act of narration' then we cannot wait to hear these stories, because by then the self and the story will be different—making sense of a new present and thus a new version of the past (Santos, 2001:183).

Following Smart et al.'s comments on their own work, the methods of experiencing, thinking through, and writing this research, have also involved the re-crafting of stories, 'many small acts of imaginative creation [and] intuitive leaps' so that what is '"real" [can] never be taken for granted' (2014:11). This is not a technical account of food production, nor does it claim to make audible universal truths, but it traces what matters, and how, to individual food producers: place made specific through plot, meaning made particular through individual voice.

Why are these voices of value? First, they contribute to the ongoing project of nuancing understanding around 'manual work' which continues to be 'wide[ly] undervalu[ed]' (Marchand, 2016:27). They make audible not just what food producers *do* but the effects of what they do, who they are, and why food production matters, not just in obvious ways but unexpected ones. It is precisely because there are calls to bridge production and consumption that the individual producer needs to be reintroduced more prominently into that conversation. Producers already bridge these two realms, for them production is an everyday as well as a commercial activity. Second, these voices underline, and stand as an advocation for, the importance of the inclusion of the individual in all areas of research. Who this thesis makes audible has a profound impact on what it is able to say. This research is rooted in the conviction that all

individual stories are significant in furthering our grasp of how more abstract concepts such as place or identity are experienced and negotiated in practice. One limitation of this thesis is that it can only make heard a handful of people in a small number of specific plots; but the extent to which it is able to share those stories is also its strength.

Whilst food production is visible as a commercial and explicitly political realm, it is also an everyday and individual, lived domain (which brings with it different ideas of the political). This thesis complicates and humanises our understandings of the practice of food production by showing it as it unfolds, enacted by particular people with specific voices, biographies and orientations. Whilst understanding individuals as agents within culture, collective remembering and society, instead of dwelling in the intangibleness of 'culture', this thesis engages with particular bodies and stories, adding the complex lives of producers back into explorations of agriculture.

## | On the Verges of Two Cities

This research was carried out on the verges of two cities: the peripheries of Bristol in the UK, and the aqueous edges of Venice in Italy. Both cities are hybrid places, not purely urban contexts but ones that blur the boundaries, unsettling imposed binaries between urban and rural, land and water. The location of this fieldwork came out of speculation. My first concern was that the particularities of place—and the way they might shape various relationships—would be audible, as well as the individuals within this research. Working across more than one place, I hoped would make those specificities more explicit rather than becoming taken for granted, silenced. This is something I think that this thesis achieves. Initially I was keen to engage with different forms of memory in relationship with food. Bristol and Venice share histories of having been powerful port cities which situates them in a network of global relationships constructed through exploration and trade. Though both cities have undergone great transformation, their food-trade histories are sedimented into the form and texture of each. In research design, this allowed for different potential engagements with 'material memory' to emerge. Furthermore, ports are symbolic of these relational flows, described in Massey's work (2005). Despite these parallels, the two cities are historically, topographically, linguistically, climatically and 'gastronomically' different: two gatherings of particular sets of stories-so-far. This research was never meant as a comparison, rather it was about setting up possibilities to hear well, or hear better, through shifting perspectives.

### *Pilot Trips*

In preparation for fieldwork I conducted two pilot trips, which would further shape my ideas. During a week in both places: in Bristol's rural outskirts and the Venetian Lagoon, it was already apparent that plots were shaped by many things, among them inevitably their wider relationship with the adjacent cities. However, their daily engagement with materiality was orientated far more locally. Ultimately, the importance of the relationship between plot and city does not take prominence in this thesis, but place is

not a neutral background in this research; it is always specific. A key concern of this research was to value individual experience and narrative. Whilst the pertinence of these locations dates from ideas, or relationships considered to be of explicit importance pre-fieldwork, that during fieldwork were found to be implicit, or secondary in encounter, nevertheless they continued to serve the purpose of giving prominence to the individual. As it is the everyday that is the 'site' of interest, rather than the capturing of voices and experiences of individuals involved in 'hot' political moments, for example, then the things that emerged through doing are more important than those imagined towards in reading. There were also practicalities involved in locating this fieldwork. Bristol and Venice are both cities in which I have previously lived. Whilst before fieldwork I had never met any of my participants, I knew *of* some of the sites included here, and was able to identify their potential to offer interesting ways of approaching my research questions.

At the outset, in my first pilot trip to Bristol I spent two days working alongside a baker, a cheesemaker and a vegetable grower respectively. Further reading and my pilot trip to Venice, however, were instrumental in re-directing my attention more specifically towards the overlap between individual, food and plot rather than other areas of the food industry which I felt were already better covered in the literature. For instance, in its valuing of narrative, this thesis builds on earlier work by Russell (2003), who explores identity in the food industry. And yet, the food industry in Russell's study is a realm of manufacturing, distributing, developing, retailing, writing and cooking (ibid: 76). The relationship between producer and plot is absent. Whilst this is largely due to the volume of life story interviews that were being worked with, this thesis returns to make that absence present, both by locating this research at the point of overlap between producer and soil, and examining production through practice *as well as* narrative. Both trips resulted in my working with one or more of the individuals I met on them. Subsequent relationships unfolded or were sought out once fieldwork began or I was introduced by existing participants in the interim period. As well as knowing both cities and having a good grasp of Italian, I also shared acquaintances and points of reference with the individuals who would participate in my research.

As well as forging relationships with my research-participants-to-be, my pilot trip to Venice served another function. It showed up the frequency with which *Venezian*—Venetian dialect[2], rather than Italian was used as the communicative language between the Venetians with whom I would be working. Indeed, the older generation understood, but barely spoke Italian. Whilst I had known about the language—and spoke a few words and phrases—in hindsight, in my previous time in Venice I had peppered my Italian with a few colloquial interjections in *Venezian* only to feel a part of the place rather than for the sake of communication. The Venetians I knew dwelled in the urban hub of Venice. I had

[2] There is no single translation of Venetian *in* Venetian. The language is referred to variously as Venesian, Venessian venezsian, léngua véneta, or venessiano (although I've only rarely heard this final one). In literature I have seen it written as Venexian (Dursteler, 2013). I have chosen Venezian because it bears the closest resemblence to how it was pronounced by my research participants (although the final n was often inaudible). Strangely it doesn't exist in Boerio's 1856 Venetian dictionary other than as to refer to a person as Venezian. Instead he refers to Venetian in the Italian as 'Dialetto Veneziano'. Although we refer to Venetian as a dialect, this is a misnomer, it is actually a separate language (Dursteler, 2013:929).

little connection or experience of the Lagoon islands where Venetian is more widely spoken (Dursteler, 2013:940). Despite long acquaintance with the city, my first visit to the island of Sant'Erasmo (where much of my fieldwork would be based) had been only a couple of years previously. It's difficult to remember now the shock I felt at such a place existing so close and yet so different to the be-jewelled heart of Venice. With this new understanding of the linguistic situation I was entering into I was able to secure an additional grant from the ESRC to spend three more months in Venice than was initially planned. Despite my grasp of Italian, spoken Venetian beyond salutations was unintelligible to me. Venetian is not taught formally, and there are very few learning materials available. This training grant, whilst unable to help prepare me in advance of my visit, gave me more time for immersion, to get to grips with *Venezian*.

*Fieldwork*

> Arriving at the *Malamocco* vineyard to harvest, I meet Luppo its custodian for the first time. 'She's a *contadina* —an agricultural worker — too' Carolina says pointing at me (field diary, *Laguna nel bicchiere*).

In Bristol, my impression was that my participants saw me first and foremost as a researcher, doing research for my PhD at The University of Sheffield, and later as a friend. During fieldwork they often asked me about my research, my thoughts and directions. In Venice, however, I felt perceived differently. I was rarely asked about my research whereas I was often asked about my plans for working with the land that my fiancé and I were in the process of buying in Catalunya. Whilst I presented myself in identical fashion (although, possibly less coherently in Italian) I can only speculate that, whilst I had never worked with vegetables or cider (the materials at hand in Bristol), that I had some history of working with wine—although not directly with grapes (more frequently encountered in the Venetian sites)—effected how I was considered by my Venetian participants. Whilst I have never worked in agriculture or as a producer, my past in the wine industry, my basic knowledge of growing things picked up in childhood, and my future—in some way tied to a plot of land—meant that I straddled the boundary of insider/outsider during my research, undoubtedly helping me access and work on these plots. Furthermore, my English life story interviews will be housed at the British Library, contributing to the National Life Stories archive following this PhD. Whereas I have yet to locate an equivalent archive to house the interviews in Italian, knowing the archival home of their words helped my Bristol interviewees to mentally locate a future audience for the stories they recounted.

Over nearly eighteen months: eight months in Bristol and approaching ten in Venice, I worked alongside ten food producers and a cultural association spread over six main sites. It was often interesting having two people recount the same plot, as it gave a way in to the multiple experiences of place. Whilst I worked fairly equally across the sites, of those ten individuals I worked with some to a greater extent than others but recorded life stories with all ten. The life story interviews ranged from four and a half to nine hours in length per producer. As I will explain, in the sixth site, I ended up working with a cultural association rather than alongside an individual. In this case I didn't conduct life story interviews, but instead, short, informal interviews with a variety of members.

As well as long lasting narratives, in doing this research I have sought to make long lasting, trusting relationships. The build up of trust that forms the foundations of this thesis was fostered not only through listening but doing: relationships forged not only out of words but out of labour and sweat; out of shared time and co-created worlds. There were moments when I felt that the closeness of these working relationships hindered questions or writing, but overall, the effect was the opposite. Not only did the combination raise more interesting questions about where stories are located, it has created a 'sustainable' research field, open to return.

3

# FIELDWORK SITES

Bristol | July 2016 - February 2017

*Who's Who*

*The Walled Garden* | *Neil & Emily*

*Barley Wood Orchards* | *Bella & Ben*

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Venice | March 2017 - December 2017

*Who's Who*

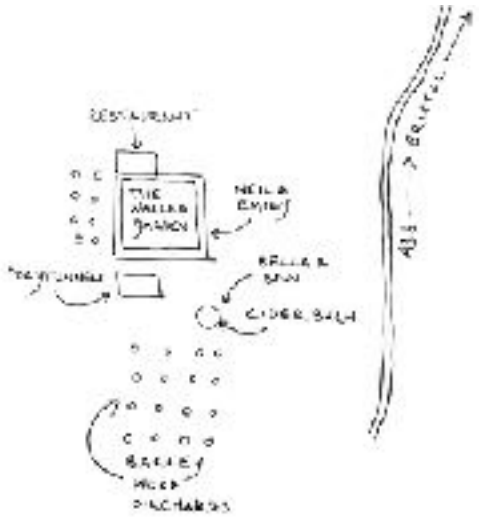
*La Maravegia* | *Stefano, Dario & Maria-Sole*

*Ernesto's plot* | *Ernesto & Donatella*

*Laguna nel bicchiere* | *Members*

*FUD/ Macchia Verde* | *Marco*

Bristol | July 2016 - February 2017



Neil

Emily

Bella

Ben

*The Walled Garden | Neil & Emily | Vegetable Growers*

In the rural skirts south of Bristol, just beyond the airport, sits The Walled Garden: an acre plot of fruit and vegetables enclosed in Victorian brick walls and flanked by orchards. I first encountered the garden, which would become my first fieldwork site, through the restaurant which overlooks it—The Ethicurean—housed in old glasshouses at the top of the grounds. Several years previous to my PhD, through my work in the wine industry I had run a series of sherry-education dinners in collaboration with the young chefs, but the garden, the orchards and the restaurant function as three separate, but adjacent, small businesses.

Before my fieldwork I had never met Neil, the gardener, but he welcomed me unquestioningly. That first day I only got through one sentence of my research intentions before Neil handed me a hoe and pointed me in the direction of a bed. The rest came later, over hundreds of cups of tea drunk in the poly-tunnels below the formal gardens.

Bristol born-and-bred, Neil took over running The Walled Garden in 2008. At the time of my fieldwork he was in his mid-forties, married, with a teenage daughter. He and his three sisters grew up with their Mum on the Hillfields council estate in North Bristol. He left school "around fifteen" with no qualifications, heavily into Punk and later, Acid-House. The majority of his school friends didn't make it to their forties because of drug abuse. Shifting from pot, to class-As, to mushrooms, to ecstasy, he worked first in construction, before going over to the Welsh valleys to work in a factory that made Quorn and ready meals for M&S. His main role was buying the cleaning chemicals and manufactured preservatives for the factory. The birth of his daughter Lily changed his trajectory dramatically and he moved back to Bristol to look after her. Only after Lily went to nursery did he return to work: as the council's liaison officer for travelling communities, a car sales man and latterly a gardener. Neil manages to radiate a sense of care and mirth and great gentleness. He shifts effortlessly between green tea and large volumes of cider, from exclamations at the wonder of vegetables to long strings of profanities.

During my fieldwork, Emily—at that time in her mid-twenties—was Neil's main helper and could usually be found at the garden seven days a week. She grew up a stone's throw from The Walled Garden, remembering her childhood as a "traditional English, middle-class upbringing" (Track 1). Although you can't glimpse it in her physical appearance, she suffered from anorexia from a very early age, becoming hospitalised by the age of twelve—soon after she'd begun at Bristol Grammar School. She ran semi-professionally, later gaining scholarships to both UK and American universities although dropping out of both. She'd been continuing to struggle with the structure of 'normal jobs' when Neil adopted her from the garden's restaurant in 2014 and gave her the flexibility to come and go as she pleased. Following my period of fieldwork Emily was grappling with the decision of whether to stay at the garden or not. Quiet on first meeting, Emily questions the world intensely, her musings and reading run wild and broad and our conversations followed the contours of what is both intimate and abstract. Whilst Neil and Emily were incredibly close, the blurry relationship of care, friendship, interdependence

and work at times acted as an obstacle to easy conversations about pay and job roles, and in some ways added to Emily's precarity at The Walled Garden. In those months I became very close to Emily and Neil and found it difficult to leave the garden behind.

The Walled Garden

The poly-tunnels

*Barley Wood Orchards | Bella & Ben | Cider and Juice Producers*

Roughly the first half of my fieldwork-time in Bristol was spent with Neil and Emily and the second half with Bella and Ben[1].

Barley Wood Orchards run adjacent to, and beneath, The Walled Garden. Both plots, originally part of a large estate, now share the same owner from whom the sites are rented. As well as making juice and cider from these two orchards, Bella and Ben also pick at other, older orchards, and even single trees in private gardens around Bristol and the Mendip Hills. Barley Wood acts as their centre, however, and they press, ferment and bottle all of their produce in a two-storey, wooden-clad cider barn built by the land's owner which sits alongside one of the orchards.

Although they had been involved in the cider-making work at Barley Wood Orchards over the previous vintages, Bella and Ben had only taken over running the cider business as I embarked on fieldwork. This was their first go at making cider and juice independently. At the time of my fieldwork they were both in their early forties, a couple for over a decade, without children and living communally in a big farm house ten minutes from the cider barn. They would identify their relationship as long-term but non-monogamous, and, though they had grave misgivings about marriage, I attended their wedding the following year under the threat of Brexit.

Ben, son of a rural doctor and nurse, grew up in Norfolk with his three siblings in a landscape of industrially-farmed sugar beet and rape. After university he felt catapulted into world politics through becoming involved in the West Papua Freedom Movement. His mannerisms are very relaxed, his tall frame languid and open. Bella is his opposite in this respect; her diminutive stature always animated, rarely still. An only-child of Korean-German descent Bella grew up first in Korea, then Hawaii, then Germany, before coming to the UK in her twenties with the anti-roads movement. A roller-derby-ing kick-boxer, a self-defence teacher with a degree in nutrition, a caterer: producer is just one of Bella's 'hats'. Similarly Ben, who has a PhD in astro-physics still teaches physics both at the University and at a college for students with learning difficulties. The couple have shared many projects and still have a catering company with a cookbook to its name. Anarchists and activists, they worked together on mass-catering projects, direct action, and set up a co-operative social centre and a multitude of side projects in Brighton where they lived for many years in communal and cooperative houses. Production for them is a key means of resisting alienation although at times the move from rioting to picking apples has had its challenges.

They welcomed me in a different way from Neil and Emily valuing the addition of my extra pair of hands. As it was their first year there were many unknowns and as a consequence it frequently felt like a race against time to keep on top of the bags of apples coming in, processing them before they rotted. We functioned as a working team in a way quite different from my experience at the garden where we were

[1] I lost November for medical reasons.

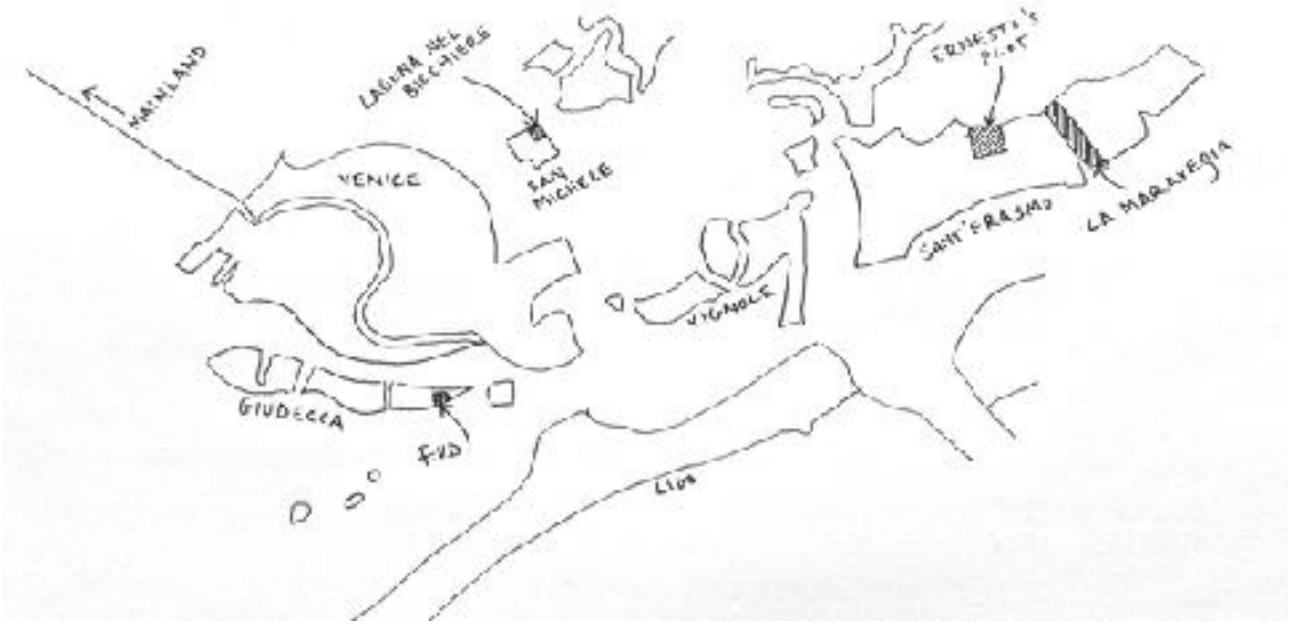
more likely to work alone but take breaks together. My time with Bella and Ben was far more focused around the job-in-hand and often we finished after dark and headed straight home in exhaustion. Throughout fieldwork our relationship was all about apples and cider, water buckets, scratting machines, cheese-cloth and presses, a different form of coming-to-know. It was only after the cider was in tank and during the recording of the life story interviews that I spent more ‘down time’ with the pair.

As my Bristol sites had been so close together, and apple-work hadn’t always happened every day I had continued to interact with Neil and Emily and to get a sense of the changes happening in the garden alongside my work with Ben and Bella. Since my Venetian fieldwork followed my time in Bristol I had more time to establish access and so launched into all four field sites on arriving in Venice. Bristol had given me a sense of the importance of relationships unfolding over time and I wanted to experience each place over as many seasons as possible.

The orchards

The cider barn

Venice | March 2017 - December 2017



Ernesto

Donatella

Stefano

Dario

Maria-Sole

Marco

*La Maravegia—'Wonderland' | Stefano, Dario & Maria-Sole | Growers: Vegetables, Medicinal Plants, and Vines on the Way | Sant'Erasmo*

I met Stefano and Dario on a week-long pilot trip for my PhD fieldwork in the spring of 2016. *La Maravegia,* a word in *Venezian*—Venetian Dialect meaning something akin to 'wonderment', is a nine acre productive plot on the largest island in Venice's Northern Lagoon: Sant'Erasmo. The smallholding is a long narrow strip that almost bridges the entire width of the island. Owned by an elderly German couple who have a large property at one edge, the plot had gone un-cultivated for over a decade and was overgrown and inaccessible until the four founding members of *La Maravegia*—all men then in their late twenties—took over the running of the land in 2014. Two of the original four men left the project within a year leaving Stefano and Dario. Whilst they pay a peppercorn rent for their use of the ground, short contracts and the need to invest heavily leave them little security.

*La Maravegia* is split into many lots. Towards what feels like the 'top' is a semi-permanent structure with a kitchen and living area that the men built using reclaimed materials with students from IUAV—Venice's University of Architecture. As well as producing vegetables, the aim for *La Maravegia* was to create a place of collaboration that would bring together individuals with different skills. For instance, during my fieldwork they worked closely with a co-operative market; Magda brought her bee hives to the plot; Andrea used the willow growing along the canal inlets to make baskets; ornithologists conducted tours; and Stefano's girlfriend brought groups of school children to plant, harvest or cook.

It was a tense time to be working at *La Maravegia*. Dario too was pulling away from the project leaving Stefano, who, wanting to remain on the island, was torn between still laying plans to plant a vineyard and crippling doubt about the future of *La Maravegia*. During my fieldwork I mainly worked alongside Stefano or Maria-Sole—a more permanent collaborator in her late fifties—who was growing a patch of medicinal plants near the 'bottom' of the ground. I still spent time with Dario, however, overlapping as he took on different agricultural projects in the Lagoon, among them: *Laguna nel bicchiere* and FUD (see following pages). Maria-Sole had been a dancer, living more than a decade in France. In her thirties she returned to Italy after the sudden death of her partner, first to study languages, then to work as a herbalist and latterly to grow plants with curative properties and to teach people about edible wild-things. She grew up in rural Veneto to the west of Venice.

Stefano had not come to the plot to be a producer *per se*. Originally from Mestre, the first urban area of Venice's mainland, he began working as a builder and craftsman long before he left school. Though we were the same age—by then just over the brink of thirty—he seemed much older. In the original plan of *La Maravegia*, his involvement centred around machinery, and anything that might need constructing at the plot. It was Stefano that had led the initiative with the architecture students to build the rudimentary dwelling, a 'look-out tower' and a bridge at the property. The subsequent pulling away of the other associates left him to 'be' everything. Dario, also from Mestre, had a media and cultural management degree. The plan had been for him to run events and manage collaborative projects. The two men that

had left *La Maravegia* soon after it had begun had also been the ones with specific interests in viticulture and production.

*La Maravegia* hut


*La Maravegia* plot

*Ernesto's Orto—'Plot' | Ernesto & Donatella | Wine Makers, Vine and Vegetable Growers | Sant'Erasmo*

Through Stefano and Dario, during my pilot trip to the Lagoon, I also met Ernesto and Donatella: a couple, at that time in their mid-seventies—their son grown up with his own two children under ten. Ernesto had been instrumental in the four young men gaining access to the land that became *La Maravegia*, and he had been their teacher—their *maestro*—and they his apprentices in learning about viticulture, viniculture and agriculture. For more than a year they had learnt from him on a daily basis but now they rarely touched base, meeting perhaps at the ferry stop at the end of the day.

Ernesto's plot is small but densely productive. I say Ernesto's plot because there is a sense that it is his domain. Whilst Donatella helps him with production, the produce becomes more interesting to her when it leaves the vegetable patch and enters the kitchen. A central path ends at a pump set over a cast-iron bath and a small, stone dwelling, a sort of garden sitting room cum store room, housing chairs, tables and two stoves. There's no electricity. The ceiling is obscured by nets and the walls are festooned with trophies from the days when Ernesto and Donatella would both compete in Venice's regattas. Outside is a patio where Donatella entertains and a domestic scene of potted pansies, roses and hanging baskets that gives way to vegetable beds. There are two other sheds: one for pressing the wine and the other for fermenting and bottling it. The rest of the plot is devoted to vines and artichoke beds. Whilst there are a couple of other varieties, the grape Ernesto prizes above all is the *Dorona*, a grape thought to be autochthonous to Venice. Similarly Sant'Erasmo is known for the violet artichoke but Ernesto champions a particular, unpopular form of it: the rose.

Ernesto talks a lot about vines, and wine, soil and working it by hand. On the subject of his craft he is a natural raconteur, delivering speeches in Venetian with carefully weighted words. I came to understand everything Ernesto had to say on the subject although my spoken grasp of the language has fast faded. On the topic of the moon, or the Lagoon, Ernesto waxes lyrical, but he speaks very little of his previous working life. Ernesto hasn't always been a winemaker. Nor does he live on Sant'Erasmo although he knows every particularity of this plot and sees far beyond the visible of what is here. Born on Sant'Erasmo, it is, he says "the place that is always in my heart" (Track 1). His childhood was spent first on the island of the Giudecca—half a kilometre to the south of Venice—and later the island of Murano, where he still lives, three kilometres west of Sant'Erasmo. As a child he worked alongside school—which he left before he turned eleven—helping his dad with his fruit and vegetable stall (produce that arrived from the mainland) as well as a stint as a trainee hairdresser. As an adult he made a living cleaning the trains, the pension from which supports them now. Donatella worked in garment factories until they married and had their son—who is now a glass blower on Murano but lives on the mainland. Twice every day Ernesto makes the return trip between islands. In the morning he tends his plot on Sant'Erasmo alone before lunch on Murano with his wife and son. After lunch, the couple return to Sant'Erasmo together for the afternoon. The custodianship of this plot, where Ernesto's vines grow and his wine is made, came down through Donatella's family, and after her father's death—when her brother was going to give up the lease—they took it on.

I came to treasure the morning hours when it was just Ernesto and I working side by side. There was a closeness to those moments, sharing the place and sharing a practice. He seemed to gain great pleasure from teaching me, and through being taught I felt a sense that he was taking care of me. The couple referred to me as *Orza* or *Orzatina*, a diminutive and affectionate play on a literal translation of my name. But the relationship between myself and Ernesto and Donatella was not always straightforward. The Lagoon is webbed by myriad, personal politics. Though I had purposefully avoided working with Bisol, a producer who had actively written Ernesto out of their 'brand story' despite his fundamental role, I had not anticipated other fractures. At times, my working alongside *Laguna nel bicchiere* caused upset. Ernesto and Donatella viewed their project as dishonest, stemming in part from a disagreement between the couple and the project that had never been resolved.

Work at Ernesto’s plot

The *cantina*—the wine cellar and the patio at Ernesto's plot

*Laguna nel bicchiere—'Lagoon in a glass' | Cultural Association with Many Members | Wine Makers and Vine Growers | San Michele*

For a decade I had sought out the wine of *Laguna nel bicchiere*, only ever coming across empty bottles, other peoples' keep-sakes that only served to make it more tantalising. I felt a great intimacy with the city of Venice having spent time there over the previous twenty years, and yearned to try her *vino salso* —her saline wine. Venice is a place that appears at first to visitors to be built out of stone and water, its productive lagoon often not attracting much attention. I thought that trying wines originating from the city would open a deeper sense of place for me. In 1993 *Laguna nel bicchiere* was begun by a teacher—Flavio Franchischet—with the same desire for his students at P.F.Calvi; to give them another sense of their city. 'The educational aim was to cultivate a coming-to-know of the ground (/the territory), to perceive its colours, its smells, the tastes of the season and of the earth and to give the students the role of the protagonist' in the whole, hands-on, emplaced process of wine-making (Franchischet, 2015:np). Their first wine was christened Calvino. In 2008 it became a cultural association and was formally designated *Laguna nel bicchiere, le vigne ritrovate*—'Lagoon in a glass, the re-found vineyards'. The Association retains its didactic aspects but it has grown to take in a broader community.

The vineyards tended by the Association are scattered across *i sestieri*—the six neighbourhoods of Venice and the islands of the Lagoon including: Il Lido, Le Vignole, Le isole della Giudecca, and L'isola di San Michele. They were often parcels of vines that had fallen out of use in the grounds of religious orders or on private land that the Association seeks to bring back to productivity. As the (paid) membership of the Association has grown, it is now able to financially support one individual per plot who becomes responsible for the vines and for organising participation. San Michele, the city's cemetery island, is the Association's 'headquarters'. The shell of an abandoned Camaldolese monastery hides both a vineyard at its heart, and the cellars in which the monks had made wine. Whilst it is rumoured that San Michele was inhabited from around the year 1000, the ground was consecrated and inhabited by Camaldolese monks from 1212 until the mid 19th Century (Panfido, 2016:169). *Laguna nel bicchiere* now cultivates the plot and uses the cellars to vinify all the grapes harvested from the disparate vineyards.

Whilst I had planned to work alongside Flavio, the founder and president, he passed away the week I arrived in Venice. I never met him. Due to Flavio's death, my participation in the Association was less structured than with my other plots in the Lagoon. As there were many people involved in the Association's now chaotic workings, I didn't spend extended time with any one individual but got to know seven or eight members well and also undertook work for the Association alone. I became referred to as 'our super-worker Welsh-girl', which reflected not only the lack of work that many other members were inclined to do, but also that the members I met only a handful of times struggled to remember my unusual name. I haven't included the members in the individual 'who's who' because, individually they do not play the roles of protagonists within this thesis. Nevertheless my time spent among them was of huge value. I worked both on my own, with large groups of members or alongside Pep, responsible for the San Michele vineyard, or Sandro, responsible for overseeing the wine-making.

San Michele, vineyard and cellar

*Laguna nel bicchiere*, harvest

*FUD/ Macchia Verde—'FUD/ Green Stain' | Marco | Vegetable Grower and Project Manager | Giudecca*

Summarising Marco's projects is more difficult. Centred around permaculture they are projects of both theory and practice that aim for social, soil and urban regeneration. His sites too are various, spreading and overlapping, with differing outlooks. Whilst all of Marco's sites produce food he does not have a strong sense of himself as a producer.

His main site is Zitelle—the gardens of a retirement home on the island of the Giudecca which lies five hundred metres to the south of Venice's urban heart. Its gardens back on to those of the Cipriani, a 5* hotel and restaurant for whom Marco produces edible flowers and vegetables. To some extent this site epitomises his work. It is a meeting point for many different groups; however, it is also a place of tension-in-practice between different parties. Whilst he has custodianship of the vegetable beds, the vines running up the middle are tended by *Laguna nel bicchiere* and the plots become the battlefield for differing ideologies.

Marco grew up in the countryside in Friuli, the region to the north of Venice, on the mainland. On the occasions that he speaks dialect with other Friulians it becomes their own private language, so different in form is it from *Venezian*. He works closely with Serena, his wife and partner of fifteen years. She is an actress but they have found common ground in the aims of theatre and permaculture and combine the two in what they call perma-teatro. At the time of my fieldwork the couple were in their late forties and had two children, Ned (ten) and Rosa (six). They were about to move house and wanted to extend a permaculture philosophy to setting up a home and a community. In everything he did Marco forefronted a relational philosophy of the world as complex and constituted by a multiplicity of connections. In transforming material sites, and in pragmatism, he never overlooked magic.

My time with Marco was concentrated at Zitelle where we would always meet once a week but it became a centre from which we were often moving. I would accompany him as he spoke to architecture students at the university, met with the cooks in the kitchen garden of the island-hotel on Sacca Sessola, began an allotment with hospitality students in the neighbourhood of Castello, consulted on a hidden garden on the island of San Giorgio, ran open permaculture days on the Giudecca or conducted *perma-teatro*—perma-theatre with his wife at Villa Heriot with a group of unemployed Venetians. Working alongside him took me all over the city and Lagoon into many forlorn, untended and overlooked green plots. His role was to re-ignite their potential, to draw people's attention to them, or he would be called on to set these processes in motion. Whilst he was often on the move, the practicalities of ongoing production were largely delegated to Bogdan—a Bulgarian construction worker—and Pablo, a Roman film-maker who was making a film about Marco but had ended up working for him instead over the last eighteen months.

Zitelle

Volunteer at Zitelle. Visiting a stone-locked new project

4

# CUMULATIVE STORIES

The methodological, theoretical and empirical elements of this research are intimately related and interdependent. The structure of my thesis aims to reflect this understanding. Rather than present detailed sections on theory or method up front, I have interleaved the body of this thesis with methodological discussions, explicitly interweaving the research process with the production narratives. The inclusion of these methodological discussions works against concealing their particularities or glossing their difficulties. It works against assuming or stating their neutrality. By structuring my thesis in this way I create a dialogue that draws attention to the essential relationships between theory, encounter and interpretation (Gent, 2014). Whilst my introductory section has gone some way to positioning the work of this research, the literature this thesis engages with more directly is threaded through the unfolding stories of plot presented in each section. Assembling the thesis in this manner seeks to maintain an awareness of the plots presented as 'ethnographic places' produced by being researched and written about, and keeps the presence of the researcher within the text (Pink, 2009:38).

Collectively these sections tell the human stories of plot, both one and many. The thesis sections are uneven and cumulative—rather than hierarchical, or chronological. For navigation purposes each section is numbered sequentially and each section has been placed in a particular relationship with the sections around it but each speaks to the others in this research. If readers prefer to read all of the methodological discussions together, however, they can be found in sections 5, 8, 12 and 16. All sections bring together both ethnographic experiences of fieldwork and narrative from life story interviews. Some sections focus on one or two plots giving greater audibility and depth to individual voices. Others, however, draw on material from various sites. Sections are therefore gathered around particular stories rather than presenting case studies in isolation. Sections 3 and 20 can be used as reminders of plot and person.

## | The Sections

The sections still to come, unfold as follows:

5

is on *doing*, but part of its argument is that 'hearing' takes time. It discusses two very different periods of fieldwork—one in Bristol with Neil, one in Venice alongside Ernesto—that I came to understand as two forms of apprenticeship. It describes a gradual expanding in understanding of what *doing* food production, and what *doing* ethnography entail, and so approaches the idea of apprenticeship both in the agricultural field and as a researcher.

6

is a tiny archive. A story of tomatoes via their seed packets.

7

Seeds planted in this section grow into more expansive stories that wend their way through the other sections of this thesis. Its focus is heirlooms. Situating itself mainly at The Walled Garden in Bristol, this section contemplates heirlooms and different forms of story. It shows how Neil and Emily are produced in particular roles through their engagement with heirloom vegetables. This section moves from heirloom tomatoes to an heirloom tattoo that Neil has had inked into his back. The tattoo illuminates not only the discussion around heirlooms, and what can be approached through different methods, it also underscores the extraordinary to be found in each person's ordinary. These personal strategies for meaning-making are precisely the reason that valuing individuals works to re-furnish our ideas of the world.

8

explains the different types of work I aim for photographs to achieve in this thesis. A handful illustrate the text, but most seek to go beyond it; to resonate with it; to add layers of experience for the reader which gesture towards the thickness of place; the possibility within experience; the multiplicity of stories ongoing, unfolding. Some were acts of photography wielded as a tool to step back, others are small documents, records in their own right.

9

There is no *one* essential *thing* which is tradition. That is the argument of this section. It engages with the work of Annemarie Mol to 'interfere' in discussions of tradition, proposing that understanding tradition through the practices that enact it, rather than looking *for* tradition, might move discussion away from attempts at locating or defining tradition and grapple instead with how it is done in everyday life. To this end it seeks to follow tradition as it is done by Ernesto on his plot on Sant'Erasmo in the Lagoon, and by his apprentice Stefano at *La Maravegia*, through the narrative and bodily practices of winemaking and vegetable growing. It shows the effects of enacting multiple ontologies of tradition and speculates that desire might have something to do with how these multiple ontologies hang together despite the inevitable friction of multiplicity. In so doing it also contributes to the discussion of apprenticeship which threads its way through the thesis.

10

show's Ernesto's plot. It thickens encounter with person, plot and practice, and engages with the unique praxiographic story that enacts tradition here.

11

This section is revealing of some of the thought-work that went into this thesis. It shows the limitations of my methods for getting at everything I was curious about, but although it speculates more than it can show, it provides key coordinates for how ideas of self, practice and place were understood. It tells a largely theoretical story of the workings of memory, arguing that the 'secret' of skill is individual biography. Whilst my contemplation of heirlooms proposes that story is at work in memory's name, this section explores memory *as* storied. It picks up the apprenticeship thread, extending the conversation from section 5 and section 9.

12

is on listening, hearing and storytelling. This section asks questions: what does it mean to listen?, what are we able to hear? It talks about the experience of life story interviewing as well as the value of the

stories themselves. It shows life stories as an exchange, and it discusses what life stories might be made up of.

13

is a portrait of fieldwork with apples, Bella and Ben (cider and juice makers), in the rural outskirts of Bristol. This section provides the reader with a doorway into the primary experience of working with apples. Whilst these field notes are not directly analysed, this section tells and shows aspects of what is in grasp. Bella's forthcoming account in section 14, meanwhile, dwells on what is out of grasp, making the process meaningful in another manner. This section seeks to materially populate the reader's imagination prior to Bella's discussion of the importance of process and product of production. It also, importantly, gives a glimpse into the doing of fieldwork, lending another texture to the text as a whole.

14

Rupture and repair are understood here as processes. This section looks at what form these ongoing connections and disconnections take, where, how do they feel, how are they encountered and practiced or negotiated through food production. This section draws heavily on the narratives of Maria-Sole and Bella. Maria-Sole grows herbs and foodstuffs, often with medicinal properties in the Lagoon. She is also an educator, teaching people about the properties of wild plants, facilitating encounter. She identifies alienation as beginning in the body, through an orientation away from the interconnectedness of the senses: something she tries to heal with her work. Bella, on the other hand, finds connection through the control of a whole process, a sensory knowing of apples from fruit to juice to cider. Bella's narrative is contextualised by section 13. Disconnection is shown not to be a process that evades notice, but one that the doing of food production uncovers. Processes of repair and sensing connection are shown to be subjective and patchy. Ultimately the section argues for a re-orientation, away from dominant narratives of nature to hear instead relationships in the particular.

15

is a tiny archive of the materiality of apples.

16

lays bare some of the processes involved in the making of this thesis. Translation overflows its category and I discuss the dynamics between language and practice. In my account of transcription and analysis, I argue for the potentially creative process of transcription but against the transcript and *for* the spoken word. This sections shows up some of the challenges of grappling with the different forms of story that feed this research.

17

is a collection of stories about place crafted through food production. It builds up resonances between stories, offering different ways that places are heard, crafted, dwelled within, imagined, experienced and mapped. It considers how cultivation can be enacted as care, without idealising place. It is a reminder that home is not harm-free and story is not without hierarchy. It engages with place as physical and fantastical, narrative and practice, connected and disconnected, but always unfolding. Whilst grappling with place, this section traverses many plots and draws on many producers: from the cellar and vineyard of *Laguna nel bicchiere*, hidden at the heart of a Lagoon-locked cemetery, and its remembered founder, Flavio, to the constellation of projects set in motion by Marco, spreading a green stain through Venice. It

puts different times and places in conversation: maps drawn five centuries apart, and practices separated by a thousand miles.
18
is not so much an ending as a discussion of the mid-points where this thesis is positioned. In summing up, it contemplates what has been possible and what has not. Rather than new beginnings, it offers potential directions that this research could continue unfolding into.

In presenting the thesis in this manner I have been influenced by the form of work by Lyn Hejinian (particularly My Life, 1987), Claire Louise Bennett (particularly Pond, 2015b) and Robert Macfarlane (particularly The Old Ways, 2012; and Landmarks, 2015).

All three authors use groups of small stories as means of exploration. Bennett writes fiction—short stories gathered together into a non-linear narrative that nevertheless feels like it also forms one bigger, single story: a phenomenological and emotional exploration of self-hood, environment, and solitude. Whilst the female protagonist, the thinker of her stories, may not be the same in each fragment, we come away with a tangible feel for what being human in these circumstances is like, whether she is one woman or many. Macfarlane and Hejinian write literary non-fiction. Macfarlane intertwines different journeys he experiences personally with the written journeying and experiences of the lives of other authors, again in a collection of stories that nevertheless contribute to a larger sense of a topic of why landscape or language matter. Hejinian is a prose poet writing about her own life. Her poetic memoir My Life is broken into thirty-seven sections, each of thirty-seven lines, one for each year of her life lived at the time of writing. Single sentences carry little stories. Each block is, in one way, a new story and yet there is repetition; stories reappear. It is a picture of an individual in which multiplicity is storied to create a sense of self. In all three texts, the individual parts exist individually as well as contributing to the heterogeneous grouping formed out of the gathering together of those stories. These texts feel similar to read in that one comes away full of stories ordinary and extraordinary.

All of the sections in this thesis are an individual contemplation and yet they are not separate from the work of this thesis overall: the same threads, thoughts and voices move through all of it. I did not choose the form before the thesis started to come into being, but I realised as I was writing it that I seemed to have many fragments, that nevertheless related, told multiple stories within the experience of food production. This cumulative effect reminds me of these writers and is, I think, valuable in its ability to approach feel through resonance, and experience in motion—always unfolding.

The ideas put forward in this thesis remain propositional. I do not pretend to have found, or to present, truth, but stories into it. These ways of thinking were not conjured up in theory alone but cobbled together out of practice and narrative in relation with people in place. ‘Cobbled together’ is a phrase used by one of my participants, not to convey a slap-dashed-ness but to gesture towards the contingency of craft, however precise, that is always drawing on a shifting environment. In this way I hope this thesis approaches complicated particularities, capturing not data but humanity—that most idiosyncratic of universals.

5

# D O I N G
## Two Apprenticeships

### The Walled Garden

*The Inventory of Behaviours*

---

### Ernesto's Plot

*Willow Tethers*

'One doesn't arrive -in words or in art- by necessarily knowing where one is going' (Hamilton, 2010:68).

Doing ethnographic work is a continuous learning process. During fieldwork I was not only learning about food production, I was also continuing to learn about doing research *throug*h the doing of it. Unfolding, becoming. Learning happens '*between* people and *with* the world' and so it is always particular (Marchand, 2010b:s1, original emphasis). In its practical guise as participant observation, and in its written form, ethnography is about inhabiting curiosity, about playing out inquisitiveness and paying attention. Both require a willingness to dwell in not-knowing, to acknowledge it, and to go with it, to be open to whichever un-knowns inquiry may lead you through. This is not passive, it is not through happenstance that we happen-across but through exploration which remains engaged, which involves work. Not knowing, as Hamilton says, 'is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response' (2010:68). '[P]articipant observation', Ingold tells us, 'should be understood, in the first place, not as ethnographic but as educational' (2017:23). Doing attentively, is learning. Doing transforms our perspective, transforms our observation, and, transforms our ability to hear what we are listening to. And so we not only participate in a re-shaping of the world—however tiny—we are also continuously altering our understandings of it (ibid).

Neil: “It’s good to feed people, it’s a nice feeling”.
*BB: Tell me about the people that work for you.*
Neil: “Well. They’re all mad. They’d have to be. I’ve had like, loads of people, and loads of volunteers over the years. [..] Sam’s been with me since day one, and she’s um, you know she’s got her problems, but she’s just like a sowing machine I call her, she’s just, she’s got fingers, her dexterity is unbelievable. She can put the finest seed, the smallest seed, like singular seed in one module, whereas I cannot, I haven’t got the patience but you know she, and everything she does totally, like *it is not* the right way to do it but she just does it how she’s want to do it and it all comes up. And if I do it, how I believe it should be done, all very you know, oh no, these seeds need virilising, virilisation, and then you put ‘em right on the top with a little dressing of vermiculite, they don’t, it doesn't happen or it’s really patchy germination, whereas Sam just like pokes a pencil into the soil, drops a seed like down to the bottom, covers it up, packs it over and they all grow —they’re like happy to be touched by her hands, she’s got green fingers, definitely. And basically that’s all she does, she just sows seeds, yeah and she’s amazing, she’s amazing. She comes in on Fridays half nine ’til about twelve but she’s a great friend, really nice friend. She’s got her issues, she’s bi-polar, and she’s had a few wobbles over the years it’s great for her to come to the garden, to such a beautiful place, environment. You know, she listens to my music, which um, yeah, she’s getting into the punk now, slightly, if she’s not going through a mad phase, she can be a bit crazy like that. And then there’s——”
*BB: How did it come about that Sam came to work at the garden?*
Neil: “Ah she volunteered for Wrington Greens before, but all they had her doing was just pulling bind weed out, just on her knees, pulling bind weed out, whereas y’know I like, anyone that comes up and helps me here, I like them to have a bit, I dunno, like, have something to eat together, have a good old chat, and, I dunno, a bit more involved I dunno, but yeh so she contacted me a short while after I started and I didn’t even know what I was doing, but when she started doing this sowing stuff it was just like wow. This is, this is…She is the saviour. [..] We just enjoy the fresh air, hang out, we just talk, we just talk rubbish and *laff*. Yeah, Sam, she’s good. True friend. She knitted me a Mexican wrestling balaclava for my birthday present which is amazing, which, I love it”.

(Neil, main gardener at The Walled Garden, Bristol, Track 9).

Neil: “You’re just constantly learning stuff”.
*BB: When people come to you, how do you teach them how to do it?*
Neil: “I dunno, I don’t really. I sort of, I just show them what I do and that’s, that’s it, I don’t know about teaching, it’s just, I don’t know, it’s just errr, um, I don’t know, it’s hard to explain —um— teaching sounds a bit formal, I don’t know, it’s like tying in tomatoes y’know, side shooting and tying in, I show someone how but then it’s by them doing that, I mean it’s practice, it’s the same with anything” (Neil, Track 9).

As a teacher, it was rare that Neil—the main gardener—directly critiqued, suggested, adjusted or intervened. As the long extract on the previous page shows, whilst he might have an idea of how something ‘should’ be done he allows the people around him to concoct their own way, to learn through their own attention and relationship with the world around them. As Lave says, ‘there is always more than one relation of knowing and doing in play’ (2011:156). At other times Neil guides attention. One year, after digging up the onions, Emily—his main helper—cut their stems short and shore them of their outer, imperfect skins. Neil said nothing. He doesn’t come across as being comfortable with being a ‘boss’. The next year, however, at the same point of the year she arrived at work to find the job already begun. Except this crop sat with long straggling stems and toughened, outer skins intact. Almost a year after that she noticed that the second year’s onions had remained firmer and were less flecked by mould than those she had ‘neatened’ the previous harvest. In hindsight, Neil had guided this comparison through experience rather than just telling her how to do it. Apprenticeship, defined by Grasseni in its broadest sense, is ‘a relational and contextual process that shapes specific skills of perception’ (2007:206), an ‘education of attention’ (Ingold, 2000). At The Walled Garden much of my time was passed in the doing of food production but not in the traditional form of participant observation—or not in the manner I had imagined. I was doing and learning to do, as Neil and Emily did, in a manner often solitary.

> ‘Solitude, by its nature, doesn’t have much of a plot and it doesn’t throw up too many events [..] one’s awareness and sensitivity intensifies to such an extent that the daily round [..] is a conduit to a more transcendent contact with reality so that, for example, objects are not simply insensate functional things, but materials, substances, which have an aura, an energy [..] a numinosity. [..] the surrounding environment is rewritten and revealed’ (Bennett, 2015:np).

When doing things alone, two, almost opposite things happen. I let go of what’s around me and emerge into the unpredictable—occasionally verging on nonsense—sphere of the imaginary and the remembered. In this realm I slink and slide at a greater speed through the gullies of association which the collusion between my sensory body and my storied memories leads me. Place, is perhaps, at its most volatile when we are alone, at its most animated with our personal pasts and wonderings for the future. Every object is an open doorway to memories and fictions that multiply our reverie. And then the opposite is also true. It is in solitude that it feels like I can pay the most attention to the material world. ‘What Italo Calvino calls “anthropocentric parochialism” has been given the slip’ (Bennett, 2015:np) and I am able to pay greater attention, sensing more acutely. I notice the absent noise of the air and the way that the wind disturbs that, the landscape and the objects in it becoming sounded by it; I notice the worlds at work within the soil; the way that the oil from the cut loveage clings to anything it brushes; and the changing texture of the greengage’s bloom.

Although, unlike Emily, my 'apprenticeship' wasn't extended enough to have the sort of experience that she describes with the onions, I nevertheless underwent small, everyday instances of learning through attention and adjustment — the angle, intensity and quantity of water that best served the seedlings, that didn't hollow out their soil, batter them or leave them desiccated. Learning becomes a negotiation between you and that material world, an act of translation between what you were told to do in broad terms and the matter of how you might go about it in the particular, understanding words by acting on them and paying attention to the consequences. As Marchand (2010b) says, cognition is individual, but making knowledge is a process of interaction between mind, body and environment. A different form of figuring out, and a different relationship and appreciation of place emerged out of my time at The Walled Garden. This form of apprenticeship was to be put in the position where knowledge was grown within this interaction of mindful body in context, to draw both on instinct—gut feel—and sensory feel, reactive to the material. Whilst I wasn't put in the position to try and fail in any grand way, I was rather expected to notice. Without being instructed, or micro-corrected, or given the opportunity to mimic, my attention was educated to learn in response to and with the plants I was tending.

Neil, Emily and I came together not to work but in all the bits in between. If my relationship with Ernesto—a winemaker in the Lagoon—was very much in the form of apprentice to *maestro*— 'master', I came to understand this time at The Walled Garden as a very different form of apprenticeship. And yet, with my attention gently guided, I was initiated into food production as a form of social context, growing relationships as much as vegetables. Though I wasn't aware of it at the time, I was being orientated towards what mattered; taught, where teaching means performing forms of 'knowing' within 'meaningful relationships' (Irwin, 2004:31). Whilst I was primarily aware of the webbed relationships between people at The Walled Garden and my growing entanglement within that web, I also grew to appreciate this form of 'apprenticeship' as allowing those doing the producing to grow the particular relationship they needed with the growing-world around them. Whilst Neil needed us to cultivate a level of attention that would allow production to flourish as much as possible: to keep the business viable, the route each person at the garden took to get to that point unfolded more out of their relationship with the things in the garden than the teacher-student relationship. In fact, as I think the long extract above—in which Neil talks about Sam—shows, allowing individuals to cultivate their own attention rather than mimicking his 'expert' behaviour, allowed greater flourishing of productivity as individuals got a feel for specific aspects of production.

*The 'Inventory of Behaviours'*

Jo Addison and Natasha Kidd ask: what would the practice of artists sound like if it were a list of instructions(2018:np)? They looked, not just at what artists did that would be traditionally considered as the making of the art, but all the other bits, that become invisible, or silent: the procrastination, the filling in bits, the slack time, the frustration. The 'inventory of behaviours' they generated—and got participants to enact—included instructions such as 'ring your dad', 'stare at the wall', 're-arrange your desk', 'cry', 'pop out to Greggs for a cheese and onion pasty' (ibid). They recognised that 'doing art' was, in fact, *all* of this. My 'apprenticeship' at The Walled Garden afforded a similar recognition, that

‘doing ethnography’ and ‘doing food production’ demanded a broader attention to the many entangled happenings, objects and relationships that were unfolding, and a broader coming to know than knowing about vegetables. Whilst ethnography embraces the notion that there is no ‘one thing’, one object of study, I didn’t see the partaking in all of these mundane states and actions around (from what outside appears) ‘the thing’, the producing of foodstuffs, as important in and of themselves. I understood them as a tool to get at what it was I wanted to study. Only with distance did I come to understand that I was being taught that the two, in this site, are indivisible—everything is ‘the thing’. ‘I relish the etymology of our word *thing*’ Macfarlane says, ‘whereby in Old English *thynge* does not only designate a material object, but can also denote ‘a narrative not fully known’, or indicate ‘the unknowability of larger chains of event’ (2015:33).

To do food production and to do ethnography was to participate in ‘unknowability’, the entangled narratives, practices and minutiae that supported, produced and were produced by food production, a webbed, vast thing. The ‘inventory of behaviours’ that comprise any given study make little appearance in final texts and yet it is only from these actions that the relationships and therefore ideas and understandings emerge. Learning is situated. In fact, in my field notes I express anxiety at what felt at first like a lack of what I ‘should be doing’ at The Walled Garden, I struggled with my role and yet the faffing, the mundanities and the fallow time were rich with getting to know each other even if I didn’t, at the time, recognise *that* as food production. To involve me in the wandering around and the wondering about, the sitting and staring, the fetching and fixing, the inscribing of profanities into the flesh of vegetables, as well as the sowing, the harvesting, the preparing, the cleaning, the selling, that unfolded in tandem with the listening to punk, the teasing, the being teased, the ranting, aching, cooking, chatting, driving, drinking, was to involve me in the producing of food. And yet, even though, for instance, Neil *kept* telling me ‘the pub is the hub’ (field diary), the pub continued to exist outside my frame of what I considered food production.

Participant observation and life stories can interact in interesting ways. It now seems explicit in that extract on p.45 how many seemingly unrelated actions come into ‘being involved’ in food production. But without having undergone this experience myself I don’t think I would have *heard* what Neil is trying to communicate in this passage. Punk, ‘talking rubbish’, laughing, eating together, the relationships and the things they envelop, the Mexican wrestling balaclavas and other objects that emerge out of time spent, sharing fresh air, hanging out, all of these are as integral as sowing seeds to what it means to Neil to produce food. He produces food to craft particular types of place, particular webs of relationships and a particular means of dwelling within them. Slowly, Neil shared with me—and nurtured my attention towards—the connective worlds created grace of the food produced, the different ways he mobilised production as care. In fact Herzfeld has said that there is a ‘reluctance to make explicit the fact that very often the goal of apprenticeship is social rather than purely aesthetically or technical’, that through apprenticeship both person and food are produced (2007:96). Any ‘separating [of] the social from the technical is in some sense a Cartesian convenience’ (ibid).

Hamilton reminds us that not acting can also be a form of action, that in Spanish, waiting and hoping have the same root, that stillness can be a route to practice (2010:69). The 'inventory of behaviours' of any practice are also the aspects of work that can lie silent in life stories, unacknowledged. Seemingly empty time belies the ferment of the imagination, and the 'productive imagination' of these producers was an integral part of how they came to understand their role. "It's only by touching the things that you manage to… you can't just recount, or be recounted to, you have to live these things" (Roberto from *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1). The inventory of behaviours draws a parallel between what it means to 'do' ethnography and what it means to 'do' food production. Both are a means of learning about the world: relating. Through both we encounter and shape our ideas of doing and knowing, ethics in practice.

Participant observation, in its sustained-ness, in its repetition, finds import in places that avoid narration because they are deemed extraneous to the main event. Just as I, as a researcher, was looking for that main event of food production so interviewees in their life stories can fall into the same trap. Inevitably there is an expectation of what is deemed 'material', and being interviewed as a 'type' of professional, producers also have an idea of what 'properly' constitutes food production. Ben, a cider maker in Bristol, for instance, clearly understood the interview as a personal and professional profile and whilst he would dig into his own emotions, he wanted to keep his partner Bella and their relationship private. Despite their relationship not being extraneous but central to their everyday experience of turning apples into juice, listening to his life story you gain no sense of this. Working with them, however, was to work very much within their dynamic as a couple. Whilst participant observation can be a means of experiencing much that might go un-recounted for many different reasons, things can lie silent in experience too. Just as producers may not recount aspects to practices they undertake, but have never verbalised, researchers similarly narrate an experience full of omissions. This could be because things are not attended to, not perceived or not understood as 'important enough'. As I have described, despite having experienced the many happenings at The Walled Garden first hand, *and* having listened and transcribed Neil's descriptions of the various activities, only after time had passed and through further reflection could I begin to 'hear' their importance and make them audible.

It was immediate. From the very beginning Ernesto positioned himself as my teacher. He saw it as his role to teach me 'the old ways', imparting what he knew about the earth and the 'laws of Mother Nature' (field diary). That I was doing research for my PhD was secondary to Ernesto, for him it was necessary to understand he and I as involved in the same custodianship of the soil: that he was instructing me for practical ends. Alongside my PhD, Tom (my fiancé) and I had embarked on another project: an abandoned piece of ground silver with untamed olive trees, a forgotten mill in a slope of derelict terraces for future vines. This mattered to Ernesto. He saw 'study' as an obstacle to the urgency of knowing how to work in place. He discriminated between knowledge from books and knowledge from practice. He saw my previous education in wine, for instance, as a hindrance, something we had to get past. Having studied wines rather than vines, he deemed me as saveable. Whilst all of us have multiplicities to our identity, in practice, we must reconcile those into a single living, doing, being. At times, producing food seemed to eclipse the research, and I wonder if this feeling of necessity to the work allowed my mindful body to fully inhabit that practice, or was it perhaps an excuse, to put off reflexivity because analysing and reflecting what felt primarily bodily was hard. The practice was also a pleasure: physical, social, and narrative. Doing re-animated the 'silent legends' of my own rural past 'restoring the alchemy of such history' (Giard, 1998:154).), stirring up botanical names, practices and pleasures that hadn't been recalled for long swathes of time, that had become secondary stories, unfamiliar to my sense of self and unfamiliar to my muscles.

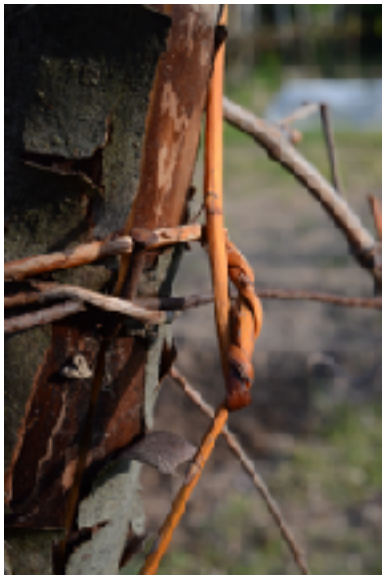
We do everything hip by hip. Ernesto never leaves me. He never gives me a task to complete by myself, or even my own row. We work on the same thing, at all times. The initial language barrier turns out to be a blessing in disguise. At the beginning of every task he asks me in Venetian *sei bón da…?* Do you know how to… dig/hoe/prune? but the words, more often than not in *Venezian*, were unfamiliar. Instead of jumping in with an affirmative my response would invariably be to ask *cossa ze…?* what is… ? And Ernesto, misunderstanding my linguistic limitation as a practical ignorance would begin to teach me from the very beginning, assuming nothing. This is the tool, he'd begin, and this is how you hold it. Sometimes this frustrated me, I wanted to gain his respect by demonstrating that, outside of language I *did* know how to do these things. It was only afterwards that I realised I was mistaken, that I hadn't known how to dig after all. That digging meant an awful lot more than putting a spade in the ground and heaving. For starters, digging began with a fork. In section 9 I elaborate and reflect on what I came to know about digging, but digging was a case in point of words thickening through practice. It was only through narrative in action, and the repetition of practice that I was able to come to know what digging meant, and why it mattered to Ernesto. Without 'doing' digging, once (/if?) the linguistic barrier had been overcome, I would have assumed that Ernesto and I already shared an understanding of what digging was. And my understanding would have remained unchallenged. Writing this brings up another realisation. Without the 'doing' would I ever have grown a working understanding of *Venezian*? Possibly not, for the opportunities to hear it spoken as a primary language are few and far between. Whilst it is often heard in the *calles*—the streets of Venice, there it mainly peppers Italian, veers off from Italian or is used to be both more base and more intimate than Italian. So whilst my growing grasp of the language

gave me greater access to learning from Ernesto, practical, bodily learning from Ernesto gave me greater access to the language. Narrative accessed through practice. Hearing facilitated by doing. Already doing and listening are becoming interdependent.

Very differently to my time at The Walled Garden, Ernesto and I came to know each other grace of the work we did together. My limited Venetian, my willingness to be involved in all aspects of the plot and the context of my life around the PhD were all factors that allowed me to become Ernesto's apprentice. I realise now, many months after fieldwork that without these forms of legitimisation, it would have been difficult to spend time with him (cf. Wacquant, 2004; Marchand, 2009). Other researchers had been there before me, for different reasons to my own, but all were allowed only brief access: one wanted to know about the wine in isolation, wanted to pick out the story of wine from where it actually existed—tangled up with the plot as a whole; and another wanted to know Ernesto's story but he had explained that he had too much work to do to sit and talk.

Through a tiny, quotidian action, I came to understand the importance to Ernesto to educate not only my attention but my physical capability to (re)produce these small, everyday actions. It was also through reflecting on participating in, learning and reproducing the practice of such small, repetitious acts that gave me a reference point when thinking through skill, for example (section 11).

*Willow Tethers*



We use twists of willow to tether things together. Mainly we use them to train (shape) the vines, tethering the vine shoots that will be the fruiting canes—the fruit-bearing branches—to structures made of wire and wood. We also use them elsewhere in the plot: to tether pea shoots to their support nets, nets to upright rods, tomatoes to poles. They do the job of the plastic covered metal ties you often see in allotments. The willow twigs sit in bundles in buckets of water next to the well-head. They smell—or make my fingers smell after I've touched them—of vinegar. Unpleasantly acrid and unexpected. 'What you know, now, very few people know anymore' Ernesto says as I manage a twist. 'Even I can't do it!' Donatella says. How to describe this action? When you watch it, or if you film it, you see virtually nothing. It seems a quick twist, self-explanatory, easy-peasy. But it's a knack. I can show how to do it but can I explain it? Your willow twig will taper at one end so that there is a wider and narrower end. Lead with the fatter bit of your twig. The thin bit stays in front of the things you want to tie, on their left, the fatter bit snakes over and behind and back to the front, on the right, where the narrower end is being held. Hold the thin bit—I hold it in my left hand—Ernesto does it all in one hand because his are bigger. Turn the fat bit over the thin bit—I do this with my right hand—clockwise—over, over, but you're not just twisting one around the other you're twisting the twist as a whole as you go, in the same direction. Whilst turning one over the other you need to keep your attention on the

objects of tethering. If they are fragile you need to make the twists without putting any pressure on the stems to be tethered. If you are tethering something like a vine in order to correct its trajectory you may be tethering against resistance, so the tether needs to be tighter. The feeling in the hand and the judgement of the eye go hand in hand to make these decisions. Then, after two passes of the wider end over the top of the narrower one, instead of a repeating these short horizontal twists over you instead take the fat bit and lie it down alongside the thin end so that it comes long, points down, vertical where it had been horizontal, and as you move it behind the thinner end you turn it up and twist the whole tether simultaneously in the opposite direction - against instinct - anticlockwise so that one end - the wider of the two - points up in the air. A neat flick. And the other, narrower end, points straight down. It is with affection that I re-produce these actions, and, I think, with affection that he appraises my doing so.

The heavy-handedness of my description, despite being written in my field notes at the time of learning, shows up how unlikely it is to come up as a description to include in an interview divorced from context but it also loses meaning, begins to seem irrelevant. And yet it was the accumulation of these small capabilities, Ernesto's ability to teach me, and in so doing reinforce this relationship of apprentice/ *maestro* that was also important to him in legitimising his enactment of tradition as a form of continuity (see section 9). That attentive doing is learning, as I said earlier is not limited to learning the skill in hand, it is staying attentive to everything else that can be learned through the doing, through the picking up of those capabilities. The ability to reproduce actions such as the willow tethers became instrumental in building trust but also in producing Ernesto as treasurer of the 'old ways' and a testament to him as teacher. Trust was an ongoing negotiation. And it was embodied in different thing differently. Could I be trusted to do, could I be trusted as a confident, to share secrets with.

On the first day of the grape harvest I arrive at the plot soon after sunrise but to my surprise Ernesto won't let me help him. 'You'll get dirty' he says, nonsensically, given that I get dirty every day, 'you just keep me company'. Later he tells me that the day before a group of sommeliers had come, but through demonstrating their 'knowledge' in narrative, he had seen that they 'knew nothing'. He had understood immediately, he says, and he wouldn't let them near his grapes. This experience seems to have undone some of his trust in me. And so I watch. He picks a bunch of *Dorona* grapes, lifts it to his mouth, pulls off a grape from near the top, munches, spits, moves down the bunch, repeats, then cuts away the bottom leaving the grapes in the grass and laying the upper part of the bunch in a box. After a couple of hours he hands me a pair of secateurs. 'Let me see if you've understood' he says. 'It's an honour' his wife Donatella says 'no-one is allowed to choose his grapes. People don't understand, you have to sacrifice grapes for quality'. Whilst being allowed to assist in the harvest positioned me once again as being trusted to take on responsibility, *not* being allowed to initially reinforced the hierarchy between us at the plot. Through this, Ernesto also reinforces the importance of sensory attentiveness—rather than narrative knowledge—in evaluating the maturity of the grapes and their appropriateness for being included in the harvested selection. Allowing me to make this assessment was to affirm the sensory education I had undergone under his direction, that I understood something, not objectively, in any form

that could be measured by instruments (such as sugar content) but that I understood him and the wine he wanted to make.

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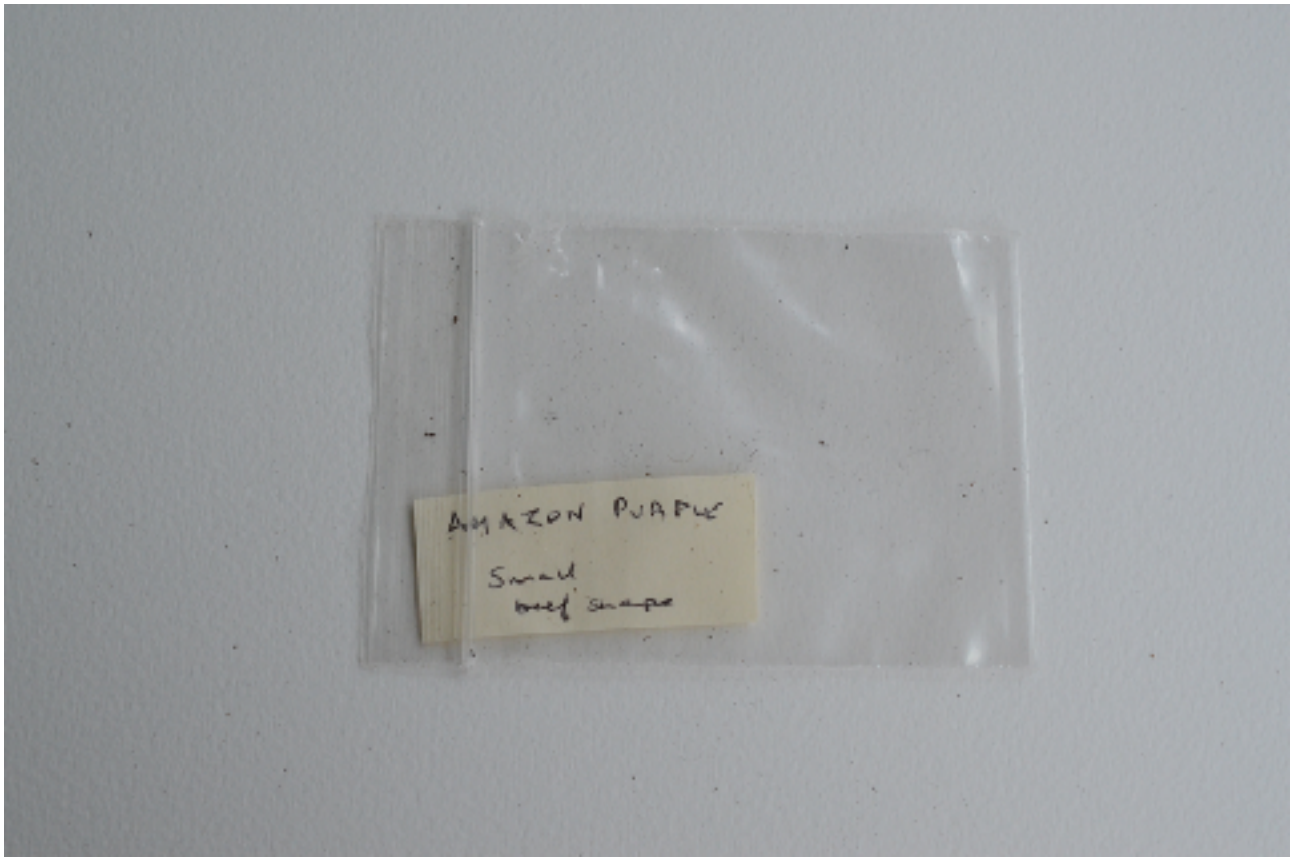
It was because of the shape that fieldwork took with Ernesto that I came to think about apprenticeship. Prior to fieldwork I hadn't conceptualised, or sought out, working relationships in these terms, but looking back I can see how fieldwork is, perhaps, always a form of apprenticeship (Jenkins, 1994).

"If I make a school it's not to teach, it's to learn" says Marco, who runs permaculture growing projects in the Lagoon, "to learn from and with each other" (Track 2). He wants to make a school whose classrooms are lagoon tasks, learning through doing. "I've arrived at a moment in my life where I'm sure that I don't know many things, but I'm also sure that there are certain things I can exchange, transmit, become". It will be a school, he says, that never finishes: "it's a continuum, teach, learn, continuous exchange" that doesn't conclude but opens new doorways. "It's like being a parent" he says, "I've learnt much more than I've taught". By approaching a school thus, "you begin to create a team that is also a work team", a team who both learns from, nurtures, and transforms the Lagoon (Marco, Track 2). This approach is attentive to the changeability of things, of 'objects' of study as unfolding, it's a comment both upon urban change in the Lagoon but also about 'how to do', how to approach research. During this PhD there was always the sensation of being in an environment where learning was ongoing, though the orientation of learning was always in flux. Whilst Ernesto was keen to produce me as a student of his particular practices, I was also an apprentice to my own changing practice of researching, of doing food production and continuing to unfold as a person (Gibson, 2011:ix)

6

ARCHIVE : TOMATO SEEDS



7

# H E I R L O O M

Since the beginning of the 15th Century we have used the figure of speech heirloom—loom, not just the wood upon which to raise a warp and thread a weft—but loom meaning tools: *heir* + *loom* meaning inherited tools. Later, the word broadened further to things handed down a line of ancestors, giving us an image of something nestled within a palm, enclosed by fingers for safe-keeping, a contact of familiar skin as that care-giving role was transferred from elderly to youthful custodian. And then, peeled back again, it opened outside of the family line to encapsulate any thing passed down between generation. Now an heirloom can be collectively inherited and every'thing' counts (*OED online*, 1989). In 2006, *The Oxford English Dictionary* added one more use: that of heirloom in association with a plant or animal, stretching heirloom to embrace something whose materiality is short lived. Heirloom becomes something less solid, and more suggestive in these final evolutions—something is carried forward but not everything, sustaining the possibility for continued encounter with what? DNA, a characteristic, affect? As the material shells of a sheep or a tomato wither and become again through offspring and seed, something tangible and yet intangible is preserved. In this state, an heirloom becomes about both persistence and mortality, highlighting an aspect of precarity—or plurality—at the heart of heirlooms, hitherto obscured by an emphasis on continuity. Our shifting conception of heirloom is produced by, and produces, our approach to connection, story, inheritance, matter and mattering; un-linked now from old, wooden objects, re-vitalised.

This section uses ‘heirloom’ crops to think about the way in which food producers are orientated towards the past and the future. It considers the relationship between narrative and materiality and how those characteristics of heirloom fruit and vegetables are valued. It shows that primary sensations such as taste can matter as affective starting points for expressing more abstract notions of time, or morals, purpose and story. The aim of this section is not just to show how food producers orientate themselves, but that a key affordance of their productive role is also its capacity for orientating the attention of ‘heirs’, whether those are future producers, consumers, sons or daughters. Building on Heuts and Mol’s work on value (2013), I argue that heirlooms are not only valued for what they can do *for* producers, but what they can do *to* producers. In their discussion, Heuts and Mol contend that drawing from the specificity of individual cases leads to more fertile ground than ‘laying out solid abstracting generalisations’ (2013:127). In what follows, I heed their advice and draw on Neil and Emily’s narratives and experience in the context of The Walled Garden, in the peripheries of Bristol—particularly those of Neil, the main gardener. Whilst his relationship to the theme is particular—involving the making of an unusual heirloom, in the form of a tattoo—his discussion nevertheless opens up a broader means of thinking about heirlooms and legacy. Existing literature on heirlooms centres around advocating for biodiversity in a context of loss (Jordan, 2015, Buchanan, 2012, Nazarea, 2005). In this section I try to move beyond this to show the other experiences and effects of the production and understanding of ‘heirlooms’. I suggest that generalisations of memory’s role in heirlooms have become unhelpful and might work to conceal the important relationship between heirlooms and story. This section responds to DeLinda’s call for scholars to find new ‘ways of thinking and feeling about local food that [..] can balance and reframe an economic orientation with more ecological and cultural understandings of people in place’ (2006:126).

## | Tomatoes

At The Walled Garden, heirloom fruit and vegetables, particularly tomatoes, co-exist with hybrids, each valued for various affordances[1]—what they make possible. Or, as Heuts and Mol might put it, they bring about different ‘registers of valuing’ (2013:125). Heirloom seeds enter the garden in three main ways. Neil, the main producer at the garden, buys them from companies such as The Real Seed Company; friends or customers such as Tony—‘the colonial style, antique book seller’—gives them seeds from his collection; or other growers such as Jeff who produces for a nearby estate—‘very spiritual but intimidated by women’—shares or swaps seed with them (Emily, field diary).

[1] Following Gibson’s (1966, 1979) use of the term affordances as both noun and verb. To afford, is to provide or furnish, an affordance is what is provided, or furnished by something (1979:127).

Commercial, hybrid plants either produce sterile seed or unpredictable results, whereas open pollinated seeds will be both fertile and share and display the traits of their parent plants[2]. Adopting the descriptor heirloom draws attention to the contrast: the finite nature of hybrid seed against the potential of heirloom crop to pass something down, to exist through time. Using the word heirloom places the focus on the inherited history or characteristic rather than the new growth, the fresh existence.

Working with tomatoes is a particularly visceral experience. In those days devoted to side-shooting—removing stems in order to direct the plant's vigour to the fruiting trusses—you breathe and sweat tomato. The smell, at first appealing, nostalgic, appetising, becomes heavy and vegetal—thick—at times overwhelming, verging on repulsive. Working with the stems, snapping out those unwanted, your fingers and nails first turn an acid green which quickly putrefies, hiding your fingerprints under black-tomato-tar and your sweat runs green. You become tomato-fied. And when you wash, you foam a nuclear tinge.

Whilst there were times that Neil and Emily were very careful with the heirloom tomatoes, there were also episodes where the many demands of everyday life meant a lapse in attentiveness towards them. For instance, having sown out all of Tony's seeds, the labels, written on wooden sticks, had rotted, taking the names with them. The tomatoes, divorced from their title and with it, access to the story of their heritage, were nevertheless still there, growing hell-for-leather. Having left it late to put them in the ground, and then late to remove the side-shoots, Emily and Neil ended up with a jungly polytunnel of tomatoes, bristling with green-smell. Branching plants, tangled together, teetered on unnervingly narrow stems. The ideal of carefully harvesting tomatoes was replaced with bashing around, blindly reaching into the havoc for the hidden fruit. Emily talks about the abstract beauty of sustaining something, but the reality was hot and humid and hairy, the smell overpowering. And the hope of continuity was thwarted. Blight hit while the plants were still in fruit, and "when blight hits, it's like a bomb-site you want to hold your breath, you can feel the spores and it rubs off on you, you can really feel it" (Emily, Track 8). Blight meant the seeds couldn't be saved.

*Producing (and Valuing) Heirlooms*

The word biodiversity 'was coined as recently as 1986' (Nazarea, 2005:3) although as Ernesto says of growing vegetables in the Venetian Lagoon: 'our elders, they knew and maintained biodiversity without studying it. Look, they wouldn't even know what that meant but it came naturally. I mean, even here where the artichokes are pretty close they'd have loads of salads and different varieties of radicchio in between, they knew what they were doing. And they had to do it like that' (field diary). These producers feel a desire to keep tastes alive, but a *responsibility* to keep options alive. Resistance in two senses: social—resisting dependence on large corporations and commercial structures by retaining alternative

[2] Hybrids are usually sterile because they end up with too many chromosomes (polyploidy). This can be accidental—it happens as a result of abnormal cell division—or intentional, to serve commercial ends. The reason that the hybrids of open pollination are fertile is because they usually form between more closely related species. In turn this often means that the correct amount of chromosomes (diploid) are retained, allowing them their fertility.

social interactions, but also biological—maintaining biodiversity to increase plants' resistance to disease. Small stories unfolding beneath large narratives, maintaining diversity offers possibility. For both Ernesto and Neil 'edible heirlooms' are not personal keepsakes but forms of experience and knowledge to disseminate. Producing heirlooms can arise out of a desire to sustain something as ephemeral as a taste, a texture, a reaction or encounter. But it is also a practicing of biodiversity as a reaction to anxiety, a response to the feeling of alienation.

> *BB: "Why would it matter if these [heirloom] varieties disappeared?"*
>
> Neil: "Well it's because the same with anything isn't it, it's like polar bears isn't it, anything, it's, you want people to share these things, I mean, look, to me, food is all about sharing, and I mean if I grow something, sometimes rather than me eat it, I want someone else to taste it d'you know what I mean? It's kind of like you want people to kind of buzz on that kind of—*wow that's amazing*—you know? And not for myself just to say I grew that, I just want people to realise you've got these tastes and these amazing things out there and for their tastebuds to just be like—*wow God, that's like nothing I've ever eaten—*
>
> It's like the apple, the luton-down-pine, in the garden, really old variety and when it's ripe you bite into it it tastes like lemonade. It's fizzy, it's citrusy, you wouldn't even know it was an apple, *you would not*, if you blindfolded someone—I mean, obviously the bite and the crunch of an apple—but that fizzing kind of sweetness it's *unbelievable*, it's like nothing else, um I just think people's palates, you want people to venture out, there's loads of stuff out there, loads of tastes and flavours. It's really nice when you get someone tasting something they've not tasted before, it's not a money thing, just wanna broaden people's kind of I don't know, tastes, yeahhh.
>
> And if they feel the same way about it as you do, they'll tell their friends and we'll keep these varieties alive, and more will come out of the closet, people will share and we wouldn't have any worries about you know GM, or rinsed out tomatoes that you can buy in supermarkets, and that, and you see 'em and they're in these packs and they're covered in cellophane, and they're hard as nails and they're slightly green, and they taste like little vessels of acidic water, and there's nothing going on there, all it is is like crunchy, a pop in your mouth, no flavour yeah I just like people to realise that a tomato is not, is not, about a little scabby garnish, and a bit of iceberg lettuce and a handful of cress…" (Neil, Track 8).

The visceral importance of taste is audible in Neil's accounts. He particularly valued heirloom tomatoes for their sensory properties, their diversity and depth of flavour. This affordance of heirlooms, to keep a diversity of characteristics alive was often experienced as novelty rather than a continuing familiarirty. During my Bristol fieldwork at The  Walled Garden, Neil would often pop up, eagerly interjecting with: 'feel this'—the fur of the yellow-peach tomato; 'taste this'—a wormwood frond; 'Just smell these! Wow. Look at these!'—the first Cambridge-favourite strawberries (field diary). The pleasure he takes in the appearance, the texture, the smells and tastes and stories of his produce can also be felt in his life story. When particular varieties come up, the narrative is punctured with chomping noises and coos of delighted appreciation that no transcript could ever do justice to. Even the remembering and recounting of their hues and taste caused him to salivate.

> Neil: "There's one called Paul Robeson, uh, which is a nice big, and it's like a browny stripy tomato and that is my all time favourite tomato, and like when you eat one and it's ripe, it's almost like, it's like a smoky, ketchup taste, its kind of, they're mushy but they're like really interesting flavour, that kind of smoky, almost like a barbecue-y kind of smoke going on with sweetness at the end, like real low acidity, just nice and they just compress, they just, they're so soft you can just grab one and you can just slowly massage it, and cut it open and eat it with a spoon and it's just like wow! Gorrr, oooh, yum! Right I don't know where I, I started off on one  I" (Neil, Track 8).

Taste is affective. In addition to the personal significance of flavour, Wiggins (2002) argues that the 'gustatory mmm' (within which I think we can definitely include Neil's 'Gorrr, oooh, yum!'), indicates a desire to share meaning and affect through dialogue. Making his gustatory mmms audible in his life story is another, dis-embodied way of disseminating and communicating his experience. Heirloom tomatoes were lauded for their sensory properties but they presented a gamble. They were inconsistent. Some plants died, others demanded hours of care, some produced so few, and such huge tomatoes that they became difficult to price and sell. What Heuts and Mol (2013) do very well in their exploration of 'what is a good tomato?' is to demonstrate the way in which individuals switch between disagreeing registers of value to come to different conclusions, in parallel, of what makes a good tomato. So, in their findings, what was a good tomato in a pasta sauce: 'a cheap one', was not the same as what made a good tomato for a salad: 'a beautifully red one, preferably one that looks tasty' (ibid: 134). They identify five registers of value in their interview material: 'These have to do with money, handling, historical time, what it is to be natural, and sensual appeal' (ibid: 125). That there were tensions as well as overlaps between registers they took as a sign that complexity was not 'an analytical flaw, but [..] an empirical fact about the valuing of "good tomatoes"' (ibid: 129). Similar switching between registers of value happened at The Walled Garden. For flavour and story, inconsistency was valued as something to savour: variety, novelty. But Neil also valued the consistency of the Sparta F1 tomatoes growing at the garden, for their reliability, familiarity—'lovely tomatoes' produced without too much help (field diary).

*Produced by Heirlooms*

In Heuts and Mol's extrapolation of different registers of valuing, what made tomatoes *good* in different circumstances was their ability to: sell well, travel well, be tasty, look tasty, or even convey status. 'We have become experts' Macfarlane says 'in analysing what nature can do *for* us, but lack a language to evoke what it can do *to* us' (2015:25). All of the characteristics that these tomatoes in Heuts and Mol's study were being valued for, fell into Macfarlane's first category: what the tomato would do *for* us; any appreciation of what the tomato could do *to* us is inaudible. The same is true for others considering heirlooms. Jordan (2015) and Carolan (2011), for instance, focus on the affordance of heirlooms to act as repositories of memory, valuing heirlooms for their ability to resist the loss and forgetfulness they see as rife within agriculture.

By considering my experience with Neil and Emily at The Walled Garden, however, it became apparent that some of this flex and flow, the negotiation, navigation and contradiction between different registers of valuing was a reconciling of these two affordances in practice: what producing heirlooms does *to* them and how they value this, as well as what heirlooms do *for* them. Neil and Emily are producing vegetables as a means to making a living, but they are also produced through their vegetables in the processes of being and becoming.

> "I remember" Neil says, "I bought some, some, um chard seeds [..] there was a little note in the, and it said this chard seed—it was called *Pink Passion*—this seed would have been extinct if it wouldn't have been found in a cinema. I can't remember where, but it was found in a back room of the cinema, in a drawer. They got it out and it was viable still and that's the only kind of place that they've seen that from. [..] We are losin' loads of these things. I, loads, loads of er, loads of

> varieties and that, a load of different, erm, yeah, loads and loads of different varieties have gone, extinct, we'll never see again. Just gone, you know?" (Neil, Track 8).

To understand chard as an heirloom, is to re-cast vegetable growers as heirs, protectors, custodians. It orientates producers towards the past and the historical and geographical journey of the crop that they have inherited. As Emily says, through reproducing heirloom vegetables she feels connected to other growers that have been responsible for the preservation of that seed up until her hands (field diary). It also orientates them towards the future, as they keep crops viable through cultivation (or fail to do so), hoping to keep the possibility for encounter open for future consumers. To sustain taste as a form of 'collective heritage' they must first establish 'collective experience'. By directing their curiosity and forming a bond of responsibility to the past and to the future, it also locates producers within the unfolding story-so-far of a variety. Heirlooms, as well as being formed through story are made in practice and in movement. They encourage a polytemporal imagination, affording this multiplicity of orientation through their ability to gather stories, transforming producers into storytellers.

If heirloom tomatoes were initially valued for their taste, this connection in the mouth helped to make sense of their survival story thus far. Flavour and diversity were understood as motivating factors in the care and preservation of these crops. Taste forges various connections, entangling itself within our own biographies, finding story-lines of association, but also in the way that through it we can imagine sharing a sensory experience with 'people we can only imagine' through time (Emily, field diary). Not only imagined networks of past and future growers but networks actively created in the present because 'you want people to kind of buzz on that kind of—*wow that's amazing*' (Neil, Track 8). Custodianship is not a passive but an active role. Through production, Neil and Emily actively participated in the material and narrative nurturing of heirlooms. Production becomes a responsibility. They recognised not only the need for collaboration between producers to do this, but a need to orientate the attention of consumers in preparing them to also enter into roles as heirs and guardians: "[I]f people don't keep them going we just end up with the kind of like, conveyor belt, of conventional, boring, tasteless veg'" (Neil, Track 8). It is not enough to preserve a thing in its given state—seed do not stay viable indefinitely—and so there is a responsibility to nurture the latent potential of the seed, to grow it into a plant that seed can then be collected from. Valuing and bringing awareness to the sensory wealth of heirlooms also fuels a market for them, making the role of producing them financially viable. The greater the destruction of heirloom fruit and vegetables via digestion, the more they are paradoxically perpetuated (Jordan, 2015; Buchanan, 2012). So Neil and Emily are also produced as educators and care givers. But this also works to show up when their care fails, drawing attention to the tension between different values. Despite this role increasing their sense of purpose, valuing the predictable financial return of hybrid production takes their attention away from heirlooms. After all, it is harder to quantify what heirlooms do *to* them, than what hybrids do *for* them.

*Story*

In contrast to the literature on 'manufacturing meaning' in the food chain (Jackson et al., 2007) or food 'sold with a story' (Freidburg, 2003) which focuses on stories applied, (often cynically) for, and ingested by, the consumer, what came out of my participant observation was the appeal and value that 'food stories' held for the producers. During my fieldwork I encountered examples of stories mattering in different ways. Sometimes it was the personal aspect of stories that gave them meaning, sometimes it was about controlling the story—about who was able to tell them and how—and at others, as in this next extract from Neil, it is the symbolic importance of story. Sutton and Hernandez (2007) explore how materiality and story can become uncoupled, and yet still do work in some way. They tell of an interviewee using the cast iron pan of an ancestor ('a skillet') as a narrative device— a means to keep recounting his family history. Following the interview they realise that this pan cannot be the object featured in those stories, it was manufactured too late. And yet, for their interviewee 'the fact that it may not actually have been the same skillet [became] irrelevant to the felt material connection it provide[d] [..] the skillet came to stand for an earlier skillet' and fulfilled the same role in evoking the vocalisation of story (ibid: 70). As is audible in Neil's case, the particularities of the story are only loosely remembered. It stands, however, for the ability of small stories to create action, of materiality mattering, and of individual meaning, seeds, and storylines—the sensory everyday—sustained despite, rather than effaced by, momentous events. Its significance lies in the thoughts and actions it makes possible.

> "There was one seed I bought last year, it was something about, it was someone, it was like a war kind of story, I can't remember exactly, but it was a sad story. The family was split up by the Germans, think it was Poland or somewhere like that, and the last thing I think the Mum or the Dad put in one of the childs' pockets was a small bag of these seeds. And the actual tomato seed was named after the parents of the kids, that they never saw again, that little story connected to that story [of war], and to that seed. Yeah, it's just, yeah, poignant. And there's so many different varieties out there, I think this was an old family tomato that had been in their family for years. I mean years ago people would keep, they'd save those seeds, they'd never buy online, you'd never buy that stuff, seeds were kind of sought after, they were like, you know, shielded in secrecy you know so families would keep their own seeds. I'm sure around, I suspect in other parts of the world it's still the same now" (Neil, Track 8).

This quote from Neil associates diversity and meaning with the practices that sustain 'sought after' seed, rather than those commercially available. This may relate to two forms of nostalgia identified by Keightley and Pickering in their attempt to 'reclaim' nostalgia from widespread views of it as a reductive idealisation of the past and negation of the new (2012:124). It is nostalgia both commercial and connective, notes Jordan (2015), that has led to the rise—and huge range in 'quality'—of heirloom and heritage varieties. Keightley and Pickering, however, argue that 'vernacular' nostalgic practices can diverge dramatically from the appeals to nostalgia in the marketing and production of cultural commodities. Vernacular nostalgia, with its ability to critique 'deficiencies' in the present is bound up in a desire to 'connect personal experience with widely shared feelings abut the relations of past and present', acting to keep certain alternatives 'open within the public domain [..] rub[bing] against the grain of established social orthodoxies' (2012: 116). In Neil's narrative, that deficiency in the present, is typified by that 'other' tomato—valued by the supermarket for its price-point and its ability to travel—that ends up as a "scabby garnish", " a little vessel of acidic water" (Track 8). The alternative Neil is

striving to keep open in contrast is "Gorrrr oooh yummm!"—heightened sensation, transportative flavour and stories that orientate our attention in new directions.

Critiques of nostalgia have focused on 'a past-orientated present as the refuge of ethical passivity and political quiescence' and a 'future-orientated present as a locus of action' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:127). But this is to divide them more neatly than they are encountered in practice. Heirlooms present a realm of overlap, a polytemporal responsibility.

*"It Ain't Like It's a Museum"*

Looking at modernisation and shopping practices, Everts and Jackson (2009) show that different trust relations characterised as 'modern' at the supermarket or 'traditional' at the corner shop do not emerge from different forms of sociality existing at different times—as Giddens (1990) suggests; but that 'different trust relations emerge from variations within practices at the same time' (Everts and Jackson, 2009:932). Thus 'the small shop, regardless of its age, assumes a distinctiveness and history' (ibid: 931). Adapting this to my own research context, the anxieties assuaged, and the trust embedded in 'heirloom' seeds are experienced precisely because of the simultaneous existence of 'modern', commercially produced hybrid seeds. Jordan argues that vegetables are only able to become 'heirlooms' because the practice of inheriting and preserving seed has largely disappeared (2015:22). Building on Everts and Jackson (2009:932), however, would suggest that fruit and vegetables emerge as heirlooms, not because commercial hybrids have replaced open pollinated varieties, but because of the existence of 'variation within practices *at the same time*' (emphasis added). This line of thinking allows us to consider how heirlooms *relate* to and co-exist with the environment around them, rather than downplaying this interaction. Going back to those tensions of valuing, we should also see that value orientated in both directions. Sometimes the annoyances of growing the heirloom tomatoes meant that Neil and Emily would 'give more love' to the hybrids (field diary). The consistent results of hybrids positions them more straightforwardly in their role as 'good' at producing tomatoes (in the present). Whilst the self-definition they receive from their care of heirloom tomatoes—as being 'good' heirs and custodians as well as 'good' producers—could only be achieved over time.

What Neil demonstrates is that navigating nostalgia and other people's expectations through an engagement with heirlooms is not straightforward and not always practical. Through trial and error, a sense of coherence, a dialogue or a negotiation of this mash of temporalities is needed.

> "I'm not going to walk around in some kind of britches and top hat on and grow a handlebar moustache and start smoking a pipe. Um, yeah, it ain't like it's a museum and people, and you're going to get some kids in to say how it was in the olden days. It's still an ongoing business and I gotta be a bit sensible about what I am trying, I mean all I want to do is grow really good veg', *reallllly* well, [..] have a few people around me that I love and y'know, and wanna look after, and that's basically it. [..] I used to try and toe that kind of Victorian line [..] like using sort of, like, Victorian machinery, or y'know if you see some antiques, like, Victorian hoes or seed drills, but nooo, now I just want it to be a little bit, I want it to be fresh" (Neil, Track 9).

Neil's grumble that 'it ain't like it's a museum' is fitting given the US Ambassador's comment about the EU's '*Museum of Agriculture*' two years following (Johnson, 2019:np). Where Johnson highlights an orientation to the past as evidence of paralysis, working with Neil showed that an orientation towards the past is neither a reconstruction of the past, nor a fixing of it. By conceptualising heirlooms as something from the past was also to conceive of their momentum. This provokes a response in the form of individual and collaborative action in order to keep practice and narrative going. Heirloom fruits, then become an intersection of cross-temporal action. Kwint et al., talking about museums, note the way in which objects do work, not by telling a fixed story of the past but by kindling new stories (1999:6). The object resonates with personal memories through association which, mixed with imagination and aspiration, concoct new stories (ibid). 'Suddenly reminded of some fragment of knowledge or personal circumstance by an exhibit, visitors can become instant narrators and possessors of the objects' (ibid: 8). The objects are in constant re-narration. Conversely, however, heirloom fruit and vegetables can also fail to gain traction, their incomplete stories unable to find affect within our own biographies. Here is that tension of valuing again. Jordan champions heirlooms as vehicles of cultural memory (2015), but if we have no affective connection with what is held up as collective story—collective memory—then we can just as easily fail to find common ground with an object, and quickly that affordance to form storytellers becomes mute.

*Edible Memory | Resonant Stand-In*

Practices of memory: remembering, recalling, reminding, commemorating, can all be bound up with heirloom crops. Heirlooms can associatively lead into our own memories, they can be a reminder of something. Equally, remembering is patchy, unpredictable; the world is full of ways in to our own biography. We are as, or perhaps more likely to be led down paths of recall by a tin of Heinz that we have experienced and are able to remember, as by an heirloom tomato that didn't form part of our past experience.

I want to suggest, however, that often 'memory' becomes a 'resonant stand-in' for particular practices of storying. 'Resonant stand-in' is a phrase taken from Jordan, who, in her book on heirloom fruits and vegetables comments that the word heirloom is often employed as a 'resonant stand-in for all kinds of specific history' (2015:124). Whilst our memories are storied, our stories are not necessarily a form of remembering. Perhaps, following a suggestion from Keightley and Pickering, we invoke memory because it is perceived to have a greater value in our society than concepts of either story or the imagination (2012:38).

'When people eat an heirloom tomato' Jordan says, 'they may be eating the memory of a relative, or they may be eating a more inclusive and less personal sense of collective memory' (2015:35). Despite recognising the importance of metaphors for orientating our attention, I wonder if using memory in this way orientates our attention away from the work story is doing in its name. The individuals that Carolan (2011), interviewed as part of his exploration of heritage seeds describe varieties passed down from family members, conjuring relatives recalled as they eat heirloom fruit or triggering their own

remembering of childhood. As heirlooms evolved to become less directly inherited, however, it becomes less and less likely for heirloom crop to be anchored in our own pasts. But what does it mean in practice Jordan's 'more inclusive', which I take to mean less directly linked to experience, sense of 'collective memory'?

Neil, Emily and I savoured the deliciousness of some of the heirloom varieties; we wondered how others had managed to survive so long, we imagined the gaps in the stories of others, or we didn't think about them at all. Ingesting them, we incorporated them into our experience, and growing and selling them we scattered them into the experience of others. It gave us a way in to imaging Massey's related world (2005), places as flows of people and things: but it was an exercise in imprecise and imagined geographies. Rarely, however, was the experience predominantly about remembering.

Landsberg writes about our ability to remember something we have never experienced as 'prosthetic memory', which is not simply the tuning in to a narrative of the past but an adopting it to the extent that it shapes our 'subjectivities' (2004:2).

Engaging with heirlooms expanded Neil and Emily's present, and yet, it wasn't audible that their *pasts* had been expanded by the addition of prosthetic memory. The meaning of memory is always emplaced historically, culturally and geographically—making it possible for the conceptualisation of memory to change. Yet, whilst engaging with heirloom seeds undoubtedly did shape Neil and Emily's subjectivities, by orientating their imaginations, emotions and actions, this interaction didn't feel like remembering. From my experience at The Walled Garden, there was little sense—particularly from Neil and Emly—that memories were being eaten, but rather, in an imprecise way, we were stumbling around in a web of stories.

Having a sensory—sometimes sensuous—material object around which to organise this imagination, also gives a way in to imagining shared sensory experience; but it was not just experience of 'heirloom' produce that Neil wanted to share, it was *any* sensory experience he enjoyed. A breadth of (sensory) experience was not always to be found by looking to the past. For affect to continue, these half-heard stories and imagined communities had to find ways in to mattering to the particular and the tangible.

And yet, orientating us to half-imagined pasts where these tomatoes had mattered enough that they had continued to be cared for, against other odds, also orientated us towards unknown futures. There was a feeling of multiple stories-so-far unfolding directly around us, and us within them: stories, in which we were not only partaking but implicated, responsible. Carolan (2011:84) conceptualises heirlooms as tying us to a 'shared past' which is suddenly made accessible, and Jordan (2015:216) 'a simpler past'; but instead it made the multiple lived pasts audible, or at least, think-able, a way in to conceptualising the past as a simultaneity of stories (Massey 2005), without either wanting to return or to take possession of them. Whilst there was certainly a sense sometimes of contributing to a 'community of hope' (Carolan, 2011:84), resisting 'a threatened future' (Jordan, 2015:216) again, it didn't tie Neil and Emily to a 'shared future' but gave them the sense that they could forge individual, multiple futures, that

were nontheless related. The past was not somewhere they wanted to be, or wished to construct as a realm ‘exorcised of all pain and difficulty’ (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:126), but imagining how heirlooms might matter to them was bound up with what they hoped for, who they wanted to be and how they wanted to relate. To hope that engagement with heirlooms will promote ‘ethical behaviour’, as Carolan does (2011:89), in any straightforward way ignores what Heuts and Mol (2013) revealed about what is good?—in this case what is right?—which always shifts depending on what is being valued and how.

Whilst memory may be the product of experience, it was experience first and foremost, as I have shown, that focused the actions of Neil and Emily. This was many folded. Certainly the fragments of stories created an affective imagination that connected Neil and Emily in various ways. Conceiving of something as an heirloom lends it a past and future. Even when neither realm has been experienced, it is nevertheless imagined. Conceiving of something as an heirloom produces it as an object of historical importance even as that object is a tiny seedling putting out its first leaves. It makes the survival and sustenance of the thing seem to matter more: suddenly you are responsible for keeping the material and narrative story of the thing going. The way in which material heirlooms move with stories also provoked a greater sense of the power or importance of stories, the way in which a word can generate a whole new way of relating.

Instead of just interacting with heirlooms as caretakers, many of these producers were also creating heirlooms, beginning stories of their own.

“[If] you cross seed you make it your own really. If you cross a really nice um tomato seed with another one you that you really like and, you know, no-one has done that before then that’s your sort of your take on this plant” (Neil, Track 8).

Many of the varieties of fruit and vegetable we now nominate ‘heirloom’ originated from a boom in experimenting in the nineteenth century (Stocks, 2009). The ambiguity of the term heirloom, as Jordan noted, often conceals the starting point of heirloom narratives: that maybe a grandmother—perhaps even your grandmother—it could be an early explorer, but it is most probably an avid exhibition grower from a couple of centuries ago. Marco, a grower in the Lagoon, for instance intentionally forges new pathways of flavours that he hopes will be sustained. He creates them for future audiences, to become heirlooms.

If we shift our attention from looking for meaning inherent in heirlooms to instead following the way in which they become affective as they move through places and lives, we move from trying to locate a narrative of remembered pasts to seeing the people heirlooms produce, and the stories and imagined worlds they make possible. It matters if memory is used as a resonant stand-in for something else, because in a conversation dominated by talk of the damage of forgetting, we need to stop and ask what it is that is becoming inaudible, unspoken, unused. If it’s not memory, then remembering won’t help. As the concept of heirloom has changed so has its relationship to memory in any straightforward way.

Working alongside Neil gave me the chance to partake in the indirect inheritance and the unfolding story of many heirloom crops, imagined places, histories and connections enveloped into our material and immaterial practices. At the same time, however, there was a very different story of inheritance unfolding during my time at The Walled Garden. A different form of storying and making sense of experience. What follows is a speculative piece that considers the 'surge' in 'ordinary affect' gathered in a tattoo to think more about heirlooms (Stewart, 2007:4). This is an heirloom without a material past, made in the present: intended inheritance from Neil to his daughter. Whilst heirloom crops have offered a form of narrative belonging across place, the heirloom-tattoo is linked to a very definite experience of plot: a belonging, and a non-belonging.

‘The skin hangs from the wall as if it were a flayed man: turn over the remains, you will touch the nerve threads and knots, a whole uprooted hanging jungle, like the inside wiring of an automaton. The five or six senses are entwined and attached, above and below the fabric that they form by weaving or splicing, plaits, balls, joins, planes, loops and bindings, slip or fixed knots. The skin comprehends, explicates, exhibits, implicates the senses, island by island, on its background. They inhabit the tapestry, enter the weaving, form the canvas as much as they are formed by it. The senses haunt the skin, pass beneath it and are visible on its surface, the flowers, animals and branches of its tattooing, eyes that stud the peacock's tail; they cross the epidermis and penetrate its most subtle secrets (Serres, [1985]2008:60).

"And Emily, another one of Emily's jobs is to, er, is like the back gets a little bit, it needs to be rubbed down at least three times a day, 'cos I had it done in a really crazy time of year, it was kind of summer when the middle bit was being done which as just so painful and the healing process, I mean oh my god, the pain. So we'd get some bypanthum, some nappy rash cream, and Ellie would sort of rub my back down three times a day, which is above and beyond the call of duty, but you know that's what she's getting paid for. So not only is she sort of my side-kick and sort of yeah, work colleague, she's also back-wiper and er, de-gammifier of the back 'cos it yeh cos it does have a little bit of a pong now and again and it was pretty nasty but it's all healed and done now so that's over now" (Neil, Track 10).

Reminders are a materialisation of something, a visible hook for invisible baggage. Do these hooks mark memory?, or the desire for remembering? Scars for instance, snag experience. As the moment of their making becomes past, that moment is distinguished from a flow of moments by becoming material. The world is full of arresting details that hook into trickling stories of association, that act as transportive portals, that provoke us to remember. Some reminders we make, others are associative connections that happen as we move through the world.

During my time at The Walled Garden, Neil was having an image of the garden that he cultivates tattooed on his back—two feet high, and a foot and a half wide. Neil's relationship with the garden is a complicated one. It often felt like being able to work in the garden was both a gift and a burden to him, a source of wonder and stress, in which to find himself and lose himself. And in either guise the garden made huge demands on him physically, emotionally, financially and in time. A tattoo, like an heirloom, affords storytelling, it opens the possibility of a public storying. It is an intentional snagging of time, here, a memory marker, here. A tattoo is a story we can choose. We use these hooks as possible hanging points in a story that we continue to re-navigate. Perhaps the skin, is already 'the shroud of the artist emerging dripping after bathing in the world, a true image of the garden' (Serres, [1985]2008:37) but seeing Neil you may not immediately guess that he grows vegetables for a living. In his mid-40s his skin remains pale, oddly un-flushed by the sun and un-gullied by the wind. The muscles grown through labour are softened from sight by the releases from labour: the cider-based love-handles cultivated at The Crown. There is not much surface wear and tear as visible history. Sometimes furrows ploughed out of concern remain on Neil's brow for a time; his smile crinkles into a repetition of smiles registered around his eyes in splaying crows' feet. But the invisible is there, memories of toils and soil, and unfurling new leaves between fingertips. Out of sight, however, Neil's back has been transformed more permanently with ink and needles, his tattooed, storied flesh, now drips—as Serres puts it—with meaning: 'Painters sell their skin, models hire out their skin, the world gives its skins. I have not saved mine, here it is. Flayed, printed, dripping with meaning' (ibid: 38).

*Changing Geographies*

Neil takes his top off in the polytunnel, his skin blotchy and pink. Emily takes off the masking tape that tacks clingfilm to the surface of his back. Underneath the skin is black and red, it smells like decomposing rodent, there is a sheen of puss. Her fingernails still full of earth she cleans the smarting surface. It is testament to the complexities and closeness of Emily and Neil's relationship that she is mopping his back at all. The tattooing, especially for 'a wussy man' (Neil, field diary), is a particularly

grisly, bodily act, one that breaks open the surface of the man just as his relationship with the garden has. Neil's visceral relationship with the garden is an act of contortion and grim perseverance reflected in the undertaking of the tattoo. The image is gouged into the flesh, which bleeds, seeps, 'pongs'. It reminds us of the alive-ness of the body and reminds us too, of its mortality, its fleetingness. Throughout my fieldwork with Neil he refused to assign any meaning to the tattoo, downplaying its importance despite the financial outlay and physical undertaking (it took around eighty hours of being tattooed to complete). It was an interesting point of divergence, as I continued to wonder about the work the tattoo was doing whilst he mocked me for my interest in it and continued to deny it any significance. And yet, when I ask Neil about his tattoo during his life story interview, he doesn't answer with brevity but tells a story that had in fact begun thirty years previously. I was wrong, this tattoo did not afford a public storytelling but as the story took form so too did a private means of making meaning. Humour glossed much of the relationship between Neil, Emily and myself. It was what brought us close but it was also wielded at times to keep distance, to change the course of conversation. Life story interviews, however, with their potential also for hurt, seem to create a place where stories can, nevertheless unfold unhampered.

To tell the story of the tattoo, he begins by telling me about another tattoo, the one underneath:

> *BB: Can you tell me about your tattoo?*
> "Ohhh The dreaded tattoo! [laughing] Oh yeah, yeah, so yeah, the tattoo, well wow. I um, yeah well when I was a boy in school we er, we used to nick the Indian ink from the art lessons and er, we just used to go down to the part of the field or this girl's house and we used to get a pin and a match and just tattoo each other as you do when you're like young and er, for some reason I had England tattooed on me—have I ever told you this? Well I had England tattooed on my back—on my shoulder. Which my mum found out when I was about fourteen. She seen it an' er she took me straight to the doctors and asked the doctor to cut it out, she was mortified, it was, but it was just crazy why the *hell* did I have, like big bubble writing "England" tattooed on my back? It's just bonkers but I got away lightly 'cos quite a few of the gang had like awful stuff, y'know like, I remember I had a tin of jeans: peppe jeans that have a shark on the tin, and I remember 'Egg', I tried tattooing him—I mean I can't even draw a stick man—I tried tattooing this shark, this big shark on his arm, and we were kids mind, y'know, this is for life, and it was just awful, it, I don't even, I can't, I, I mean he's dead now, but I can't even remember how bad it was, so anyway! So I had this tattoo when I was about thirteen, something like that, crazy, so um I've always known that this, this crappy tattoo's on my back—not that anyone sees it, it's not like I get about with my top off all the time—but I know it's there—[..] yeah, it's hard to read, I thought it was spelt wrong too, and I was thinking Oh My God! So anyway, I was yeah, always thinking one day I'd get it covered up with something just for my peace of mind" (Neil, Track 10)

In this case narrative makes sense of the meeting between the remembered past and the lived present creating a story of transformation (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). Neil's tattoo is not removed but re'placed', re-imagined. Though there has been much in between these two events, storying the tattoo in this way gives a new way of recounting memory and understanding the present whilst creating a continuity of self that doesn't efface different times but, in conjoining them, illuminates them (ibid). The evolution of the tattoo is also a becoming, as the barriers between man, practice and place blur into each other, craft each other. At the centre of the tattoo is the entrance to The Walled Garden, a majestic brick arch. In Neil's tattoo the wooden doors are open and the eye is led up the brick path, between the tall box hedges. Outside, around the arch, are a throng of vegetables and animals with whom he shares the garden. Because the garden is open to the public and runs up to the restaurant at the glass houses at the

top, ‘being’ in the garden is to be visible. Whilst we are often ‘at work’ within the garden walls themselves, the polytunnels at the bottom of the garden, outside of its boundaries are where we retreat to seek shelter or privacy.

> “Right in the middle, [of my back,] which is quite crazy” Neil says “is The Walled Garden. The archway of the main central path with the archway of The Walled Garden which is kind of mad, thinking of actually T*he Walled Garden*, actually stamped on my back, um, never gonna get away from it, yay, it’s with me for life, that is [..] so yeh, my full back is now covered in The Walled Garden. But the pain. [..] just yeh, just pure agony, but yeh. The tattoo!” (Neil, Track 10).

The transformation of Neil’s tattoo from ENGLAND to a depiction of the garden narrates a changing sense of place and a changing attention. By placing the two tattoos in relationship with each other Neil ‘comes into new possession of the past’ (Emerson, 1946:284). The story locates him both in the past and the present. Neil dwells in the garden, he ‘belongs’ there, but in other ways he doesn’t have control over the future of The Walled Garden. This second garden, however, the one he has had inked into his skin, he is its narrator and the only designer of its future. The tattooed doorway becomes the doorway to an alternative garden in which he controls the story. This is a garden where he continues to belong, whatever the future. Bunting makes a point, that becomes moving in this context. She says belonging is not about possession it’s about commitment (2009:275).

> *BB: How do you feel about having it so permanently on you?*
> Neil: “What?, the ‘work place’? Alright ‘cos, if I ever decide to leave or if anything happens and I do leave The Walled Garden then I’m just going to get Beef [the tattooist] to put some like barbed wire over the entrance to The Walled Garden on my back and put like a keep out sign and loads of like Japanese knotweed in the background and a few zombies or something. Or I might just get it sort of covered up with something else no, no, it’s going to be on there for life, it’s just my little passage through life, and The Walled Garden and how it’s consumed me, I mean totally consumed me now. To get it on my back I mean wow, it’s crazy” (Neil, Track 10).

Neil tells me that even though the garden is on his back he has pictures of it on his phone, and when he’s high on hallucinogens, it becomes a stretchy, animated and coloured-in world that he climbs into, the archway a portal to another level of reality. ‘When you’re high’, another friend says, ‘you know time and place are slippery and you can slip between them. You don’t have to try, you feel, you know everything to be connected, when you’re high it’s so obvious that humans and everyone else, we’re all interconnected, nature isn’t something else it’s everything, we are it, it is us’ (Anonymous, field diary).

The tattoo affords many means of connection: it’s becomes not just a representation of a physical place, it multiplies place, it becomes a fantastic portal to the fantastical, a means to dream (connection in immaterial realms). It is another form of physically connecting Neil and the garden, in the flesh: his body is produced by the garden and the garden is reproduced on his body. But it also creates another story connecting him and the garden. A doorway of affect. ‘The door opens, says the poem—that knows that all doors are magic spirits, and all poems are doors, and, in the same way Time opens and closes, according to its strange magic, Time, which is the very matter of our soul, our very substance, strange and dreaded’ (Cixous, 1998:58). Is it a coincidence that the central image of the tattoo is a doorway?, or that Neil describes the tattoo itself acting as one?

When Neil dies, he wants his tattooed back to become an heirloom for his daughter Lily. His flesh depicting the garden, he says, is a better memory of him than a picture of his face. He thinks he has found a company in Amsterdam that will legally flay him —he doesn't want to leave a potentially illegal request in his will. There's no knowing with Neil where jokes stop and start. I'm not sure if he's joking when he says he's going to get two mating toads and two whippets tattooed across his ribs and a cauliflower on his buttocks. I'm almost certain he *is* joking when he describes Emily's task of wiping the tattoo as "what she's getting paid for" (Track 10), but I'm not sure about the flaying—I wouldn't put it past him. Whether he's joking or not, he's put a lot of thought into the story. The suggestion of the flaying, of the tattoo as heirloom nevertheless registers an attachment to the garden, an acceptance of precarity or temporariness, change and mortality. And a desire to persist. Neil's tattoo holds the same contradictions as heirloom tomatoes: their preservation is made possible by their physical destruction. His back will only become an heirloom once he is dead and flayed.

> Roald Dahl tells a tale of a man whose back is tattooed by a young, unknown artist in lieu of rent. After the artist has become famous, a wealthy collector offers to keep the man, who is now destitute, in fine circumstances, employing him as a 'live piece', a walking piece of art to parade bare-backed for the entertainment of his clients. The man agrees. Shortly afterwards a previously unknown work from the artist turns up in the collectors gallery, highly prized for its unique texture, and the man with the painted back is never heard of again… (1952:31).

> *BB: You've told me about your hopes for this tattoo in the future, can you tell the tape?*
> Neil: "God yeah! That's the whole! The reason for the tattoo and um yeah! See, this is me my way of brain thinking see I'm on veg' at the minute [..] but um, I had a huge great lily on my back as well which represents Lily—my daughter—um and that is one, and that is one of the biggest pieces on there, above the badger, Lily yeah, God! Forgot about that! And there's some Ivy on there which is my wife's middle name. Yeah. And there's a Rose on there which is my Mum's middle name. So um. Yeah, that's quite poignant. But the whole reason for the, the reason I wanted the tattoo, which—it freaks her out still but she's coming to terms with it, um, was I wanted—when I died to um have my skin removed, the tattoo removed and stretched over a canvas for Lily for on her wall but um, but I was thinking, but we were talking about it, but I think I'd be better used as a lamp shade now [..] Lily's a bit squeamish about it, but I'm sure. Or maybe a little clutch bag. I think maybe she would lose that. But a lampshade, Dad will always be shining on you, or is always in the room and I think it will look quite nice as a lampshade. So that is what I would like it to become. Definitely. Um. But yeah. It will be a mem…" (Track 10).

This heirloom is different. Unlike the heirloom fruits discussed earlier, which afforded access to memory through their sensory properties but less through their temporal orientation to a specific or familiar past—heirlooms for unspecified heirs—the tattoo is created intentionally for a specific heir. For Lily to remember her Dad. But also as a guiding of attention. The tattoo is a point where intensities gather, or as Stewart might put it where ordinary affects surge, a 'pressure point' of attachment (2007:5). 'The politics of [that] surge [depend] on where it might go. What happens. How it plays itself out and in whose hands' (ibid: 15). What happens to the affect of her inheritance depends on Lily, what thoughts or actions it makes possible for her. The doorway is there—leading back into Neil's past and forwards into Lily's future.

'Ordinary life [..] draws its charge from rhythms of flow and arrest' (ibid: 19) and ordinary affects 'pick up density and texture as they move through bodies', place and stories (ibid: 3). The act of tattooing is not extraordinary, but increasingly ordinary, so where does all that affect come from? We can hear already that the tattoo is dense.

Once during, and once following fieldwork Neil referred to the garden as a map, a map in which he could locate himself.

> 'The garden is like a map, y'know? Because you have to look after your map for it to look after you. If you're out and you get your map wet and you screw it up and you don't fold it up properly and treat it well, it begins to crack and rip and then you're lost, aren't you. You can't find your way, you need the map to know where you are and where you're going: your path. I have to take care of the garden to find myself, for the garden to take care of me. It's a map into myself' (Neil, field diary).

Neil is not only leaving Lily an image of the garden, but a map. He is not leaving her something to remember him by, but to guide her, and to guide her attention. So if Neil is guiding Lily's focus back to the garden, and himself as garden, why does the garden matter?, or the tattoo of a garden? Firstly, more than a memory of that initial tattoo, Lily inherits a story of its unfolding, becoming. The changing history of Neil's tattoo matters to the meaning he wants it to take forward. A changing of attention from the imagined collective of ENGLAND to the particular happenings, materials and possibilities of the garden.

> 'By making this map I found the boundary of my personal parish, a form of cathedral or physical body; the area in which I feel in direct contact with a sense of 'home'. The boundary is where I feel I am stepping out of my "home" body and where, when I return, I feel I am stepping back into my "home" body. Within the boundary the terrain lives in me, full of the time I have mingled with it. Often the visual memory of a path, a crag, a street, is of the first encounter, but deepened and matured by subsequent visits; - different seasons, different moods, different thoughts' (Nash, 1986:np).

Coming back to that strange and graphic Serres quote she does not inherit a picture but a canvas 'inhabited' by meaning whispered as 'subtle secrets'. The skin 'implicates the senses', which are 'entwined and attached', they form the garden and 'are formed by it' ([1985]2008:60). In section 14 Maria-Sole, a grower in Venice, explains the vital nature of having one's senses turned on, interconnected, tuned in. Here, Neil draws awareness to the capacity of heirlooms to orientate the attention of their heirs. It's a story about a man and a garden and the way they consume each other, become each other. He isn't leaving her a reminder of something that was easy in any straightforward way, but nevertheless it was meaningful. Use your senses, this heirloom says, find your map. Belonging it suggests, is not about ownership or permanence but about finding what matters. Just like those half-heard stories of the heirloom tomatoes, what might matter is not the story that it came with but the unfolding story that unfolds through 'you'. That story only continues if either the narrative of the thing, in either symbol or substance, continues to be affective: to move people to recount or to replant. We do not only make discoveries by inheriting things, this story hints, but

through an awareness of bestowing them too. Caring for the garden Neil leaves a wider inheritance for the world, but he also finds identity, a role, receives care, *becomes located*.

On Neil's back heirloom and hybrid vegetables co-exist, like the vegetables themselves, a reminder to consider the affordances and values of both; but Neil's skin as garden cautions, how do these things produce you as a person? What can they do *to* you as well as *for* you? What is affective for *you*? 'Politics starts in the animated inhabitation of things [..]. There's a politics to being/feeling connected (or not), to impacts that are shared (or not), [..] and to all the forms of attunement and attachment. There's a politics to ways of watching and waiting for something to happen and to forms of agency' (Stewart, 2007:15-16). The tattoo is not a claim to ownership, rather it shows how places become our own, how we make them our own outside of the language and law of posession, and how places lay claim to us. These plots are not backdrops to the producers' lives; they play active roles in their identities and the two-way relationships established through work and production animate both body and plot. Neil and the garden are interdependent, enmeshed. At a time when questions of place are acutely political and issues of access, identity and belonging are charged and contested, narratives of loss are plentiful. But here we find a small story that shows the idiosyncratic ways that individuals go about dwelling. That's what the stories of heirlooms show us, the ways people find to be in community: imagined or remembered or created relationships between people, the world and the things in it.

## | Conclusion

'The skin, the border zone between the bounded self and the social world thought to encompass that self, a membrane that protects but may also conceal, [is] a zone of fascination and danger of a particularly charged kind' (Benson 2000:235).

This discussion of the tattoo demonstrates the value of combining work in the form of participant observation and the recording of life story interviews. There are different dynamics surrounding the two. The three-way relationship between Neil, Emily and I often guaranteed a lighter tone than if I were alone with one or other of them, and so the life story offered a space for storying the tattoo that couldn't happen at the garden. When I asked Emily about the tattoo she said she couldn't give it any meaning because Neil didn't—end of story—and yet Neil's life story challenges this, animates it, loads it with meaning.

Would Neil have mentioned the tattoo in his life story if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes through the strangely intimate ritual of the tattoo cleaning? During my work there, many people asked to see it but it remained securely under wraps. As I also got to know Beef the tattooist whilst I was there I joked that I would get details of the tattooing days and turn up with my camera so I could get a shot for the front cover of my thesis but I was always met with a squeal 'you fucking won't!!' (field diary). I know that he will be relieved not to see a picture of it here. As I noted, the tattoo, for Neil, was not a matter of public storytelling, but somehow a private act of recognition, a symbolic commemoration of this consuming and important relationship. It created a private place and a private heirloom to be inherited directly rather than collectively.

It is not only that life story interviews feel very private that draws out stories. But that the act of recounting is also partly responsible for forging meaning and making sense. Whilst the story of the tattoo is more directly linked to experience and memory than the heirloom tomatoes discussed before it, both forms of heirloom show up individual means of meaning making. To story something is to pay attention and to open the possibility of sharing that story, of it unfolding. Food producers find themselves increasingly precarious in terms of land ownership. None of the food producers heard in this thesis owned the plots they worked on, none of them were bequeathing these places to heirs. Now that physical tools are less likely to be inherited and heirs will not find themselves tending the same plots as their ancestors, food producers have to find new ways to bestow a legacy, a way to orientate heirs towards means of belonging that are not hinged on possession. Guiding attention through stories, teaching the senses as tools to be wielded, heirs are left guides as heirlooms, guides to doorways through which they are able to feel and find what matters.

Memories are not themselves collective possessions. And yet, remembering is always to a greater or lesser extent intersubjective and shaped by the world around us, and what we remember is always an intermingling of our own experiences and second-hand experiences that inform it (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:86-88). Whilst authors such as Carolan and Jordan expose the relationships inherent to heirloom varieties, they seem to end up stuck at the same point: that heirlooms are important because they represent a repository for 'collective memory', which is needed to resist monoculture, loss and forgetfulness. Without explaining the dynamic relationship between individual and collective memory, however, and by treating popular memory as if whole communities remember in the manner an individual might, the term 'edible memory', and Jordan's study of heirlooms, obscure the work that producing and consuming heirloom foods might do. It is important, I think, to keep in mind that it always individuals who remember. And as such, individuals are agents in collective remembering. Re-examining individual relationships to heirlooms, where and how and if memory is at work is necessary before any examination of collective memory can be approached. By focusing on the memories that these seeds purportedly hold, these authors focus on the preservation of memory as product of experience and handing down that product via the physical act of seed-saving. But they do not explain what is going on in the absence of direct recall.

Heirlooms don't need to tap into memory to be powerful, to shift our orientation to past or future, to imagined communities, or material things. Producers participate in the stories of heirlooms by becoming both an audience and a raconteur of their narratives. They demonstrate the way in which stories need to be inhabited in order to make things happen or to be audible. We can inhabit the affect of heirlooms only if we allow them to inhabit us, to pay attention to what they can do *to* us as well as *for* us. In order to understand when and why heirlooms lose affect, or the form of this affect changes, we must consider how and what we value about them, not in isolation but in the material and emotional webs of everyday life. As much as the thing itself, what heirlooms preserve is affect. In the absence of memory this works through narraitve. Only if stories keep hold of the surges of ordinary affect that run though them can 'narration [become conceived of] as navigation' (Macfarlane, 2007:179).

8

# THE PHOTOGRAPH

*The seer is not a gap, a clearing in the fabric of the visible; there is no hole in the weave of the visible where I am; the visible is one continuous fabric' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:247).*

Perspectives.

(Me) the photographer, (and Luna, Camillo's dog), and the photographs that I was taking of Camillo and Luppo loading grapes into the boat to be transported across the Lagoon from Malamocco to San Michele: from vineyard to winery.

At the heart of photographs is a series of dichotomies or dialectics, present not as *either/ or* but *both/ and…*: presence and absence, immensity and limitation, corporeal and ethereal, visible and invisible, stasis and movement, passive and active, remembered, forgotten, imagined.

> 'Truth might be viewed as a handful of sand. Most of the grains slip through our fingers, but something sticks and can be held in the palm. In a desperate attempt to hold onto these pure grains—and in the intense heat produced by the desire to know and understand—a lens is forged. It is made up equally of the grains of truth that form its elements and the hand that fashions it' (Back, 2007:99).

There are so many interpretations of what the photograph does, but often they co-exist in tension. The photograph, to me is vivid: 'these people live again in print as intensely as when their images were captured [..] I am walking in their alleys, standing in their rooms and sheds and workshops [..] [a]nd they in turn seem to be aware of me' (Adams, 1974:4). But the photograph taken is also a comment upon a particular moment in my life, my focus, my ability to see. Not only are these photographs of others particular to me, but, in sharing them I believe the possibility is opened up for them to be taken possession of by the viewer who 'applies his own logic to it' reflecting and affirming the viewer's sense of the world (Levine, 1975:52). Sontag has said we can understand nothing from a photograph ([1973]2005:17), 'there can be no answers. We can find only bits and pieces of clues' (Duane Michals cited in Sontag, ibid: 152) but at the same time she was obsessed with what could be captured. Glimpses, fragments, moments, limited perspectives are also capable of containing 'whole worlds' (DeSilvey et al., 2014:657), 'immense and unexpected' (Benjamin, [1955]1969:236). Prosser says that photographs are not 'an aide-memoire, a form for preserving memory [but a] memento mori' (2005:1); but it is not either/ or, it is both/ and, it hints at the shifts between absence, presence, memory, imagining, storying and loss. How far we engage with photographs is a subjective matter. The photograph suggests ways in to thinking about tensions between past, present and future but it doesn't force us to grapple with them.

What is a photograph to me? It is precisely a lack of written narrative. It is potent potential for a different type of storytelling altogether. It is a collaboration. It lends importance to the ordinary. It acknowledges the everyday and sustains it through time. A photograph materialises a curiosity. A photograph is not knowing, but a wanting to—showing up the orientation of attention in a given moment. Prosser writes rather melancholically that 'photographs contain a realisation of loss' (ibid), but in them I see instead wonder, inquisitiveness, a valuing, love even. When a photograph is taken, something was attended to, a relationship was requested.

A photograph exists in the imperative tense: look. And then, softer, after the imperative the interrogative: what do you see, how do you feel, and finally the hypothetical: what is see-able, what is feel-able, what is real?

The photographs included in this thesis do not all try to do the same work. Their combined purpose, however, is to set up layers of resonance in dialogue with the stories and voices so that the 'text [as a]

whole acquires significance it might not otherwise have had' (Sebald, 2007:54). Photographs contribute to expressing 'ethnographic places' (Pink, 2009:48; see also Coles, 2014). They are not an objective presentation of place, or what happened, nor are they able to show people as full human beings, they work instead through reverberation and suggestion.

Some photographs straightforwardly illustrate, but in most cases the images and text tell stories that are the same but different. The words and pictures create conversation that is richer than monologue, that gets at the multi-vocal, multi-sensory experience of fieldwork that I try to analyse by opening up rather than breaking down. In many cases I have not described the content of the photographs, feeling that to do so would not only become tautological but might encourage the reader to look no further than the words. Rather I acknowledge and encourage the engagement, interpretation and curiosity a reader brings with them, a means of seeing that is always highly personal and alters what a photograph can make avialble. The juxtaposition of quotes and extracts alongside photographs act as invitations to the imagination. I am also wary, however, that a photograph can cauterise the imagination as well as access it. There are moments in this thesis when I have not shown, but constructed in words, experiments in maintaining affect.

| Practicalities

At times the camera was an important tool in allowing me to stop participating physically and step back. The more I was involved in the practices of these plots, 'the less [I could] avoid joining the action' (Tedlock, 1983:287). Rather than the continuity of the seer in the fabric of the scene, taking a photograph forced a discontinuity, a rupture, a selection. I employ my methods adaptively, drawing on them when they a useful rather than using them rigidly. With Neil and Emily, for instance, our relationship was built on a sense of almost clandestine camaraderie, a bubble outside of the world. Using my camera, especially trained on them, broke this intimacy and their sense of privacy. There is power at play in photographs, but it is not always so straightforward as the photographer having power over the photographed. What was photograph-able was a negotiation. Ernesto, for instance was very aware as a subject. Being photographed as a grower and a winemaker allowed him to be perceived and immortalised in a specific guise—this practice, this identity—PRODUCER in capitals. For Bella, *being photographed* lent an importance to their actions, valorised their decisions. Unlike Ernesto and Bella, Neil and Emily sought for their work to be visible but their bodies to remain less so. My photographs of that time at The Walled Garden, often un-peopled, of the changing cycles of the garden flora also shows up how I learnt. My work in the garden I mainly did alone, not learning from, observing or mimicking but a guessing, trying, feeling-forward until we were together again, drinking tea in the poly-tunnels.

As 'participant-observation' hints at, 'vision and the body are tangled up in one another' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:152) they 'belong to the same world' (ibid: 134). Doing was irrevocably intertwined with looking, even whilst that didn't always involve *seeing*. Photographing without doing, I could not have acquired the knowledge involved to see rather than merely watch. Or, more specifically I couldn't have

begun to acquire the same sort of sight as those who I worked alongside. In learning, unlike the skilled duality of the artisan's gaze—which is able to hold in productive tension both context and detail—in the beginning there is everything and nothing.

Photographs also act as a tool—transporting me back after fieldwork, reminding me of things both visible and invisible, inside and outside of the frame, re-evoking my experience. Talking earlier about participation I talked of understandings emerging from the body but some understandings were also uncovered later.

Sometimes, rather than simply visible objects, photographs become the means according to which we look, and secondarily consider. I had never accompanied Ben to the compost heap, for example, I'd always been involved in another task. But one day I was following his every step with a camera. Only through the act of photographing did I see the interaction of Ben and the body of waste from the cider making process. Here was another reality of apple-materiality. After the juice has been valued and the pith discarded, it has the opportunity to re-enter a system of being worth something to humans. Broken down by bacteria its value is made available again as compost. Here the smell is of a different form of transformation from the barn—more bitter—fermentation under different circumstances. Small re-orientations afforded by the camera.

| Documenting Small Stories

A Saturday morning during this period of PhD writing, I was trying to identify a flower I'd seen out walking. The illustrated flower book I have is a version of the one I grew up with, but this one I found later in a charity shop. Out of the dust sleeve dropped an envelope that I'd completely forgotten about. Inside are earlier newspaper clippings, only one is dated: 1951. In prose already so foreign from today's periodicals, these clippings tell tiny stories of flowers. One, now author-less fragment, tells of an 'unimpressive plant' that if I were walking through London 'just now' I might happen to see, it reads: 'lowly parented between *squalidus* and *viscosus*, the hybrid *londinensis* was born upon the ruins of the capital of the world freedom [..] it found an ideal home upon the rubble-strewn wastes of HITLER'. I find these fragments of newspaper completely transportive. They hold more affect for me than historical tomes. This is what I hope for from an archive: that sustenance of affect. Whilst the photographs of place and people in this thesis, sitting as they do alongside long, intimate accounts (in the form of life stories) are one form of archive, my two tiny archive sections: section 6 and section 15 strive for flashes of connection, sparks of feeling. One is a record of apple materiality, without narrative, just an engagement with form and texture and colour of the apples that made up Barley Wood Cider in a particular moment in time. The other tells a story of one man's collection of tomato seeds: snippets of narrative and nomenclature with material and human traces. They tell us that 'Noire Charboneybe' grew with a bronze skin, that 'Bindinkel' with its 'dusky pink crown' was a particularly good one—from Tony's taste[1]—and that 'Ivory-Egg', 'Mr. Novak', and 'Burpee-Jubilee' shared a bed in a British,

[1] Tony is an antique book seller who shared his tomato seed collection with Neil and Emily at The Walled Garden.

twenty-first century garden. These are experiments, but, they preserve a glance into the everyday, and something more.

Emily focuses a feeling on a seedling. Just by observing, and intending, she says, you are affecting and creating the world by being in it. Harry West says something similar: ‘people do not merely make meaning; in the process of making meaning, they also make the worlds they imbue with it’ (2007:46). Do photographs bring a world into existence? They certainly tell a story, one of many possible. If photographs are writing with light are we writing a love letter to a lost moment (as Prosser would propose) or—more optimistically—a found one. Or do a moment lost, a moment found, *and* a moment made, continue to unfold, as a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey, 2005:9)?

# 9

# TRADITION

“My *cantina*—my wine cellar ” Ernesto says, “I made with a  friend. It’s all wood but I won’t ever touch it. It can never be changed [because] it’s alive. [..] Everything speaks of my wine. The wood has absorbed all the healthy yeasts and moulds over the years, it’s saturated with them” (Track 3).

Sant’Erasmo, Venice, September. When we peel back the tarpaulin there’s a collective scuttle as things flee the light, the air is fugged with dust, the low purr of hornets and the higher pitch of mosquitoes. Things in the *cantina* haven’t been touched for a year, since the last harvest. The floor is dry and soily and cobwebs are strung heavily with dirt.When we take out the wooden blocks to do the press there’s a frenetic kick-spring of grass hoppers getting out the way. The roof is a patchwork of rafters with plastic over the top and the whole lot tilts.

Ernesto captures these oppositions which I want to look at in this section: a place that can't be touched, can't be altered, understood as vital to making wine 'traditionally'—but is in itself wriggling with life, cycles of life and death unfolding, invisible to the eye within this place that appears unchanged—but was, at a specific point in time, created, new.

Using Mol's (2002) work on multiple ontologies, I want to suggest that the *cantina* shows up ontological friction. The main argument of this section is that there is no essential 'thing' that is tradition, instead tradition is always multiple. To make this argument I show different ontologies of tradition as they are enacted in practice and in narrative.

I mainly focus on two ontologies as they were enacted in Ernesto's plot, through the production practices of both wine and vegetable growing: tradition as stable (consistent and 'old') and tradition as particular (to time or place for instance). This section will explore how multiple ontologies of tradition and their subsequent effects, whether they appear compatible—or not—hang together in practice.

An effect of enacting tradition as stable and continuous means that the cantina can't be altered. This ontology results in wines 'authenticated' by being 'unchanged' over time. Alongside this, however, the effect of practices enacting tradition as particular, is to produce vines and wines as alive and 'natural'—a different means of 'authentication'. Together these multiple ontologies make up a web of meaning (Hesse, 1988). Whilst it is clearer in an ontology of tradition as particular, how each enactment, is always a unique 'praxiographic stories', *every* enactment of tradition is always a specific assemblage: narrative and material, that makes specific things possible (Mol, 2002:156). I explore how 'ontological politics' might emerge from multiplicity and speculate as to how these are negotiated and with what consequences (Mol, 1999).

Making use of Mol's (1999, 2002) material semiotic approach (see also Law, 2009) extends work in geographies of food by authors that have similarly adopted a framework of multiple ontologies to study food waste (Blake, 2019), cheese (Forney, 2016) and rice (Dwiartarma et al., 2016). In its focus on tradition as a particular way of practicing food production, rather than a material object, it particularly builds on Jackson et al's (2019) work on the multiple ontologies of freshness as a quality of foodstuffs.

Multiple Ontologies of Tradition

*Locating Tradition*

*Definitions*

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Ernesto + Dorona

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Enacting Tradition

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Tradition as Stable and ‘Old’

*Vines*

*Bordeaux Mixture*

*Artichokes*

*Desire*

*Then and Now*

---

Tradition as Particular

*Wine*

*Anthropomorphism*

*Leaning How to Dig*

---

Tradition in Apprenticeship

*Cruel Optimism*

---

Interference

*Locating Tradition*

Slippery, complicated and at times contentious words such as traditional, artisanal or natural are all frequently mobilised as straightforward, 'known' categories across the food industry (Jackson, 2013). Look closer, however, and those defining boundaries will immediately begin to lose their edges, to blur with their constitutive counterparts: modern, industrial, manufactured (West, 2013). In his study of Saint-Nectaire, for instance, a cheese produced in central France, Harry West talks of the Bellonte family's paradoxical need to modernise technologies at their farm in order to sustain other 'traditional' aspects of their cheese making (2014:86). Similarly in Polly Russell's oral history research into the food industry, 'traditional' can be heard to become unlinked both from a particular place and a particular production practice. Her work records the director of Dickinson and Morris, a pork-pie manufacturer established in the mid 19th Century saying: 'As long as you still embody the essence of heritage' by drawing on bodily knowledge even within a highly mechanised production, then 'there's nothing amiss to using technology to assist you with that' (Stephen Hallam quoted in Russell, 2003:211).

As these examples already suggest, 'tradition': a practice, or quality often employed to suggest stability and 'authenticity' through its passage over time has been unsettled in academic literature, dissolved from a known category and shown to be less easy to locate in practice. The work of Heather Paxson (2016)—also with a focus on artisan cheese —reveals a blurring and masquerading going on between new and old; whether that showed up as the traditional subtly incorporating the novel, or the novel implicitly conforming to tradition. Playing against a backdrop of Eric Hobsbawm's (1983:2) ideas on 'invented traditions', Paxson's (2016) work compares the narratives of European and American cheese makers. European cheese making, she concludes, broadly tells a story of continuity—which, she shows to be more of a veneer—supported from below by a scaffold of changing production techniques. American cheese makers, meanwhile, through their continual assertion of originality and their abundance of creation stories, have created a long and ongoing 'tradition of invention' (ibid: 33). Whilst the many threads inclined towards what has gone before could have been woven into a narrative of tradition, this trajectory is suppressed in favour of one in which cheese making promises something new, a way to shape the future. The focus is attuned to that which is orientated towards the original and turned away from that which is sustained. The two cases show two different strategies in which the apparent oppositions of tradition and innovation interact in practice under different labels.

Whilst the work on invented traditions reveals the ways in which individuals and communities might make sense of something, or how affect is maintained, by pointing out the way in which some traditions are invented, 'partly invented'(Hobsbawn, 1983:4)—or even newly understood as alive—it reifies the understanding of tradition as something that *should* or *could* be something ancient, passed down without substantial change. It suggests that we create myths to conceal a lack of authenticity in tradition, therefore suggesting that *there is* an 'authentic' tradition. This works to protect the notion /possibility of tradition as somehow pure and stable and only obfuscates its multiplicity, leaving no room in its

narrative to easily embrace difference. It suggests that there is a 'real' tradition, that it has an essential identity even if this is an identity these authors are contesting, stretching or probing. West (2014), Marchand (2009), and others have worked to move beyond this by articulating the need for traditions to be considered in movement. In order to be transmitted or transmittable, they say, they must become amalgamations, hybrids of new and old components giving rise to 'living traditions'. In West's words: 'In order to live, tradition must be conveyed through time. In the process it necessarily changes some of its component parts even breaks down: it is consumed, it is remembered, it is (re)made again and again' (2014:86). 'Tradition is dynamic, always situated at the confluence of continuity and change' (Marchand, 2009:25), or as Alphonse puts it, one of the Bellonte cheese makers with whom West worked, tradition is both a 'living and a dying thing' (cited in West, 2014:86).

Initially I was interested in what seemed the amorphous, evolving nature of tradition, an unfolding story-so-far gestured towards in the literature but a different line of thinking was helpful in changing the way I would come to think about what was going on in the Venetian Lagoon. Reading Annemarie Mol's *The Body Multiple* (2002) changed the form of my attention away from something that shifts to something that is always multiple.

*Multiple Ontologies*

Through the practices of a Dutch hospital, Mol (2002) studied the multiple ontologies of the body as they were generated through different enactments of the disease atherosclerosis in different contexts. For example: in the outpatient clinic of the hospital vascular surgeons might identify the disease by talking to patients about the location of pain, or how long they could walk for versus in the pathology department of the hospital where the disease emerged—not in moving, hurting, talking bodies—but under the microscope as the thickening of vessel walls from limbs already amputated (ibid). Mol also conceives of disease, or daily life, or hospital stays as the composite objects of praxiographic stories, each flowing into each other along with the multiple objects and practices that make them up (ibid: 156). In this way, not only are there multiple ontologies brought forth through different enactments but each enactment is always a local assemblage of objects, people and vocabulary.

Mol expresses concern that assemblage is too neat an expression for objects coming together. And yet Bennett's (2010) use of the word assemblage (following Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and Mol's praxiographic story seem to collide. They both focus on what is done. The things in Bennett's assemblage and Mol's praxography are not mute but 'vibrant' (Bennett, 2010). Their animated nature allows the things in an assemblage, or a praxiographic story to all 'hang together [..] [to] cohere' (Mol, 2002:149). Or, leads to a *lack* of cohesion, to friction. As these are always local (ibid) and finite (Bennett, 2010), different enactments, and therefore different negotiations between them emerge with frequency.

Coming back to terms, I follow Mol in her use of ontology. Ontology, she says 'is not given in the order of things, [..] instead, *ontologies* are brought into being, sustained, or allowed to wither away in

common, day-to-day, sociomaterial practices' (ibid: 6, original emphasis). Reality she says 'is *done* and *enacted* rather than observed' (Mol, 1999:77). And '[w]ith this shift the philosophy of knowledge acquires an *ethnographic* interest in knowledge practices' (Mol, 2002:5, original emphasis). It is through ethnography that we can begin to explore 'enactments of reality in practice' (ibid: ix). Applying this to tradition: multiple ontologies were brought into being through enacting them in particular practices. These different enactments produce different versions of tradition. This is not the same as generating different perspectives or representations of what is essentially the same thing, it is to bring into being complex, co-existing, differing versions that have the potential to clash or to cohere, to include each other or to contradict each other.

We must make the shift from presuming that tradition is located at a particular ratio of continuity and change, and instead follow it as it is enacted in daily practices.

I want to try to attend to the multiple enactments of tradition that seem to be coordinated, related in a way that they 'hang together' under one nomenclature—for Mol says, the 'manyfoldedness of objects enacted does not imply their fragmentation' (ibid: 84). But also what happens when they don't hang together, when there is more (perceived) incoherence than coherence and the 'ontological politics' that emerge from this (Mol, 1999). As I am coming to understand it in the specific context of an older man teaching younger men about the tradition of wine making and vegetable-growing in the Venetian Lagoon, an enactment of one ontology, or of several, simultaneously, is shared, or taught through how meaning is communicated in practices that are both bodily and narrative. As tradition is *always* emplaced, however, as it is *always* particular, then when that ontology comes to be enacted anew, different effects will always emerge. There are two levels of multiplicity at play: that of ontologies and that of temporality and spatiality so that, though the same ontologies are being enacted, any change in place, time and the different assemblages of words, people and things that come together in each specific enactment results in a multiplicity of effects.

In a previous draft I had prefaced the section with the sentences 'I want to think about tradition. What it is, what it promises, why people engage with it and what happens when they do'. Reading Mol made me re-consider the 'it' I was pursuing but also to clarify the 'is' in 'what it is'. Following Mol's model for atherosclerosis, this use of 'is', 'is one that is situated' (2002:54). It doesn't tell of what tradition is 'by nature, everywhere. It doesn't say what *it* is in and of itself, for nothing ever "is" alone [..] The praxiographic "is" is not universal, it is local' (ibid). This particularity and situated-ness of Mol's 'is', is something I wish to carry explicitly throughout this thesis as a whole and my awareness out in the world.

I had been exploring multiple perspectives, assemblages and performances of tradition but still thinking about 'it' as if the present definition needed to be stretched to accommodate a 'confluence' of continuity and transformation (Marchand, 2009). Instead, work on multiple ontologies liberates one from this search for what tradition *is* in abstraction or totality and instead looks at the way in which multiple ontologies of tradition are enacted out in the world, in the particular; how they relate or exist in tension,

and the effects produced by these enactments. There is no overarching one thing which *is* tradition, instead, multiple traditions come to exist through their enactment. As Jackson et al. put it: a turn towards identifying the multiple ontologies of—in their case 'freshness'—stopped them continuing to approach its multiplicity 'as a series of social constructions or as different perspectives on essentially the same thing' (2019:79). Following Mol's work, Jackson et al. applied these ideas to freshness as a quality of food identifying its multiple ontologies to reveal how their enactment produces different effects in the material world (ibid).

In section 7 I drew on Heuts and Mol's (2013) work on registers of value, to show how an heirloom, could be valued in different ways, depending on which of the affordances, inherent to the conception of an heirloom, fit a given circumstance. This is an example of how the same thing, in that case an heirloom, could be constructed, thought, and valued differently. This section, however, thinks about different enactments of tradition, not as different social constructions of the same thing, but that multiple ontologies produce *different* traditions, each with different affordances. This is to draw a distinction between how tradition might be seen or thought differently to how tradition is 'done' differently (Jackson et al., 2019).

*Definitions*

The semantic roots of tradition are multiple, 'borrowing', as *The Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, from Anglo-Norman, French and Latin. Although now used rarely, tradition is a verb as well as a noun (*OED online*, 2015), an active, doing word. *The Oxford English Dictionary*'s first description of the noun too focuses not on the 'thing' itself but the 'action or act of imparting [..] something'. The definitions can be read to suggest movement, or stasis, action and practice or the bounded-ness of a material thing. One entry forefronts the idea of orality and recounting as key; whilst another stresses the motion of handing on, transmitting, delivering. 'Between generations' one adds, before the next says 'not necessarily' (ibid). Tradition is something 'established by a particular person [..] and subsequently followed by others' or 'any practice [..] established for some time [..] considered collectively' (ibid). In old French it is an act of betrayal, or in Latin surrender. It has been used to mean the personification of a thing passed on, as well as teaching and earlier, judgement (ibid)[1]. Is turning to a dictionary, house of definitions, the antithesis of what Mol is trying to do? I'm not certain. It may be that the dictionary is offering us many different meanings but arguing that they are all one thing. The difference, however, in how nouns and verbs are enacted already suggests to me that multiple ontologies of tradition might exist at a dictionary level: dictionaries responding as they do to usage—words, and ways of wielding them

[1] In comparison to the *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which seems to allow for tradition's multiple ontologies, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) keeps the definition ambiguous rather than multiple: After an investigation on labelling terms carried out by the Food Advisory Committee (FAC), the FSA produced the ambiguous guidelines that traditional should mean that something has 'existed for a significant period' and be 'substantially unchanged' over that period (they suggest 50 years or two generations). Within this they say, traditions should be allowed to change in parallel with with consumer expectations of what is traditional (2002:15). These terms present a problem in that to regulate them, they need to fix a definition of them. What this report hints at in its ambiguity is the struggle to fix them meaningfully enough to regulate.

being produced out in the world. This is consolidated by the way in which *The Oxford English Dictionary* draws on examples (admittedly all written) showing them in particular contexts. The differences in what tradition 'is' and how it is enacted have emerged out of tradition happening, but they haven't changed the word to mean something homogenous they have shown that they are discreet and yet related. Can we approach these definitions as effects of the enactment of different ontologies? These —sometimes simultaneous—unfolding happenings create different things, all of them which 'hang together' (as Mol puts it, 2002:5) under the nomenclature of tradition.

But why, when even the dictionary shows the many ways tradition 'is' and is enacted, does it feel brittle, threatened, rather than easily multiple?

The enactments of tradition I look at here are those involved in the production of food and wine in the Venetian Lagoon. My attention was drawn to different enactments of tradition in two ways. Firstly, whilst trying to make sense of the apparent inconsistencies I had experienced during my fieldwork with Ernesto growing vegetables and making wine at his plot. Secondly through reflecting upon recounted tensions between Ernesto and his former apprentices Stefano and Dario.

| Ernesto + Dorona

On a wooden bench, above a concrete floor laid over shattered glass, in a room without a light, the contents of glass vases, hooded with paper bags, bubble. It takes a minute for your pupils to dilate and the shoulders of demijohns to sharpen from the shadow. If you hold very still you can hear them puttering and see the shallow, guttering breath of the brown paper bags, in and out, held round the glass necks with plastic bands. The door closes, not well, and is decorated with the glossy, once thrown out, now re-purposed advertisements of 'Clarks' shoes. The door opens onto a tunnel of trees at the heart of a vegetable garden enclosed by vines and fruit trees, willow, a ditch and a gate. Outside the gate is the circular road that loops the island of Sant'Erasmo, itself encircled by the Lagoon which wets the urban banks of Venice.

Inside these glass demijohns ferments *Dorona*: Ernesto's golden wine[2].

Ernesto smiles often: two teeth visible in his bottom row. His eyes are pale as if they were once striking, a finger, damaged in an accident with a chainsaw has a long, thick nail and he holds it as if still vulnerable. The other fingers are broad, split and dry but their dexterity and strength outstrips the rest of his body which he struggles now to bend fully. There's a sibilance to his voice; sometimes he stammers, a hollow knocking on a single word but he is a great narrator of stories and his stammer serves only to draw people nearer. On a one-hectare plot Ernesto grows vines, makes wine, tends artichokes and vegetables, accompanied in the afternoons by his wife Donatella.

In his seventies, his weathered patina; his tools: cut from straight, light, elder staffs; his dialect and surname identifying him as an island dweller, are some of the elements that allow him to embody a popular conceptualisation of the *maestro*: the experienced elder; emblematic of 'tradition', rooted in, and demonstrative of place; a bridge to the past and knowledge on the point of vanishing. And Ernesto too, sees himself in this way: a precarious, mortal link between traditional knowledge and a history-less, future-less, place-less modernity. This place: this room, this tiny vineyard, they matter too of course. Their very materiality is affective. Vine growing, wine making: practices—a tradition—that can be traced back millennia (Unwin, 1991). Tradition, is not the word that Ernesto chooses most frequently. He refers interchangeably to tradition, the old ways or the ways of the old ones; by-hand or 'natural' agriculture and wine making. These terms come up often, in his didactic deliveries, as moral necessities, as hopes, as a way of life and something vital to pass on.

Sant'Erasmo, known as Venice's allotment, is the largest island in the North Lagoon, but rarely attracts visitors. As the crow flies it is only around five kilometres North-East of Venice's urban hub, but half an hour into the *vaporetto* ride—the public water bus—few people remain aboard. 'When I was a child' says my neighbour Francesco, who is in his late thirties: 'Sant'Erasmo wasn't a place one went, in fact people would think it very strange to go there. Even more recently people would look at me as if to say

[2] The grape-name *dorona* comes from gold/golden.

what are you doing here—what are you going to do here?'(field diary). Born on Sant'Erasmo, Ernesto has never lived on the island and yet through work, through production, he dwells here in another sense. His connection with the island is life-time-long, coming to help his uncle and cousins with the land and animals and sleeping in the hay loft through the summers before taking over the plot of Donatella's family.

In 2013, four young men that would come to make up *La Maravegia*—'Wonderland', a small holding on Sant'Erasmo, came across the opportunity to manage a vineyard on neighbouring island Vignole. It was part of the cultural association *Laguna nel bicchiere*—'Lagoon in a glass'—a project to recognise, (re)find and (re)cultivate the vineyards of the Lagoon engaging with Venice's material and intangible heritage. It served as a stepping stone. Through these initial forays into island agriculture they encountered Ernesto, who would become their *maestro*, their mentor—and they his apprentices in learning the old ways and traditions of island agriculture. By the time I first encountered *La Maravegia* it was down to two men: Stefano and Dario, and by the time I returned for fieldwork Dario too was beginning to pull away. My fieldwork at *La Maravegia* was therefore spent working alongside Stefano, but I often encountered Dario in the Lagoon as he took on more work for *Laguna nel bicchiere* or helped out in other agriculture concerns on the islands.

At first the men gravitated towards the magnetism of the myth. "Sant'Erasmo, for me" Dario says, "was, *appunto*—precisely, this idyllic, productive place, where vegetables grew naturally, where the fruit appeared as if by magic" (Track 2). Later, sobered by the agricultural reality they found on the island ("initially we were led astray!" he says, Track2) they gathered closer to Ernesto, a lasting embodiment of their fabled ideals—the old ways: an agriculture centred around a sense of place.

> "He treated us with all the love that a father shows to his own kids, when I say kids I don't really mean his own children but the fruit from his plot and his vineyard—they're like his kin. When he talked of these things he imparted a lot to us, fundamentally we became a part of him and that place, he gave us a lot and when he recounted stories he gave all of himself to us. And so we found ourselves in front of this devoted man, dedicated to these things [..] a man of a certain age —in his 70s—physically capable but naturally with limits and yet, notwithstanding, what he was able to produce was astonishing. He astonished us" (Dario, Track 2).

At times, the practices of my participants enacted more than one ontology of tradition, and yet, both forged and supported a web of meaning that made their production matter. Even when these different ontologies appeared (and were, in a sense) contradictory, they remained indispensable for the different effects they produced out-in-the-world and were navigated in a way that allowed them to hang together nonetheless. Through these different enactments, tradition is not uncovered but produced as multiple and complex (Jackson et al., 2018). This is perhaps messier than Mol's (2002) case of atherosclerosis—where different ontologies meet but mainly exist in different sites for different people, but was something encountered by Jackson et al. where multiple enactments of freshness moved from incompatibility to 'support[ing] and depend[ing] on one another' (Jackson et al., 2019:82).

Initially the experience of doing felt impenetrable to meaningful reflection. There were clashes, inconsistencies, and times when the actions I was recording were confusingly contradictory. Trying to story this initial mash made my head spin and caused increasing doubt and an inability to articulate anything clearly. I didn't know where the stories I was experiencing and writing about were going or how to make sense of them, they seemed to be unfolding but unhinged.

It was only when I didn't try to reconcile these actions under one 'thing'—as the practices of a singular tradition—when I could see that contradictions *co-existed*, emerging out of the simultaneous enactment of more than one ontology (which themselves were brought into being through practices in motion) that I was able to move ahead. Where before there had been a cacophony now I began to hear poly-vocality, where before there had been a conflict of meaning, now I began to hear meaning-making.

In what follows I show how, in one plot, tradition is enacted variously. How tradition is 'done' generates multiple realities (Mol, 2002). Whilst I separate out the discussions—of how tradition is enacted as stable, and how tradition is enacted as particular—they are not neat categories but overlap, clash and compliment each other. I have tried to keep a sense of these interactions, this messiness within each discussion. Whilst academically we might be able to divide different sets of material and discursive practices in order to label them, in practice the enacting and effects of different ontologies are always at play—often simultaneously—in the everyday life of the plot.

| Tradition as Stable and ‘Old’

*Vines*

Through actions and narratives that perform vine growing and wine making as a recognised practice—sustained continuously and consistently through time and space—the tradition of viti/vini-culture is enacted as stable and ‘old’.

Ernesto grows *Dorona*, *Bianchetta*, *Raboso* and *Fragolino* vines inherited already in growth, or propagated with purpose, or in happenstance, through layering. (Layering is the process in which an above-ground part of the parent plant is pushed beneath ground to encourage it to take root. Once it has put down a separate root system that buried bond can be severed creating two, independent plants from one). Some of Ernesto’s vines are already over a century in age, others have taken root in his time here, under his watchful custodianship. When I arrive in the Lagoon in the first days of March it is barely spring and the vines are still leafless. Their bark is rough, their surfaces show flow and fixity: like water whipped into raggedness and swirls by the wind, but, at the same time, it is movement ossified, flux immobilised into contorted bows that have the dry, cracked brittleness of sun-hardened husks. For now their exteriors hide their dormant life. Soon they are transformed by the rising sap, the spreading tendrils and unfolding leaves.

> “The vine—it’s a thing which agitates me a lot. *All* of our vines are *píe franco*—of European rootstock [literally, French feet], that is to say that genetically [the vine] has its own roots, its own, from natural wood from Mother Nature—they’re not grafted—they’re made by the mother plant, who's a hundred years old, she makes a new plant, they’re born from her, those new plants are the children of the older mother plant understood? They don't have anything external, new, strange they are from Mother Nature. [..] They yield less, they need more time passed with them, more attention, but I can say, really, I have an antique vineyard. I can say that I make wine with very old vines and their own children” (Ernesto, Track 3).

Extremely rarely for Europe, all of Ernesto’s vines are ungrafted—*píe franco*. In the late nineteenth century the introduction, from America, of the insect phylloxera devastated European vineyards. The bug feeds on vines and their roots which in European varieties (from the family vitis vinifera) leaves open wounds that become infected  It is these secondary infections that ultimately kill the vines. American vines are still attacked by phylloxera but they have inbuilt defence mechanisms: the open wounds quickly heal over, preventing fungal and bacterial infections from taking hold. As there are no known means of decreasing phylloxera populations the main solution to phylloxera—emerging as a means to resuscitate Europe’s graveyard of vines—was to graft vitis vinifera vines onto phylloxera-resistant American root stocks (different hybrids, not originating in the vitis vinifera family). Only tiny parcels of vitis vinifera vines survived in Europe, usually grown in sandy soils which impede the movement of the insect but Ernesto’s vines, grown in clay, are an anomaly[3].

[3] There are several other vineyards on Sant’Erasmo and Ernesto takes no precautions in terms of visitors and so on. It is speculation only that perhaps the island-nature of Sant’Erasmo and the relatively low traffic to and from the island has thus far proved enough protection from phylloxera. One of the other vineyards—a French man growing ‘international varieties’—claims to have *píe franco* vines, but Ernesto counter-claims that this is a lie.

*"*I saved the Rose
which was being ruined,
thrown away,
forgotten

I saved the *Dorona*
which was vanishing,
becoming extinct

I saved the *Bianchetta*
which was disappearing

I'm able to say these things,
what can those people who graft [their vines] say to me? [..]
what have they saved? [..]
what have they protected? [..]
what have they defended?
preserved?
rescued?
what old thing have they helped to survive? [..]

*Dorona* was a wine stepped over by everyone.
Everyone.
[..] and we, with our passion, we saved it, we made our wine,
always going forward [..]
moving ahead with the past"

(Ernesto, Track 3).

Whilst most people buy grafted vines at a nursery, the propagation means for producing ungrafted vines through layering allows the process to be performed as more direct and continuously of a single place. We do this one day, separating what will be the new vine from its parent with a sharp downward cut of the spade and shifting it to a different spot. Ernesto is returning his plot to an old island-layout where vines weren't planted in rows but as the contours and borders of the *orto*—the vegetable plot. For Ernesto the traditions of wine making and agriculture are enmeshed. Look at old maps of the islands and you will see many plots marked as vineyards. Whereas today this is more likely to denote a vitis (vine) monoculture, then its meaning was closer to *orto.* Ernesto tells me: 'people would say *I'm in my vineyard* but it meant I'm on my plot, because the productive beds and plots would be ringed by vines: vegetables and vines would always come together' (field diary).

'Wine has been made like this since the ancient Romans, even before them, since the dawn of humanity' (Ernesto, field diary). The age of Ernesto's vines and their ungrafted-ness provides a continuity of material form that enacts this viticultural practice as continuous and recognisable through time and space. Ernesto goes as far as to say that grafted vines are no longer real vines, for him they are no longer able to enact a viticultural tradition that is stable, 'old' and unchanged. Ernesto spits as he pronounces the word *incalmo*—grafted (or *innesto* in Italian). Grafting, he says, is a contamination of the true nature of the vine, an insult. Most importantly, he says, the grape from a European variety grafted onto an American root system can no longer 'taste of itself'[4] for the relationship between soil and plant has been ruptured, interrupted[5]. Nor can it 'taste as it always has' (Ernesto, field diary).

For Ernesto, *Dorona*—his most prized grape variety—is only *Dorona* in a particular network of relations. For him, as soon as *Dorona* is grown elsewhere (even on Sant'Erasmo but not in the same soil) it is no longer *Dorona* because it's 'always been here'; as soon as its vines are grafted it is no longer *Dorona*; as soon as its wine has sulphur added to it, it is no longer *Dorona*. This *Dorona* is an effect resulting in part, from the enactment of both ontologies of tradition that I look at here: tradition as stable and tradition as particular. That it's '*always*' been grown *here*, for instance, contributes to enacting continuity, but so too does it cement the particular relationship between grape and place. Multiple ontologies therefore, can produce complimentary effects that overlap as well as diverge. Similarly, as I now elaborate, a multiple ontologies approach reveals the manner in which seemingly contradictory processes come together in enacting a particular ontology, and demonstrates that the co-existence of different ontologies of tradition does not always result in friction.

[4] In my experience this is an opinion unique to Ernesto.

[5] It is, perhaps interesting to think with, given Ernesto's feelings, that the word graft, defined as insertion, carries physical and metaphorical connotations of something new imposed on and inserted into something old, to suppress former life and grow directly out of it (*OED online,* 1900).

*Bordeaux Mixture*

Looking back at my notes I find this section and I feel like I'm looking down on our relationship locked in doing: Ernesto, dressed in beige with a cloth hat and string for a belt, me, in shorts and a t-shirt with an old straw hat, attentive at his shoulder:

*Leaning over the cast-iron bath Ernesto is stirring the blue liquid with an oar. The blue is milky, opaque like thick gouache saturated with pigment. I pass him a white container which he empties into the bath, stirring still. Straightening, he holds out a navy puffer jacket stained with brighter blue. It's coarse with a stand-up collar, pilot style. It swamps me. It's sunny but I do the zip up all the way to my chin—although it looks beautiful churning in the bath, the thick blue feels unnatural and I want to avoid getting it on my skin. The metallic odour of treated vines is a familiar smell to me, one I find deeply unpleasant, but I've never seen the liquid before it's sprayed over the vines. I stand next to the well-head, arms outstretched, back turned and Ernesto mounts the sprayer onto my shoulders, putting the nozzle into my left hand. He pushes my arm into a higher right angle. Though the nozzle is light it's not a natural arm position and as I move down the vines freckling the leaves with droplets of blue he adjusts my shoulder, pointing out the angle of the dots on the leaves and supporting my elbow, lifting it up as I make my way, showing me how to catch the faces of the leaves whatever tilt they lie in, so that blue clings to green.*

The blue liquid is known as Bordeaux mixture—it's a mixture of copper sulphate and lime that, sprayed onto the vines, prevents prevalent diseases such as downy mildew. It seemed to go against Ernesto's convictions that they 'follow nature', that the purity of wine emerges solely from vines and grapes, that there 'is no product more natural than ours' and that he is continuing an unchanged trajectory back to before the Romans (field diary). Bordeaux mixture emerged in the nineteenth century but has remained accepted practice in organic, biodynamic and natural wine making because each element is naturally occurring. For Ernesto, that it has been a visible and continuous practice within living memory allows it to be a performance of stability.

When his apprentices suggested alternative solutions (as Bordeaux mixture has recently been linked to concerns about heavy metal pollution and toxicity: see Edlmann, 2013), Ernesto was adamantly against trialing them, even though the plant based tinctures appeared to fit more closely with his ideals. Here, a practice that Ernesto executes that enacts tradition as a set of unchanging 'old ways' (for the younger men) comes into conflict with the desire for a wine that is 'totally natural' and 'alive'. *That* 'alive' wine is an effect which results from enactments of tradition as particular. As I will show these two ontologies of tradition as stable, and as particular, are both enacted and sustained via Ernesto's winemaking practices.

In the young men's understanding, the idea of the tinctures is to adapt solutions to locale—a form of faith in Mother Nature, that 'she' will have provided solutions growing nearby. And so, though their practices are different, the young men's use of the tinctures enacts tradition as particular, a tradition

already in existence in Ernesto's plot but brought about in other practices. The fiction here is between praxiographic stories rather than the ontologies they enact. Observing the younger men's trust that answers could also be found in internet forums from across the world of wine making showed a similar divergence in the way in which the younger men enacted tradition as stable through space and time. Finding advice in mobile phones was seen by Ernesto as a clash with tradition as particular to place. Both Ernesto and Stefano bring forth, on one hand wine and practice as familiar global objects, and on the other lively, local, personified vines and practices. And yet each enactment, as Mol underscores, is always particular (2002). Is this how ontological politics arise (Mol, 1999)?

*Bordeaux-blue*

*Artichokes*

*The Rose Artichoke*

> "*Fia mia*—my daughter, when you work with artichokes by hand—as we must—you are never done! But the tradition of the artichokes is important for all of our islands—Mallamocco, Torcello… Sant'Erasmo is not the only one [..] but Sant'Erasmo is an island of legend—understood? [..] once upon a time, we distinguished the violet of Sant'Erasmo because of *il terreno*—the soils, because *i veci*—the old ones maintained that, for the artichokes to come good, they had to come from real clay, understood? So the others, they're not really true. The old ones would keep this whole stretch in artichoke production—the violets, it's this soil that gives the value to the artichoke understood? The real artichoke would be of this soil, not sandy or light black soils. It has a different taste, a more pure, purple colour, it's simply another thing" (Ernesto, Track 3).

Similar to the vines, Ernesto propagates the artichokes directly from the parent plant, connecting not only the plants but Ernesto, back through his wife's family. "My artichokes are over a hundred years old", he says, "maybe two hundred!" (Ernesto, Track 3).

> "Our artichokes, they're still from the time of [Donatella's] father you know? I'm planting and replanting the plants of her father" < *Donatella: "The origins are always those"* > "The origins are always those old ones understand? We're talking about one hundred, one hundred and fifty years eh—understand? Still always with those old ones those old plants, same with the vines, going ahead with past. (Ernesto, Track 3).

In 1966 '*L'aqua Granda*'—'The Great Flood'—devastated Venice's lagoon-agriculture. The water level rose to two metres, but more damagingly stayed that way for almost two days. Livestock perished. Islanders remember the bloated corpses of cows floating by their upstairs windows. Crops sank beneath the waves, and fruit trees—which had been the island's mainstay—later withered and died from the salinity of the soils. Top soil could be rinsed and/or replaced but the trees with their deep roots suffered from the far-reaching salinity of the soils. Astonishingly, many of Ernesto's vines pre-date 'The Great Flood', somehow surviving yet another obstacle. The artichokes, however, were not so lucky. Donatella tells me that cultivators of the violet artichoke in Pisa stepped in in subsequent years giving the lagoon islands the stock needed to replenish their own cultivation. These artichokes, descended from those of Pisa stand in for those lost in 1966.

Whilst Ernesto's narrative of the longevity and lineage of his artichokes could certainly be understood in many ways, a multiple ontological framework can hold Ernesto's narrative as part of a performance, an enactment of tradition as stable and old. Narrative as a balm to breakage, as a resistance to rupture, a place to dwell and enact identity as continuous. Portelli gently reminds us that 'the importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge' (Portelli, 1991:51). In this way Ernesto's narrative of the tradition of cultivating violet artichokes on Sant'Erasmo as continuous over time is part of also establishing the tradition as particular to place. His narrative indirectly speaks of what he fears as well as what he desires for the two are so often complicatedly and intimately enmeshed. Beginning to pay attention to multiple ontologies, allows us to start to understand how things are enacted meaningfully rather than attempting to locate things along a scale of true to false, authentic to inauthentic.

Ernesto talks of a social rupture that was precipitated by a change in agricultural practice. 'Machines' he says 'isolated us all from each other, they made everyone look to themselves. Once upon a time a field would have seven or eight thousand artichokes in it. Now, with mechanisation that's four thousand. So what 'a field' means has changed. Now they plant them wider, sparer, so everything can be done by machine. So space, now, is never enough, and yet it's ever more empty' (field diary). He talks of his increasing isolation in practice as those practices around him change, the collaborative and social aspects that ran through and alongside previous agricultural practice disappearing as an effect.

The 'rose' artichoke—a mutated form of the violet artichoke—was something given value by Donatella's father, persevered with and therefore preserved by Ernesto who took up the mantle of propagating and defending it. You shouldn't, he says, cease to produce something just because people don't want it: continuity over viability. The rose artichoke opens sunk within the plant, its petals coming to a thorny point, they are difficult to harvest, produce less, and suffer more with ants and disease. "The rose is also the violet [artichoke] of Sant'Erasmo you *have* to take ahead this too, to let people taste how good it is, and not say it's evil because it opens like a rose but first you taste and then you say if it's good or not, understood?" (Track 3).

Here, artichokes of different forms, different ages, with different narratives co-exist, but they enact tradition in specific and related ways, bringing it into being: here in the particular, here in the continuous, both producing Ernesto as defender, custodian of two ontologies of tradition and the practices, narratives and artichokes that produce them.

Mol's work centres around *where* different ontologies of a 'thing' come into being. Different ontologies sit in different sites and there they make different actions possible. 'As long as incompatible atheroscleroses do not meet', Mol says, friction is avoided (2002:119). In my case, ontologies are not segregated in the same way, we do not come across shifting ontologies (necessarily) by moving between different plots. They are not neatly compartmentalised but jagged, overlapping in geographies and coming together unexpectedly. Shifting attention from Mol's focus on where different ontologies exist, I want to think about how the enactment of different ontologies can be accepted and understood. What allows these ontologies to co-exist despite potential areas of tension and apparent contradictions? In what follows I speculate that an optimistic attachment—to particular 'desired' effects of various enactments of tradition—helps to smooth over potential ontological discord.

*Desire*

I was first looking at Lauren Berlant's (2006) work because I was thinking about affective things: Ernesto, his golden wine, his place: they are magnetic, they draw people in and move them, they are desired, and this is where Berlant's ideas on 'objects of desire' began to resonate. Berlant's objects of desire are affective things. To be affective is to move us, and in part, this kinetic energy—for do we not feel emotion as a surging or rushing away, a solid lump or a vanishing of mass: a movement both abstract and strangely physical—comes from how we hope that thing might transform us, where it offers to transport us, what it offers to do for us.

Berlant's writing re-positions things. She prises open these objects of our desire, making visible not the thing itself—be it person, place, practice or thing—but how it is understood by those who desire it. When we desire something, she says, it is the 'cluster of promises' embedded in that thing that we hope to get at (ibid: 20). 'To phrase "the object of desire" as a cluster of promises is to allow us to encounter what is incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments' (ibid). What she means by that, she says, is that conceiving of it in this way begins to explain our continuing attachment to that object. We are optimistically attached to the potentialities implicit in our object of desire, even when they don't transpire in the way we'd hoped (ibid).

The cluster of promises glinting in Ernesto's golden wine are not fixed then, but ripple and shift, contingent on the person focusing their desire upon it. A bundle of vibrating potential. Perhaps it promises a taste of place; a connection to 'a past'; continuity, authenticity; proximity to Ernesto; to ingest, be infused by and moved by heritage. For Dario and Stefano, being in Ernesto's 'magical' place, where fruit becomes kin, where apprentice and master bodies merge through stories, promised connection. It promised connection to the story and tradition of wine making unfolding over centuries

and it promised connection, through learning a practice, to their patch of land, and 'Mother Nature'. Ernesto himself was an object of desire who promised access to vanishing knowledge. 'Knowing' in turn offered promises of inclusion, belonging, purpose and identity. Yet promises are hypothetical, and, as Berlant identifies, optimistic. When we dig deeper, a promise of a connection to the past, or to place shows these concepts to be less than solid.

This is relevant to tradition because it speculates about our desire to make sense of multiple ontologies of tradition and how they might hang together rather than negate each other. Different enactments of tradition result in different effects that might be desired. Enacting multiple traditions means a plurality of promises for those enacting them. Each practice carries its own internal, storied logic. Creating a web of sense-making stories allows us to pursue practices that enact tradition variously, animating different affordances, realising desired objects and making multiple identities possible.

What I want to suggest is that different registers of enactment—whether that is of tradition in my work, freshness in that of Jackson et al. (2019), or any of these slippery categories: artisan or authentic or heirloom for example—are made sense of partially for the objects of desire produced via that enactment. The way in which we enact tradition, invoke it, mobilise it, shows up our attachment to the potential effects of practicing it thus, our *desire* for the effects that this enactment will, or might, produce. Each different ontology of tradition is its own particular cluster of promises.

When we begin to understand objects of desire as subjective groups of promises we cease to see things as solid, knowable, objective, fixable. A particular enactment of tradition is a movement towards promise, a physical movement of practice. Desires can be the negation of things as well, a movement away as well as towards. In the Lagoon, both enactments of tradition come together in offering resistance to other registers of agriculture and a rebellion to present politics. Suddenly we see not just the enactment of tradition but what it promises to do: the texture of human hopes projected into practice.

Practices that enact tradition as stable and old produce affective continuity, and defend affective materiality, a desire of Ernesto's fuelled by a context of felt-fragmentation, change and loss. It is a problematic object of desire because, as Keightley and Pickering (2012) pick up on, it exists at an extreme which cannot be fulfilled, precisely because of a clash in ontologies: one producing experience as continuity and stability, one, as always particular. Enacting tradition as continuous becomes an imperative, imbued with an urgency that is linked to needing to transmit, an idea that tradition enacted thus cannot withstand fallowness, or forgetting. Ernesto turns to me often whilst we work to say: '*cara Orza*—dear Barley, please remember something for me…'; 'you *must* remember…', or, with upset: 'they won't even know what they've lost' (field diary).

The narrative and practice of 'transmission' is key to enacting the continuity of the traditions of the *orto*—the plot, and wine making. The performance of transmission produces Ernesto in a certain role, connected backwards in time to those who have 'carried' tradition before him and forwards to those who will continue these practices after him. As well as temporally, it connects him geographically to all of

those custodians of practice across the world. And on a more intimate plane it connects him in a tactile realm to the apprentices with whom he shares practice and place—the emplaced movements of the body—and with the plants and weather among which he works. As a teacher, attentive to his site, he also enacts tradition as particular.

Apprenticeship, is itself an object of desire and plays a role within the enactment of both ontologies of tradition looked at here: as stable and old, and as particular to place. Apprenticeship affirms Ernesto's knowledge as 'embodied', and promises to keep him necessary, relevant, that what he knows is important. In this role, Ernesto and others like him become links in the preservation and transmission of knowledge, produced as bridges between generations, they become living treasurers. For the apprentices the relationship seems to promise 'authentic' knowledge, an art learned, a participation in a story of place, and entry into a wider story of practice.

And yet the attachment invested into that apprenticeship relationship later becomes an example of 'cruel optimism' where incompatibilities will emerge and shift optimism and desire to uncertainty and concern. 'Cruel optimism' is another of Berlant's concepts (2006). Objects of desire turn cruel 'when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially' (ibid:20). As the 'is' of tradition, is *always* enacted through a local assemblage, the reproduction of practice will never be identical. The continuity that Ernesto strives for will not 'look' like continuity as it moves from hand to hand, from plot to plot, and practices that enact tradition as always particular, will always be *newly* particular. I expand these ideas at the end of the section.

A third strand of theory helped me at this point in thinking through desire. Keightley and Pickering in their astute reflections on memory, experience, imagination and nostalgia (all things at work within the enactments of tradition) reveal the ways in which the transformations conceived of as modernity rely on 'stark conceptual polarities' which 'pose a sense of historical dichotomies between "then" and "now"' (2012:145).

*Then and Now*

'*Then we were poor and the earth was rich. Now we're rich and our soils are poor. And what richness? Peh. Comparatively we're still not rich, but people felt richer. Everyone looks to themselves. We've destroyed our soils. All for what? For insignificant wealth*' (Ernesto, field diary).

Down among the lines of vines Ernesto and I are facing each other across a row of french beans ten inches tall. I'm sat cross-legged, damp slightly from the dew and Ernesto sits on a low, wooden stool in a checked shirt and his usual brown work trousers. The plants are still standing proud, they have a thick dousing of condensation that's keeping them refreshed. 'Only beans can go underneath the vines' he says, 'it needs to be something with a skin otherwise you'll eat the sulphur [from the treatment of the vines] on the leaves. I don't like doing this job but it's got to be done now—we've tried to do it in the afternoon but it's much better to do it now—that way you do less damage to yourself and the plants. I much prefer planting and doing, not harvesting. In another time women would have collected the beans,

it's a job that needs more patience than I have. I'm all about continuity, I keep things rolling on, so I already have the next beans coming on now so that they'll be ready when these ones are done and I'm already thinking about those ones instead!' (Ernesto, field diary). We've been picking for almost an hour and our baskets are brimming. The sun is on top of us now and the spade-fluted leaves are beginning to sag. 'In another time', he says 'the elders, the grandparents would recount their knowledge, their wisdom, their ways. They would recount what they knew while we were doing it. In the past, on a plot this size you would have had ten people, now it's just me. You would always work for your elders; doing the *orto*—the plot was a family responsibility. But now, when my grandchildren come here they don't work, they might play but they don't come here often. Ah it was a different time. That was then, but now, how can young people recount now?' (Ernesto, field diary).

*'There's no history anymore. There are no more stories. How would young people tell stories these days? Into their mobile phones? And what would they say? They don't have a history. They don't remember. They don't have stories to recount' (Ernesto, field diary).*

Ernesto narrates his experience of 'then' and 'now' as one of rupture, a crisis for memory and knowledge compounded by those around him who either already seem to him to no longer to remember, or corroborate his feelings of precarity. Sandro, from *Laguna nel bicchiere*, for instance said 'Ernesto's an important person for Venice, I don't know if people recognise it but when he goes he'll take a lot of knowledge and history with him'. Ernesto is not alone in his experience but rather echoes writers such as Pierre Nora who exclaim 'we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left' (1989:7), 'what we take to be flare-ups of memory are in fact its final consumption in the flames of history' (ibid: 13).

Materialities, practices and people that enact tradition as stable and old become precious in the context of potential loss. When Keightley and Pickering (2012:144) begin to unravel the work of Nora they show how a severe, exaggerated idea of historical rupture is essential in bringing forth ideas such as *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory—'where memory crystallises and secretes itself' in Nora's famous phrase (1989:7). *Lieux de memoire* is a concept predicated on the idea that memory as a faculty is no longer integrated into quotidian experience. And, what Keightley and Pickering take issue with is Nora's reliance on a stance in which the time predating *lieux de memoire* was one in which memory was unmediated, natural, and somehow authentic. Tradition enacted as stable and old in this scenario is treated as a precious residue, a fragment of a former time. Undeniably rapid change has brought about huge shifts in community, agriculture and the particular practices of the *orto*—the plot, and wine making within living memory. Keightley and Pickering, however, show up the ways in which 'arguments predicated on claims of historical rupture create an indisposition to attend in a more measured way to institutional structures of continuity across time, and an inability to grasp in a more subtle manner the complex interactions between continuity and change of which memory is only one, albeit critical element' (2012:145). Ernesto feels a rupture between then and now, but he also forecasts one between now and the future. He mythologises himself always starting sentences with 'once upon a time' but the way he enacts tradition also adds to his sense of precarity because he understands this practice as starkly in contrast with anything that 'comes afterwards'. His concern that current generations 'don't

remember', that history has ceased to be and that 'there are no more stories' is an anxiety forecast forward: that young people won't have a future, that his value will be subsumed, and that the world will succumb to a sensory numbness, a uni-vocal-ness with a monoculture of materiality and an agriculture in which known, old traditions will cease to exist. One issue with this, one that Keightley and Pickering point out, is that Ernesto, like Nora, posits this rupture in opposition to a past without rupture: a time, predating the present, equated with continuity, and shared, essential knowledge that was 'real'. Enacting tradition as similarly having this stability, especially when he feels increasingly isolated, can't help but lead Ernesto to equate what is modern with absence, falsity and disconnect (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:22).

Focus on the co-existence of multiple ontologies, makes visible too the interaction between them and how narrative forms that navigates their different forms. Where an enactment of tradition as stable and old counters feelings of temporal-tearing and social rupture—even as it is instrumental in producing it—practices that enact tradition as particular assist in sustaining a different sort of 'felt' continuity: that of knowing a particular plot, particular vines.

Ernesto | Stefano

A second ontology, fiercely present—and already in evidence in this discussion—was that of tradition as particular. Particular to this place—*this plot*, particular to *this* time, particular to *these* individual materialities. Here it is useful to come back to Mol (2002), who argues that when reality is understood as singular, then everything must add up to wholes. When reality is singular things fit inside of each other, they add up to each other (ibid). On one hand it is quite feasible to conceptualise of 'little' stories of individual winemakers coming together to make up 'larger' stories of a tradition of winemaking spanning the world and stretching back into time. But then we return to the question of what is tradition in this reality? And the whole problem resurfaces of trying to locate tradition on a scale between the individually specific, always changing, daily work of tradition and the authentic, collectively experienced tradition transmitted unchanging between generations. This is what much of the literature around tradition is trying to do—but is unable to reach a consensus on—how much change and how much continuity is allowed in tradition?

Once we move from looking for the essential nature of tradition—'universally', and its acceptable mix of fixity and flux—to understanding tradition as enacted through practice then 'such scaling efforts collapse' (ibid: 120). 'Sure' Mol continues, 'in practice objects may be part of each other. When one object is enacted, another may be included in it. But this is not a matter of scale, if only because such inclusions may be reciprocal. Sometimes two objects each contain the other' (Mol, 2002:121). So here I explore how tradition was enacted as particular, not making up a larger, more stable version of tradition, but co-existing with it.

*Wine*

'Wine is the child of the vine' (Ernesto, field diary).

*Dorona* is a pertinent example of tradition enacted as particular to place, but also, as I have noted a similarly pertinent example of enacting tradition as stable and old. *Dorona*, Jancis Robinson et al.'s (2012:308) weighty work on grapes reveals, is a cross with *Garganega*—a grape grown and known widely in the North of Italy. Grown here, it becomes *Dorona*: Venice's heirloom, traditionally produced on the Lagoon islands, or as Robinson puts it: 'recently rescued but not especially ancient' (ibid).

> "Always remember dear *Orza*. The wine is not dead. Wine never dies. You *kill* wine if you add chemical treatments—sulphur—because you lift away its potency and its potential you strip away its character, that which it is. If *Dorona* is tart it's because that's what she is, it's her own tartness, if I take it away I take away her body, she's no longer wine, it becomes a completely different thing. You have to understand that wine is better than us. We, with the years, get ever worse, but wine, if you respect it—like the vine, if you respect the vine, it has a much longer life than ours, but you have to respect her. [..] But you have to give [the wine] her body, her character, you have to leave her her life. If you take that away from her you leave her to deteriorate. Understand? It's a philosophy that you have to enter into dear *Orza*, friend of mine. [..] Some people take the piss out of us for it, some people admire us for it and the rest think we're crazy but I don't care because I know. I know how it's done, the secret of how you do it, [..] and it must be done like this" (Ernesto, Track 3).

These individuals are drawn to the vital vitality of food and wine, their vibrant particularity, but natural wine is not simply 'alive' it is also in-transformation, (that is, temporally particular)[6]. The simple sugars of the grape are fed upon by yeasts, they ferment, breaking down and re-configuring as alcohol and gas until there are no sugars left and the yeasts die. It encapsulates life and death and the somersaults in between. Sulphur acts as a preservative in that it halts the oxidation—the continuing development of the wine—and protects it from spoilage. Whereas the majority of winemakers might pick a taste-moment to showcase, choosing when to halt that development through the addition of sulphur, wines with no added sulphur don't choose in the same way, don't halt the evolution (of oxidation for example) in the same way. Natural wine (to a greater extent than 'conventional' wine) is the taste of the journey of destruction of a grape. Within the vitality of food is its mortality, its perishability, the processes and energy that make it grow—that nourish plants as they thrust upwards, branch out, ripen fruit—don't stop, they spiral past this, pushing on to seed, withering, rotting and sprouting again. Food is continually re-made. What appear opposites or contradictions are not experienced as such in everyday practices. The preservation and continuity that underpin one ontology of tradition are complicatedly enmeshed with the alive-ness, vitality and mortality emerging as effects from the narrative and material practices that bring about another. In this enactment, stable, global know-how is replaced with the particular 'secret' of how to make *Dorona* (the wine).

Considering the cases of Ernesto's contented use of Bordeaux mixture on his vines alongside his absolute abhorrence of the use of sulphur in wine making is where I wobbled. Was this theoretical lens of multiple ontologies helping me understand this material or was I just confused? Adding sulphur to wine is as recognisable a tool to suppress problems—bacterial spoilage and oxygen spoilage mainly—as copper sulphate is to discourage downy mildew from taking hold in the vineyards. Had I got it wrong then that Ernesto is able to make sense of Bordeaux mixture as a recognisable application that enacts tradition as stable? Wouldn't adding sulphur to wine be a similarly recognisable vinicultural treatment across time and space? But here is the complication of having multiple ontologies of tradition, the practices that enact them and their subsequent effects all in play together. It's messy. And as I have suggested this messiness is not experienced as explicitly problematic because it allows for the continuing existence of these different objects of desire. This also demonstrates the way in which ontologies of tradition are not only enacted through physical practices but storied practices in which narrative contributes to sense-making. Of course, there is also never just one way in which to explain the world, these actions could be storied in many ways, but this framework doesn't try to fix tradition as a compromise between two outlooks, but allows, instead, for multiplicity.

Whilst it appears that the use of sulphur in wine making should be acceptable to Ernesto for the same reasons that applying Bordeaux mixture in the vineyards is acceptable to him, the former clashes with

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[6] 'Natural wine' is a non-regulated term now becoming widespread that, many of its advocates would argue, goes beyond organic or biodynamic treatment of vine and wine in its decreased 'intervention'. It is particularly an attitude towards sulphur so adopting the term natural wine suggests a hugely decreased addition of sulphur or none at all. For example the UK natural wine fair RAW only admits wines containing less than 70mg/l of sulphur, whereas the EU's maximum levels for dry wines range from 150mg/l - 250mg/l for example (see Robinson, 2016:np).

the effects resulting from an ontology of tradition as particular. The enactment of tradition as particular produces wines that are alive, and individual in character, and the use of sulphur negates these qualities. These wines are objects of desire that promise 'naturalness', vibrancy, purity, a more direct connection to landscape. And yet, here the effects of the two ontologies don't clash but reinforce each other, providing different but complimentary ways of valuing the wine, fulfilling two very different avenues of desire. The wine resulting from tradition enacted as stable and unchanged across time and place is desired for its link to heritage and history, and is authenticated by the longevity and consistency of its production practice. In contrast the wine resulting from tradition enacted as particular is desired for its celebration and 'true' representation of place—in the particular of plot, through flavour and aliveness. Heterogeneity emerging as effect from one ontology, homogeneity from another.

This is confusing, because we're talking about the same wine. But I am not trying to say that the wine is multiple, but that the ontologies of tradition that bring about the creation of the wine, these are mutliple. Here, focusing on the object of desire—the wine—smoothes, reconciles potential conflict elsewhere. For example, using Bordeaux mixture, for Ernesto, enacts a stable, viticultural tradition. By managing disease he also protects the vines—that material legacy of continuity. But *not* using additional sulphur in his wines is part of enacting tradition as particular, respecting the character of the grape in these wines which are 'alive'.

'Things are not simple but nor are they complicated: they are complex. To interpret complexity (which is richness) one must have the right tools, a good dose of humanity, of practicality, of knowledge, and a pinch of madness because complexity is not completely decipherable: a part of complexity—mystery—must remain as such' (Marco, (Lagoon-permaculturist), 2018: np)

At times different but co-existing ontologies work to vouch for and reinforce each other, at times enactments of tradition as particular emerge out of, or go hand in hand, with those of continuity and stability, but at others they appear to directly contradict each other. Not only might two ontologies be incompatible but also the dynamics between the effects they produce; different facets of their enactments or their narratives might clash. How can they co-exist without barriers between them? Here, I think it is important to approach the world with what Marco dubs, 'a good dose of humanity', that in practice we don't live, practice or believe in neat little boxes. Here we are only focusing on the multiple ontologies of tradition but these practices are entangled with all the other beliefs we live by, with, in. Tradition is entangled with concepts of place, nature, care, healing and story all in movement, all in relationships 'not completely decipherable', or as Heuts and Mol put it: complexity is not 'an analytical flaw, but [..] an empirical fact' (2013:129).

*Anthropomorphism*

I also touch on anthropomorphism in section 17, but here I want to engage with it, specifically in how it relates to enacting tradition as particular. We are (often rightly) cautioned against anthropomorphising the world around us: for imposing human desires and reactions on non-human things often in order to serve a human cause. But our wariness can lead us to the dead-end of dismissal and dampen curiosity

In direct opposition to common vinicultural practices, Ernesto washes his sheds with wine. 'My wines must only ever smell themselves' he says rinsing a demi-john with wine. 'Water can die' he says, 'but wine, never, it's a living thing. The worst thing you can do for your wines is, when they need to breathe, to allow them to breathe in the stench of stagnant water' (field diary).

and further questioning. Anthropomorphism is metaphor. Ernesto knows that the vines are not human, and yet the metaphors offer him a vehicle for communicating meaning, treatment, relationships. In his astute chapter 'Potatoes and knowledge' Jan Dowe van der Ploeg (1993) highlights what can be missed through this preemptive dismissal or reduction of metaphor to the factually incorrect. Metaphor he says, quoting Morgan, is 'an attempt to understand one element of experience in terms of another' (Morgan, 1986:13, as cited in Ploeg, 1993:214). 'Metaphor is strategic' Ploeg says, 'it is the theoretical expression through which the communication of multiple meaning is organised' (ibid). And yet, there is an essential relationship between these ways of conceptualising and the people that use them: separate knowing from its context and it becomes 'inaccurate' (ibid: 293). Ploeg also notes the way in which it is impossible to integrate local knowledge into a scientific framework because they do not fit imposed standardisation (ibid: 297). He goes on to describe how the application of metaphor rather than scientific logic produced outcomes nevertheless understandable through a quantitive lens, that navigating by metaphor, the 'local' approach to potato farming in the Andes, gave greater yields than the imposition of 'scientific logic' in the form of 'improved varieties' (ibid).

When Ernesto personifies his vines he is gesturing towards their individuality, their particular materiality, their discreet as well as collective history and the affective relationship he is able to have with them. Antrhopomorphism shows up something of what is desired. Whilst there is certainly a discussion to be had about whether anthropomorphism is a way of turning away from the differences of the more-than-human world, I think there is also room for the opposite argument that anthropomorphism is also a way of 'coming into knowledge' of a thing and of wanting to, of opening the type of 'dialogue with nature which poetry understands' and grasping or configuring some of our own humanity, dialogically, in the process (Griffiths, 2013:84).

Ernesto remembers each of their stories: he knows when each vine was split from a parent and moved and how each has responded to different handling and different years. His understanding of the relationship between wine and vine has many implications for how he goes about his wine making. For instance, he says, to understand what is going on for a wine you must look at the vine, the filial link is never broken, he says, so when the vine is suffering the midday sun, the wine will stoop and sag too, when the vine hibernates, the wine will be sleepier, closed, the activity of wine as living organism will slow and still but when the sap is rising the wine will be enlivened. And these relationships are set within a wider set of relations with 'Mother Nature' and the moon. Whenever you move wine, it must be when the moon is descending, he says, and before the heat of the day has developed. If the nebulous concept terroir can be 'heard' in tradition-as-particular it gives rise to plants of discreet personality which in the case of vines, offer those characteristics to their vinous 'offspring'. Whilst this may not be based in scientific language it is a shorthand Ernesto has developed for understanding and communicating practice learnt from attention.

Rather than dangerous anthropomorphism it hints perhaps at experience that escapes a ‘scientific’ explanation or one that is learnt not from written rules but from ‘feel’ and experience, that also allows a space for imagining rather than pinning down. Book-wisdom dictates, for instance, that Ernesto’s practice of washing the *cantina* and bottles with wine, should lead to spoilage and the excessive presence of acetic acid in the wines. And yet, Ernesto’s wines suffer no discernible faults. Ernesto makes sense of this practice through a personification of the wines, that they will respond to what they smell, leading him to the practices he uses. That the vines are individuals, alive, relate-able-to more easily allows their progeny to take up this mantle of aliveness, to have character, personality, moods. The tradition of wine making becomes, not something generalisable, not something continuous or stable but something highly specific to this assemblage: these vines, this soil, this practice, this shed just the way it is and suddenly what needs to be protected, what needs to be taught is the specificities of the wine making tradition *here*.

Anthropomorphism of the vines quite neatly enacts tradition as particular. Other practices, however, rather than enacting one ontology of tradition manage to intertwine them. In what follows I explore how the practice of digging did just that.

*Learning How to Dig*

'Ninety-five percent of people now don't know how to dig' Ernesto says as we pick up our forks (digging, to me, had always meant a spade)—with angled tines and elder staffs—durable but light. 'Everyone that sees me working like this thinks I'm crazy'. We start at the northern edge, backs to the patch we will transform. At our feet we dig down, 30cm (never more), lift the earth and drop it further ahead of us. With a downward, angled movement stroke the tines from the right and then the left, striking and combing out the clods. Ernesto makes this movement seem gentle, fluid, but in my hands it becomes awkward, the fork, held away from my body and brought down over the earth with force is a laboured, heavy manoeuvre. Toss the roots brought out. By repeating this movement we create a gully, a cleft at our feet—and as we dig that gully moves across the patch—the transformed soil and then the gully ahead of us. As we comb the clods, we bring the earth towards us, raking it level at the same time. The final levelling of the final traverse will close the gully and close the task.

As we do, as we dig, I learn some of what makes up 'knowing how to dig':

Knowing how to dig means knowing how to move soil in and through space by hand.

Knowing how to dig means knowing how to transform the soil simultaneously when moving it. The moving does the transforming. (And more slowly also transforms our bodies).

Knowing how to dig means choosing the right tool for different earths and different stages.

Knowing how to dig means taking part in a particular and precise choreography—both spacial and bodily.

Knowing how to dig means being able to imagine what the space will become and bringing that into being, and, in the practice of digging and knowing how to dig, digging becomes also an act of knowing why and knowing how this soil has been dug last year and the year before, knowing that this soil has already moved, that the transformation of the space now is only one part of past transformations.

Knowing how to dig is about watching, reading and feeling the soil—being able to understand what the visual markers tell us. (For instance, when it's tinged white it's because it has yet to feel a warm rain: and so also about hearing these cultural stories circulate).

Knowing how to dig is about time and gaze—the pace allows us to turn up and to see unwanted grubs that we can remove whilst not harming desired soil dwellers. (We also turn up still intact objects of past use. Ernesto's land being part of the "new Sant'Erasmo", it was made from the excavation of the Venetian canals and then the land was fertilised with Venice's rubbish).

Knowing how to dig is a particular orientation towards your land, a set of values, a relationship: sensory and affective.

Knowing how to dig, learning how to dig, and going about the doing of digging enacts two ontologies of tradition: one recognisable over time and space, the other, highly particular to plot and moment. Ernesto's fork, his physical exertion, his knowledge of how to transform the soil thus, even his apprentice by his side bring tradition into being as repeated, known, particularly in a context of increasing novelty and instability. *Píe franco* vines (their ungraftedness), the 'untouched' *cantina*—wine cellar, the old basket press, digging, all perform tradition in this way[7]. And yet the practice of digging doesn't straightforwardly enact one ontology of tradition alone, but entangles them. Noticing that the soil will be different each day, different here than there, that different bits have different needs, these do not enact tradition as consistent but as particular. So too, the attentive digging, that changes form depending on the bugs that are turned up, that changes narrative depending on the objects surfacing and the stories they precipitate, through this digging, the individuality of the vines and the aliveness of the produce is underlined. Through this practice, multiple ontologies of tradition are simultaneously 'done'.

'[A] technical gesture only lasts as long as it is inhabited by necessity (material or symbolic), a meaning and a belief' (Giard, 1998:202).

Whilst the practical necessity of Ernesto's digging practices have dissolved, they remain essential to enact tradition as stable and old, and to tradition as particular to place. He is attached, now, to the effects of both. Whilst Ernesto's movements can still be recognised as digging, they are not reproduced as simply. Knowledges and material culture have changed in such a way that this is no longer the common practice of preparing ground.

'The practice as a "nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki) is not only understandable to the agent or the agents who carry it out, it is like-wise understandable to potential observers (at least within the same culture). A practice is thus a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood' (Reckwitz, 2002:250; also referencing Shatzki, 1996). Although Ernesto fears that to stop a practice would be to forsake tradition, as the young men, show, their practices, though different, combine to enact these ontologies of tradition.

[7] It is worth noting that these are not the only ontologies at work, they are two that I look at in detail, but another ontology, enacted and populated by plastic buckets, for instance, speaks to an ontology that would be something like: tradition as viable.

“this secret of ours
shhhh
it will be a secret
until until”
Ernesto’s voice cracks
“until the time we decide that we can't do it anymore.
I will only pass on these secrets to someone young
that I value as my own and that I know can do it [..]
if so it will go on but if not then . . .
not”.

“I don’t know what to say”
Dario shrugs
sinking lower into the chair
“because from what we learnt
from him,
from his method
we’ve moved away
we’ve undertaken our own,
different experiments”.

Stefano is tall and broad, ginger-haired although you only get the faintest hint in the shadow of stubble on his shaved head and hard-set jaw. In his early thirties, but rarely seeming boyish, he can be mellow, reflective and, in the period I spent with him he was often prone to the melancholic in these days of uncertainty in the project. He can also be contrastingly reactive and in his *umore nero*—black moods, his stature becomes intimidating, his face broods and people keep their distance. Stefano was struggling, not only with the changes happening within *La Maravegia* but with a growing distance between himself and Ernesto as their 'ways' diverged.

Ernesto had often worked alongside Donatella's family and picked things up from them. But over the years the way in which they did things would change hugely. When Ernesto talks about his first vintages he recalls mistakes, improvements, a stumbling, fumbling, feeling-forwards, of all the things he tried and didn't try again, of the way he worked it all out. 'Mistakes!' he says, clapping his hands on his knees 'in life and in work, *bisogna farli*—you have to make them, if not you don't learn [..] you make mistakes because you have to learn from the soils!'. And yet as Stefano feels his own way forward he is struck by Ernesto's disappointment in him. He feels it keenly, his teacher's disapproval for the new assemblages of manners and means that the men have cobbled together to serve them best, abandoning certain practices and elaborating upon others. Their practices though different still enact the same traditions ontologically. The shifting *locality* of their enactments, however, effects the praxiographic story that is enacted, effects the assemblage of things coming together in its performance.

Although Stefano learnt to dig in a manner similar to me, at Ernesto's side, he turned to a no-dig method, building up and adding compost and mulch, rather than digging down and digging nutrients in (also the 'new' method of Neil and Emily at The Walled Garden in Bristol). Whilst Stefano sees this as responding to the poverty of the soil at *La Maravegia* and therefore, enacts tradition as particular to the state of the plot in this moment, an *effect* of enacting that through these practices, is that digging is abandoned. For Ernesto this signified that his attempt at transmitting skill or importance had failed.

As Ernesto was taught practices by Donatella's father, and as these practices were executed and given narrative, multiple ontologies of tradition were brought forth, lived, done, known. Ernesto actioned and articulated tradition as stable and old in this practice, and tradition as particular in that. In the web of relations and narratives of everyday life these ontologies are not nebulous and intangible, but reality.

"Her father" Ernesto says gesturing with his chin towards Donatella "—he made vinegar [for wine] but it was *real*—her father lived this reality" (Track 3). As Ernesto highlights, he and Donatella's father inhabit the same reality, despite their practices differing and producing effects which differ too. Both treated the wines emerging from practices of tradition-as-particular, as alive, to be protected from anything that would suffocate this vitality but one resulted in vinegar and the other in wine. Tradition is enacted as stable by being taken on by Ernesto. The praxiographic story was not the same because the individual and their combination of practices had changed.

‘We follow nature’ Ernesto says talking of being taught by the vines. When they experimented, one season cutting the grass away from the roots, another letting the vine bear more fruit they learned from both the reactions of the vine to their tinkerings and how those affected the vines’ interaction with the world of weather, soil and bugs. They moved away from their beginnings of being shown, or from knowledge written or recounted and learned instead how to notice, relate, how to continue and create by working with the vines, learning in dialogue, responding in turn to their vines’ responses. This is a point made by Harry West (2013) about how to learn from/with/like curd. As West says in his work on cheese, learning with a living, changing, reacting thing which transforms over time is not straightforward (ibid: 332). The process of trying to follow cause and effect is blurred by time, the relationship not always visible from an interaction—in my viti/vini-cultural case—between human and vine to a quality revealed weeks or months or even years later in a wine (ibid). Within the ongoing relationship between maker and wine, learning happens unevenly because all elements are in motion: place, human, vine and wine (as living entities) unfold together. And so rather than learning in ‘spots in time’ as Wordsworth called them (1969:213), learnings became not an archive of moments but a re-jigging of narrative, part of an ongoing story that backs any skill, that hones future attention, that stitches together disjointed experiences into a feel for/with something. This is something I will explore explicitly in section 11.

Though *La Maravegia* is only a few hundred metres from Ernesto’s plot the history of their soils is very different. Ernesto is situated on *Via delle Motte*—the ‘modern’ part of Sant’Erasmo, formed out of the earth excavated during the formalisation of Venice’s canals. A rural built from an urban. This dark, heavy clay pulled from the city doubled the former size of the island. Where the younger men farm—off *Via delle Torre* the soil is paler, sandier, saltier. Four years ago *La Maravegia* was uncultivated and so overgrown as to be impenetrable. In contrast, Ernesto’s land, where they learnt their craft alongside him, has been cultivated continuously over multiple generations. The two are very different creatures, and this has an enormous impact on the practices that enact tradition as particular to place.

‘Never trust a *contadino*—a farmer, that says it has to be done like this, or it has to be done on a certain day’ Stefano (Ernesto’s erstwhile apprentice) says to me. ‘It’s too prescriptive, it talks of a mind only able to see a practice in a single way’. As Mol emphasises ‘is’ can only ever be local, this is what precipitates tradition as *always* multiple. ‘So much is about the person as well as the thing, or the place, what has to be done is always down to your place, your body and it’s about our intent too, that has so much impact’ (field diary). But Ernesto’s ‘like this’ is about maintaining a recognisability of practice and materiality over time: ‘it’s always been done like this, for a reason’ (field diary). This begins to hint at the friction between the materialities and practices of multiple ontologies.

At Ernesto’s plot, the practices they performed responded to the land’s specific present, a culmination of its particular past. They learnt techniques and ideas from Ernesto that responded to the needs of that piece of ground but they didn’t stop learning then. What they took from having enacted tradition as particular was that their learning would necessarily continue to unfold in response the different particularities of *La Maravegia.* Rather than treat tomatoes, potatoes, mulberries and wheat as general

categories they responded to them as they behaved in certain ways: as tomatoes adapted or wheat didn't grow. The behaviour of the crops taught their growers about their practice. At the same time, however, they continued to enact tradition as something old and unchanging over time and space. Where for Ernesto this had meant digging, or applying Bordeaux mixture, for the young men this meant that global knowledge could be usefully applied to their ground. They use their mobiles often out in the field, checking the repercussion of removing a certain plant or insect, seeking advice on planting companions and inputting their own experiences to be drawn on by others. During my months there, many individuals passed through: from other regions of Italy, and other continents—South America, North America and Asia—sharing their understandings from far away plots.

> 'We don't have *nonnos*—grandfathers (/elders), anymore because *nonno* went out and started using chemicals, because they didn't know they were bad, they didn't know the long term effects, so there wasn't a generation to hand these knowledges on, but it doesn't matter because we have the whole world at our fingertips' he says spinning his cracked smart phone in his hand (Stefano, field diary).

Takeing cues from their plot: building up the soil rather than digging in, they enact tradition as particular. Drawing from a digital globe of practice they enact tradition as consistent.

*Cruel Optimism*

*'My brothers and I spent weeks with our grandparents by the sea where we learned so much more than it may have seemed. Not because we saw an actual shipwreck but because we saw the potential for it. Not because we actually found treasure but because we could feel the immanence of treasure at every seashore [..] We fished for wishes and caught them; we swam to find mermaids and became them; and we dived for pearls and returned with a stick, a bit of litter, a coin or the makings of a joke. Pearls, in other words' (Griffiths, 2013:47).*

This brings me back to Berlant's (2006) ideas on objects of desire and the 'cruel optimism' that unfolds through them. Apprenticeship, for Ernesto is an object of desire, an affective object, and was too, for the men of *La Maravegia* when they were setting out. Practices of apprenticeship unfolding in Ernesto's plot variously enacted tradition both as stable and particular. For the young men, learning alongside Ernesto enacted the tradition of the *orto*—the plot and the vineyard as a known practice over generations, offering one form of connection. Cultivating *Dorona* and the rose artichoke as particular to this place and this soil, meanwhile, enacted the tradition of *orto* and vineyard as particular to place and promised another means of connecting. Apprenticeship promised to produce both parties as experts: Ernesto already an expert in the 'old ways', and an 'understander' of the particularities of this place; and the apprentices emerging from their pupillage armed with new attentiveness to soil and practice, and a place within the wider cultural story. Importantly, for Ernesto, apprenticeship was a way to remember and to recount. His teaching was his storying of place and change, of things and tastes and time. Fearful of absence, of the potential for loss and for forgetting, apprenticeship offered him a way to share his memories, the young men's learning came about through storied enactment in place. Temporarily then, this reassured Ernesto that absence, loss, forgetting had been delayed, that his memories would contribute towards the building of skill and practice and story of the young men.

Affective objects are, Berlant says, essentially optimistic—we hope that these clusters of promises are realisable and we invest in them emotionally (ibid). And yet, all objects of desire, she suggests are simultaneously optimistic and problematic. Is optimism—as Berlant proposes—cruel? 'Cruel optimism' being, in her words 'the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of its loss' (original emphasis, ibid: 21).

'Cruel optimism names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility' (Berlant, 2006:21). The object of desire produced as an effect of enacting tradition as stable is continuity. A different form of continuity, that situated within the idiosyncrasies of the plot is produced through an enactment of tradition as particular. Whilst paying attention to the specificities of their own plot, the young men adapted practices, that nonetheless enacted tradition as particular, but to Ernesto looked like rupture, interruption and change. 'One might point out' Berlant says 'that all objects/scenes of desire are problematic, in that investments in them and projections onto them are less about them than about the cluster of desires and affects we manage to keep magnetised to them' (2006:21). Thinking with Berlant might suggests that Ernesto is not disappointed by an ontological shift, but by the variation in effects that come about from discrete assemblages of enactment. As tradition at *La Maravegia* becomes another praxiographic story it seems to disqualify him and his teachings.

Perhaps the Griffiths (2013) quote above might complicate Ernesto's reaction by suggesting that, as it is more about the promises than the objects that purport to hold them, those promises can be fulfilled through different objects. Desire provoked apprenticeship, which was productive, although perhaps not in the way imagined. Categories such as real or false are rendered redundant. But by understanding apprenticeship or lively wine or continuity as objects of desire we show up the variety of hopes projected on to those 'things'.

The tradition of the *orto* and vineyard is both one and many (Mol, 2002:151). Ernesto's disappointment underlines my argument that tradition is not singular, it cannot be taught and re-instated in another plot, it is always multiple, not just ontologically, for as I have shown multiple ontologies of tradition are already existent in Ernesto's plot, but that the praxiographic stories of enactment must vary, because the 'is' of tradition is always local, even as it is enacted as stable across the globe. In turn, the effects of these unique enactments are inevitable different. Cruel optimism only has purchase when we try to close the objects of desire and make them static things. In doing so Ernesto meets what is 'incoherent' in his desire. He wants tradition not only to be reproduced ontologically but via the identical practices of his own praxiographic story that nact them thus. The irony is that true replication would fail to enact tradition as particular. What this section has done is to no longer focus only on the object of tradition as an essential, locatable state, but instead, 'follow' tradition whilst it is 'being enacted in practice' (Mol, 2002:152). Tradition as 'different and yet related' practices (ibid: 77). Spraying Bordeaux mixture does not reveal tradition as stable, it produces it as such, just as consulting an internet forum produces traditional knowledge as stable across space. The actions and the narratives together perform and make sense of tradition.

When Lepecki talks about dance he talks of it being praised and defined as: ‘continuous, ongoing flow, as never-ending motion’ so much so that moments of body-stillness were clearly understood as being ‘non-dance’ (2000:338). Stillness haunts dance, becoming its shadow, its negation. Stillness highlighted the flight of dance by offering flightless moments. ‘[I]f not as a fleeting pose, stillness was that disturbing element which, by its impending menace could not only catastrophically disrupt the magic flow of dance, but, moreover, undermine the very identity of an art form moving towards its autonomous, stable definition’ (ibid: 339). The choreographic imagination was bounded. Modern dance was understood as emerging in reaction—and as an opposition to—the romantics of ballet: structure and poise versus collapse and spontaneity. If tradition is *defined* as stable, old, unchanging over time and place then what is particular to moment, plot and individual vine can only ever be *defined* as its opposite, as not tradition, its threat or alternative. We can stretch the definition of tradition but when do we stop? How far can we expand the ‘old’ consistency of tradition to included lively inconsistencies before it breaks and tradition loses all meaning?

This section has not been about finally locating tradition where others have failed, nor has it been about painting tradition as all inclusive, there is no universal reveal. Instead, it has been about ‘interference’ (Mol, 2002:3). It has been useful in re-thinking tradition, *not seeking to define it*, but showing how it has been done in practice, and speculating about how multiple ontologies of tradition might co-exist and hang together, or not, in a plot. Ernesto’s practices, such as leaving his vines un-grafted and his *cantina*—wine cellar untouched, enact tradition as something stable, continuous, unchanging. Meanwhile, enacting tradition as particular to this plot, produces vines of individual character, producing live wines, and a *cantina* lively and inhabited with plot and practice-specific yeasts. These two ontologies of tradition come together to make a web of meaning that makes sense of the apparent contradictions of Ernesto’s *cantina* and wider practices.

Whilst Blake identifies food as being ‘fundamentally distinct in each ontological space because of the ways it is formatively assembled into practices and the material effects of those practices’ (2019:np), I have shown how those ontological spaces might inhabit not just the same plot, but be brought about within a ‘single’ practice—such as digging. This makes following tradition as it is done a complicated and challenging process, but one, nevertheless that allows us to pause and re-think. This section demonstrates how performing multiple ontologies of tradition gives rise to different ‘desired’ effects. It speculates that whilst desire helps smooth ontological friction, ultimately desire is part of a project doomed to fail. The rigidity of Ernesto’s hope projected onto continuity, that tradition continues to be not only ontologically familiar but similarly enacted (via an identical material, affective and narrative assemblage) is a case in point. Following tradition in this way also has knock-on consequences for how we understand learning and teaching. Amongst those who write about knowledge, there are already widespread rumblings of ‘dissatisfaction’ around the notion of transmission (for instance see Ingold, 2010; Marchand, 2010b). A multiple ontologies framework could fruitfully expand these discussions by shifting from looking at the movement of knowledge objects to what is enacted.

Whilst this ending looks similar to those authors arguing for locating tradition as a dynamic object between continuity and change, the difference is in the conviction that what tradition 'is', is always specific to the praxiographic story within which it is brought into being—through being done. As well as the frictions and ontological politics that emerged from Mol's multiple ontologies, this section has shown how the effects of various enactments of the *same* ontology might also create tensions. The effects of enacting tradition as multiple are seen here in specifically local repercussions. However, looking further afield, it is clear that how tradition is understood has wider political consequences for food practices. Whilst it has not been the commercial implications examined here, the consequences of *what* 'gets to be' traditional and *who* 'gets to do it' raises both questions of commerce and identity. Changing the focus from defining who is, and who is not, working traditionally, to how is tradition enacted through different work, we change the narrative in interesting ways and get to examine real effects out in the world.

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In part, the following photo essay continues to explore the particularity of Mol's 'is', where tradition is both always specific and always multiple. Tradition is always *done by* someone, somewhere. The quotations invite readers not to limit what these photographs show to the content of this section, however. The images try to approach the tactility and sensuousness of things, the movement, relationship, bodily and emplaced experience. I hope that the reader is able to feel something, and I leave it to them to narrate what is important in this set of photographs. Whilst it is in conversation with this present section, this photo essay speaks to the other sections storying place, the senses, legacy, identity and production.

10

# ERNESTO'S PLOT

*'A crucial feature of local knowledge in craft-based agriculture is the way it is interwoven with the labour process. It is knowledge generated in and through labour as dynamic process. Knowledge, the labour process and those involved in it compose a unity hard to unravel into separate elements' (Ploeg, 1993:209).*

*'We have largely forgotten silence [..] we are unaware that silence is also permitted, that silence also is good' (Brook, 1968:25).*

'*[They] had been animated at first by the delusion of a comprehensive totality, the belief that they might come to know their chosen place utterly because of its boundedness. And all had, after long acquaintance, at last understood that familiarity with a place will lead not to absolute knowledge but only ever to further enquiry*' *(Macfarlane, 2012:111).*

*'It's not our wine, my wine, it's Venice's wine [..] I'm just a custodian, it's for this whole land' (Ernesto, field diary).*

11

# M E M O R Y  a n d  S K I L L

Memory

*Lying Buried | Always Becoming*

*The Mnemonic Imagination*

*The Skilled Self*

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Donatella and the Wine

*The Body is Not a Container*

Whilst it *shows* less than the other sections, the discussion laid out here provides key coordinates for implicit thoughts that underpin other parts of this thesis. Whereas, in the section on heirlooms, I asked whether memory is being used as a resonant stand-in for different types of story, here I approach the storying of memory and how it might be at work within coming to know. I set out both the theories of memory I hope to go beyond—those based in metaphors of sedimentation and retrieval—and those I move towards—those based in metaphors of narrative and reconstruction. Keightley and Pickering's (2012) theory of the mnemonic imagination is important in setting out this speculative case for memory at work. Whilst memory is inarguably formed in relation with the social, here, focusing on everyday memory, I look at remembering as a highly individual faculty of becoming and knowing, albeit always in place and with the world[1]. I draw these theoretical threads into the context of my fieldwork and suggest that the sparse articulation shared through apprenticeship belies the complexity of what's going on.

[1] Work on memory and geography has been overwhelmingly focused on collective forms of memory (for an overview see Johnson and Pratt, 2009) but these have rarely been 'everyday'; rather they focus on commemoration, memorialisation and national identity. With the affective/emotional turn this has begun to change and there is a decided shift back to the individual. See for instance Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012.

Ernesto: ‘And then Donatella will nose the wine, and know when it’s ready to bottle’ says Ernesto as if that explains everything,
*BB: ‘But how does she know?’ I ask,*
Ernesto: ‘She smells it, and she knows, in the fragrance, that it is the right time. And that is the fragrance the wine will carry forever’.
Donatella comes into the small shed.
Donatella: ‘I smell the wine and I can smell that it’s the time’.
*BB: ‘What does it smell like when it’s time to bottle? Are you waiting for a change in smell or a particular smell?’*
Donatella: ‘I just know. And one day you will learn to know too’ (field diary).

What does Donatella mean? How will I learn to know if Donatella is not going to tell me, show me or leave me to learn through trial and error? How did she come to know? What could coming to know look like?, feel like?, sound like?, and how might we get at those? If apprenticeship as method reveals some things, life stories others, what are they both not able to access?

Apprenticeship, has already emerged as a complex, heterogenous grouping of circumstances and different means of relating, communicating, learning and teaching. Whilst section 9 looked closer at an aspect of tension in apprenticeship—Ernesto’s disappointment with Stefano—this section takes as its starting point Stefano’s frustration. The exchange quoted above is from my own fieldwork but it is a scene Stefano had already described to me along with his exasperation as he struggled with the ambiguous ‘teachings’ of Donatella and Ernesto. At some point, the wine, fermented and clarified in large glass demijohns is sealed into individual bottles…but when? I return to the particular experience of Donatella and Stefano at the end of the section. Whilst the extract above is a particularly opaque example of ambiguity, it serves well to ask what else is going on?

Other work on apprenticeship relationships has looked at suspicion and a guardedness towards knowledge sharing (for example, Herzfeld, 2004, Coy, 1989). I want to suggest another possibility, however, that the ‘secret’ of craftsmanship, that Stefano alludes to, is individual biography (Track 3). After reflection I understand the questions I posed above as being ones of knowing, being and remembering. In order to approach responses, this section speculatively explores the workings of memory, and how the remembering self and the relationship between memory and skill are conceived of.

‘The stuff we are trying to put into words - is it so easy to grasp?’, asks Ted Hughes, ‘do we ever know what we really do know?’ (1967:120).

At the outset of my PhD I wanted to explore everyday memory. And yet, in practice, that daily form of memory, so constantly in-play, permeating experience without drawing attention to itself, *that* memory consistently eluded examination. Lisa Heldke explores her own ‘extreme remembering’: ‘[h]ow does it come to pass’ she asks, ‘that a feature of my present launches a memory so vivid, so visceral, that it swamps every other sensation I’m having, and organises everything in my sensory present into some new, more complicated polytemporal whole?’ (2016:87). She talks of becoming ‘phenomenologically attentive’ to these experiences of ‘extreme remembering’ (ibid). What I was keen to get at, however, was not instances of extraordinary remembering—the ones that stop you in your tracks—but arguably, the most ordinary of rememberings. These are the ones that go unnoticed, unrecorded, and yet contribute to the invisible process of being and becoming. These subtle forms of memory are deeply necessary to everyday life. Forms such as the remembering of a sense-of-self that allows us continuity within flux; and the remembering that is integral to ways of knowing—that allows us to integrate, use and transform what has gone before—that gives substance to our senses (Klein, 2012; Seremetakis, 1994). How are we able to foster attentiveness to that remembering which doesn’t deliver the demanding physical thwack of Heldke’s remembering, nor the self-reflexive Proustian form, in which memory is pursued (Proust, [1913]1976)? How do we attend to the unattended to, the pervasive faculty within our lives that makes not only the extraordinary moments, but *every* moment of the present a ‘more complicated polytemporal whole’(Heldke, 2016:87)? Importantly, whilst Heldke was paying attention to her own body, her own processes of remembering, how could I get at those processes in other people? My interest was not primarily in an auto-ethnographic understanding of memory at work in myself, but the work it did for my research participants. This sort of memory, however, isn’t audible in the same way. By its very nature it isn’t often vocalised explicitly, to the extent that, in its ubiquitous, ongoing unfolding, it can be difficult to recognise that memory is at work at all. The processes that memory facilitates become wrapped up in who we are and how we know. How memory contributes to Donatella’s decision making, for instance, is not at all obvious from what seems at first like an evasion of the questions put to her.

This section, speculates more than it can *show*. It accesses the workings of memory only obliquely. And yet, the way memory is conceived of, matters to the way in which we understand the things entangled with it. It is, therefore, essential to lay out my understandings of it here, given the effect they have on my understandings of identity and relationships out in the world.

*Lying Buried | Always Becoming*

Walter Benjamin is often quoted describing memory as ‘the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging’ ([1932]2005:576). And thus, he says, through ‘meticulous investigation’ the earth of memory will yield its ‘long-sought secrets’: ‘torsos in a collector’s

gallery' (ibid). 'For authentic memories' he continues, 'it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them' (ibid).

It would be poetically appropriate if the metaphor of the soil, the digging and the digger fitted my explorations of memory. Benjamin's metaphor, however, reifies unhelpful but persistent assumptions about remembering as the retrieval of static things laid down at the moment of experience to ossify as experience moves on. This, I suggest, is to bypass the workings of memory and its presence in the present and to conceal memory as process, or worse, to suggest that only memories detached, preserved and excavated wholesale from the depths of the earth are pristine and of value. This conceptualisation of memory has knock-on consequences: perfectly preserved memory-objects are pristine, ergo memories used in the everyday, drawn on relationally for meaning, altered through use—these memories are tainted. In contrast, Montaigne ([1580]1958), captures a different approach to the remembering self as dynamic, unfolding, multiple stories-so-far, that nonetheless hang together: the self as process, the self as produced in a changing dialogue with memory rather than containing memory as buried objects.

> 'The lines of my portrait are never at fault, although they change and vary [..] Constancy itself is nothing but a more sluggish movement. I cannot fix my subject. [..] I do not portray his being; I portray his passage [..] from minute to minute. I must suit my story to the hour, for soon I may change, not only by chance but also by intention. It is a record of various and variable occurrences, an account of thoughts that are unsettled and, as chance will have it, at times contradictory, either because I am then another self, or because I approach my subject under different circumstances and with other considerations [..] [the self is] always in its apprenticeship and on trial' (Montaigne, [1580]1958:235).

More than four centuries later Montaigne's ideas of memory have become a popular conceptualisation of the remembering self. Across disciplines, memory has emerged as process, narrative-sense, something unfolding, constructed and always becoming rather than an accessible archive from which we withdraw and replace unchanged objects (Bartlett, 1932; Brockmeier, 2010; Fernyhough, 2012; Keightley and Pickering, 2012; Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012; Sutton, 2001). Following Montaigne, Keightley and Pickering, and many others, this thesis conceives of remembering not as the digging up of sediment but as 'an active process of ongoing reconstruction and rearrangement [..] [that] gives meaning and significance to experience in the continuing and dynamic interrelationship of its lived and learned dimensions'(Keightley and Pickering, 2012:25). This has ramifications for how we treat the unfolding of the skilled self, as the always-remembering-self.

Following Crites (1971) and others (see for example Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001; Ricoeur, 1990), Keightley and Pickering (2012), understand narrative as key to the experience of remembering—that experience is refigured *as* narrative. This is not always narrative in a formal semantic sense, but the characteristic of giving coherence and direction, of understanding and structuring experience unfolding through time. Experience gains meaning as it is storied through remembering (ibid: 20).

'[L]earning, knowing, and practice [..] occur, take shape, and continually transform *with* situated bodies and minds. Field-workers customarily record *what* their subjects know, but they are less inclined to delve into questions of *how* we come to know as humans' (Marchand, 2010b:s3).

Over the past three decades, theories of memory as active re-creation became influential, and remembering became understood as a means not only for relating to the past but an intersection of past, present and future realms (Michaelian and Sutton, 2017:np). Understanding remembering, not as a re-instatement of wholesale past experience but as an interpretation, had become more common place. How this might happen, however, remained largely neglected ground. Combined with this, 'knowledge how' rather than 'knowledge that'—often termed 'procedural memory'—has received 'relatively little philosophical research' (Michaelian and Sutton, 2017:np). Keightley and Pickering's (2012) detailed and necessary theory of 'the mnemonic imagination', building on Bartlett (1932), goes some way to filling this gap. Bartlett was an important antecedent to the reconstructive shift of the 1990s and introduced the idea of a direct relationship between memory and imagination. Despite this, the role of the imagination in remembering seems to remain marginal. It is his ideas around the ability of memory to selectively develop the past—in contrast to conceptions of memory that recall the past as permanent 'product'—that were actively engaged with by other disciplines, rather than his speculations of *how* the mutability of memory might come about.

How do we move from remembering as a relationship with a determined past, to a creative faculty that produces meaning not only in the present, but re-negotiates meaning in the past, and becomes a resource for also thinking meaningfully about the future? Keightley and Pickering (2012), argue that the groundwork for this shift lies in an understanding of these temporal spheres as interrelated and interdependent, and that these relationships only come about grace of the mnemonic imagination. The concept emerged out of Keightley and Pickering's attempts to forefront the essential relationship between memory and the imagination as indissoluble and always at work: productive, continuous, creative (ibid). Remembering for them is a dual process: the meaning in memory comes via the imaginative handling of those memories and the imagination's capability for crafting story (ibid: 21). The relationship between memory and the imagination is narrative and dialogic (ibid: 37). Retrieval theories of memory worked to give over-positivist values to the fragments of the past brought up through remembering. This, they say, exaggerated the divide between remembered material as 'true' and imagined happenings as 'false' or at best 'fiction' (ibid: 40). Denigrating the reputation of the imagination only served to rob remembering of its 'transformative potential' (ibid: 5). It is interesting to think of this in light of section 9. There, it was the insistence of tradition as something singular and locatable that concealed the way in which multiple ontologies of tradition hung together (and even more so worked together) in practice. Here it is the conception of the imagination as fictitious and memory as factual that obscures how the two work together in remembering.

The mnemonic imagination is posited as the means through which fragments of experience are not amassed but interpreted, productively juxtaposed, linked and re-configured through narrative. This is not

a process happening in isolation but one shaped by the shifting, emplaced self. Both growing knowledge and the growing self are dynamically responsive to the environment (Marchand, 2010b:s2). The mnemonic imagination is the means by which time becomes experienced as polytemporal. It facilitates sense-making in the present; and *of* the past, *given* the present. Furthermore it allows the future to be understood as related and produced as part of the same story.

The mnemonic imagination also retains the *feeling* of building on our past to stabilise our sense of self even as it is unfolding (Dokic, 2014; Klein and Nicholas, 2012). In transforming the past and our understandings of it, our life story is constantly re-narrated incrementally to accommodate these changes. This constantly reproduces the remembered past to *feel* like familiar territory rather than 'a foreign country' (Lowenthal, 1985). This is, perhaps, made easier by the current conception of self as 'continually transformable [..] a self able to reconfigure' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:3). All of this is going on in the life story narratives foundational to this thesis. But it is also unfolding in less accessible ways in everyday life: impacting practice, facilitating skill, contributing to sensation.

*The Skilled Self*

> 'You cannot step into the same river twice' Bakewell, quotes Heraclitus, continuing: 'even if you return to the same spot on the bank, different water flows in upon you every moment. Similarly, to see the world exactly as you did half an hour ago is impossible, just as it is impossible to see it from the point of view of a different person standing next to you' (Bakewell, 2011:33).

"Artisans invent" Stefano says (Track 3). The verb invent carries an implicit encounter, unfurling as it does from the Latin *invenire* meaning to come upon, to find out, to devise, to contrive (*OED online*, 1900). In contrast to 'creation', newly conjured and virgin, invention elaborates, it is productive, creative but it also encounters the world, re-assembles it as a way of knowing it. This encounter, an attentiveness and responsiveness between action and world, is key to skill.

Skill is "a crescendo. A growing awareness of the senses" (Stefano, Track 3), which itself entails an awareness of the memory inherent in understanding them (Seremetakis, 1994). 'This is not an awareness of a mind that holds itself aloof from the messy, hands-on business of work' but one that '[reaches] out into its surroundings along multiple pathways of sensory participation' (Ingold, 2011:61). What Stefano describes is not a splitting of mind from body but an integration. 'To describe an action as thoughtful is not to say that the physical behaviour is accompanied or preceded by an inner mental event; it is to describe the kind of action it is' (Best, 1993:201). We must bear this in mind when we consider Stefano saying 'only with great difficulty can [artisans] recount how to do something. It's with difficulty that they explain their ways'. It is easy to interpret this lack of verbalisation as a lack of consciousness (Farnell, 2000:409) and yet as Ingold argues, the concentration mobilised for these practices shows that, any appearance of unconscious action is far from 'automatic' (2011:61). The infinitesimal compensations and adaptations the skilled practitioner makes in response to changes in material, body or environment are perceptive, 'thoughtful' responses (Farnell, 2000:409).

"It's very difficult for
an artisan
to pass on his
learnings

"What is it?
Artisans bring
they carry the
secret
of an art form
An art
a skill
a trade
They collect
they elaborate on
hands
that travel this path"

(Stefano, Track 3).

'Decision making', as West describes it, paraphrasing the cheesemaker Joe Schneider, 'entails not only tinkering, but holding tinkering in a broader context' (West, 2013:327). That broader context is not a set of data but the story of ourselves, these foodstuffs, in place, unfolding, held together by and narrated by the mnemonic imagination animating relevant fragments of memory and assembling them into the sense that makes our decisions possible. Complicated selves acting in complex worlds. What might appear repeated or habitual practice is re-configured as a 'prime site for the production of difference' (Marchand, 2010b:s14).

I argue that to attend to skill means becoming attentive not only to the sensory and material, but to situate that within the wider context, the story, and the biography of the self in which it is produced and performed in relationship with the mnemonic imagination. Furthermore, understanding memory as made active through the workings of the mnemonic imagination we must re-examine the way we think about the relationship between skill and memory. As Sutton (2011:473) points out, different ideologies of memory affect memory practices, so how we conceive of memory matters.

To have skill, then, is to grasp, to feel perception in the context of re-perception, and to put this composite of perception, memory and understanding to work. Memory lends sense, discrimination and depth of field to our senses, but it is the mnemonic imagination that accessed and continues to create this field of understanding. Although now obsolete, skill used to mean 'the power of discrimination' (*OED online*, 1911)—bringing to mind Grasseni's (2004) 'skilled visions' and the way in which things become seen through knowledge. Today we use skill to mean 'practical knowledge in combination with ability, cleverness, expertness' (*OED online*, 1911), but the ability to discriminate, which is the ability to discern, to be attentive to differences, remains essential.

## | Donatella and the Wine

'the word "smell" for instance, [..] include[s] the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of the animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling' (Grahame, 1908:67).

Whilst Ernesto is the chief tender of his vines and makes the wine, the decision of when to bottle the wine he hands over to his wife Donatella. His main preoccupation with flavour is that it should be 'Dorona's own' but he guards that through his viti-vinicultural work up until this point (Ernesto, field diary).

'I guess you've heard how they know how to bottle?' Stefano asks me, continuing 'Donatella noses the wine and says that it's ready! They do it but they don't know why, and if they can't explain why, how can you learn?' (field diary). Despite speaking of his own evolution of skill as an artisan: "slowly, slowly, slowly, I made my own way", "you invent because no-one can teach

you" (Track 3), Stefano nevertheless expresses his frustration at the inability of both Donatella and Ernesto to articulate knowledge as instruction and to explain it: 'Ernesto is the typical *contadino*—farmer. He knows that it works but he can't explain why it works, he just does it' (Stefano, field diary).

Consider this passage from Fernyhough: 'If someone had asked her beforehand whether she remembered the smell of the cigars, she would have said no [..] [b]ut as soon as she smelled it, she recognised it very distinctly' (2012:56). Recognition is connection. I suggest that Donatella relies on the mnemonic potency of aroma to inform her understanding of when to bottle. Unlike Proust ([1913]1976), who is first surprised by remembering unfolding, and then effortfully pursues it into language, Donatella expects the sense to emerge between herself and the wine through smell. But there is no *a priori* knowledge about *what* will be recognised. Nor, is the memory experienced as a re-construction of a single scene but a *feeling*, a knowledge. As Rilke says:

> '[T]he memories themselves are not important. Only when they have changed into our very blood, into glance and gesture, and are nameless, no longer to be distinguished from ourselves—only then can it happen that in some very rare hour the first word of a poem arises in their midst and goes forth from them' (Rilke, ([1910]1985:14).

Donatella's olfactory knowledge is not passive, but 'dynamically embodied', what Heldke termed 'phenomenologically attentive'(2016:87). This comes back to one of the first points I made in this thesis, that the body is as thick with story as it is with nerves. Whilst applying Heldke's term, I also mean to add story back into sensation. This, I suggest, is skill. It is an attention to the present that is made meaningful by the polytemporality of individual life. Donatella is not only smelling meaningfully, she is materialising that meaning through her decision making. Remembering is not a return to the past, it is a collaboration between an ever-changing past Donatella and present Donatella. 'Both individuals have a say in this memory. Their feelings shape it, their goals structure it' (Fernyhough, 2012:324).

It is, however, "with difficulty" that she "passes on [her] learnings" (Stefano, Track 3). 'There is no such thing as one moment of perception and then another of memory, representation or objectification' Nadia Seremetakis said acutely (1994:9). 'Mnemonic processes are intertwined with the sensory order in such a manner as to render each perception a re-perception. Re-perception is the creation of meaning through the interplay, witnessing and cross-metaphorisation of co-implicated sensory spheres' (ibid). The "secret" that the artisan brings to skill is their own story, and their constantly shifting understanding of the relationship between biography and sensing the world (Stefano, Track 3). Here, Stefano commits the same 'error' for which Farnell critiques Bourdieu: '[his] error lies in assuming that the lack of such a discursive facility entails a lack of *consciousness*' (2000:409, original emphasis). Farnell's criticism of Bourdieu's habitus echoes my critique of Connerton's sedimentation that I will come on to: 'The conception of habitus denies the possibility of thoughtful action because it limits the body to its Cartesian status, a mind-less, unconscious repository and mechanistic operator of practical techniques' (ibid). Fernyhough, however, argues that the relationship between memory and smell is particular because it stretches back to the time of our development 'before memories were encoded in language' (2012:62). He suggests that this could explain why the first reaction is often meaningful emotionally, and instinctually (ibid; see also Rowland's theory of Rilkean memory, 2016).

Returning to the work of Harry West, the cheesemaker Joe Schneider articulates the way in which huge quantities of sensory information are built up each day surrounding a batch of curd. At the end of the day, however, he has to take all that 'feeling' and record it in a single word: 'all the complexity of that understanding is gone' he says 'because I can't carry that'. (Joe Schneider quoted in West, 2013:326). 'But then' says West, '[Joe] pointed out that even if he had all of these data, no formula exists to plug them into telling him what conclusions to draw from them' (ibid: 327).

And yet, both Joe and Donatella *do* draw conclusions, they do make decisions. Rather than a formula though, the mnemonic imagination gathers temporalities in ways that create new knowledge. It interweaves what this wine may become, how other wines were, and what they could have been to inform how we understand the wine now, within its context: 'establish[ing] a position from which we can act intentionally' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:63).

What both Joe and Donatella do, is acquire a knack for hearing the story of their senses, each sensory encounter tweaking this ongoing story to better their position of understanding the meaning of those primary sensations. It is the twists and turns, the nuance and texture of this story and the ability to use it to make sense of and respond to, the changing environment that allows them to evaluate particularities.

Where Joe describes a loss of information, an absence, it is the work of the mnemonic imagination to story the gaps: to become a tool which makes sense that is narrative, where skill is about constructing meaning rather than gaining access to archived data. Understanding skill as needing data rather than story would move back to Benjamin's conceptualisation of remembering in which 'it is far less important that the investigator report on [the content of memory], than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them' ([1932]2005: 576).

These points parallel the process of the researcher and remind me of Ingold's words when he talks about participant observation: 'to convert what we owe to the work into "data" that we have extracted from it is to expunge knowing from being. It is to stipulate that knowledge is to be reconstructed on the *outside,* as an edifice built up "after the fact", rather than as inhering in skills of perception and capacities of judgement that develop in the course of direct, practical and sensuous engagements with our surroundings' (Ingold, 2013:5). This is not only true for researchers but for apprentices and those skilled workers they look to. A spreadsheet of data could never stand in for the story of skill that we elaborate alongside our own biographical becoming, we cannot 'expunge knowing from being' (ibid).

*The Body is Not a Container*

As studies of memory have moved beyond retrieval metaphors of remembering, it is equally necessary to move beyond thinking of the body as container, as a site for sedimentation, or an archive (Koriat and Goldsmith, 1996; Robins, 2016). An example of this would be to revisit the still influential and oft-cited work of Paul Connerton (1989). Connerton posits that '[m]any forms of habitual skilled remembering

‘“I” is an “other,” then; becomes a *world* of others. It is a process of becoming, A collaging self. Is infinite & contradictory. It is “I” and “not-I.” [..] I contains multitudes’ (Rothenberg, 1994:524).

[..] re-enact the past in our present conduct. In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body’ (ibid:72). Connerton uses the example of swimming. We might not remember when we learnt to swim, he says, but we know how to swim because that information, that knowledge, that skill, lies sedimented within the body. This is similar to the way that Connerton explains the way that culture exists by seeing it as amassed in the body, which unconsciously reproduces it—and in so doing ‘re-enacts the past’ (ibid). Paralleling Benjamin’s ([1932]2005) understanding of personal history as experience-objects laid down, pristine, this conception of culture reduces it to a series of gestures-as-objects, preserved within the museum of the body and either brought forth in imitative re-enactments or referred to as similarly ‘accurate’ mental object-images. Despite the idea of memory as archive becoming superseded, this notion of passive knowledge, ‘mechanically’ reproduced through memory is persistent, and with it insidious effects and associations of static pasts and unthoughtful practice that hinder thinking about habit or skill in a different way (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:41).

Montaigne’s orientation towards the self ([1580]1958), Marchand’s ideas of ‘the indissoluble relations between minds, bodies and environment’ (2010b), and Keightley and Pickering’s theory of ‘the mnemonic imagination’ (2012), all emphasise that knowledge is not static (in the context of the self as also in the process of becoming). These are not knowledge-objects ‘incorporated’ once into the body, nor reincorporated unchanged into the present. As Bartlett memorably said: ‘in a world of constantly changing environments, literal recall is extraordinarily unimportant’ (1932:204). Instead, experience and its reconfiguration through memory imbues our senses with meaning that emerges from interpretation: explicitly in the form of story or more implicit in the form of affect. There is no ‘pure’ past residing in the body, because remembering cannot help but alter the story of that knowledge. Not only is it always a slightly different self that remembers, but the story of past experience(s) is always being re-decided. The mnemonic imagination ‘generat[es] the action which allows continuity with the past to be achieved while also allowing for the accumulation of new experience, and the sense that it will contribute to a story that is still unfolding’ (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:63).

Skill is able to be adaptive, relational, and attentive to the particularities of the present, precisely because the present is thick with memory and therefore understanding. The mnemonic imagination increasingly enriches our relationship with the world with affect and meaning. Rather than swimming in the present unconsciously incorporating that memory of ourselves in armbands, swimming in the present ‘hums’ with re-embodied *sense*, rather than a re-embodied *past* (Sutton, 2011:472). Coming to know, becoming skilled (always ongoing), is necessarily a temporal and spatial process (Marchand, 2010b:s5). Skill is always a story-so-far (Massey, 2005). We don’t have to ‘*stop* in order to know’, we come to know in motion, our movement both propelled, and producing knowing (Harris, 2007). Nor do we arrive at knowledge; there is no moment of stopping *once* we know, we continue to participate in the world: ‘“making knowledge” is a process entailing co-ordinated interaction between interlocutors and practitioners with their total environment’, none of which are static entities (Marchand, 2010b:s2).

Knowledge, therefore, is not detachable from the particularities of individual biographies within which it comes into being. It is shaped by and enmeshed with the self and the dialogue of the self—both its conscious and unconscious 'traffic'—with the world, in the world (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012:161).

To sum up, to become attentive to these unremarkably-remarkable, small forms of functional memory, and what they afford, we have to become attentive to the processes which they inhabit. The self and skill are two interesting and interconnected examples of this.

To have the authority to embody skill, to make decisions based on sensory knowledge is also a matter of narrative. Bella, a cider-maker in Bristol teaches me this. Authority is not automatic, not a given. Authority emerges out of having enough of a story of skill, and to call it skill, to know it as skill, to hear the meaning within the perception that comes also from context. It is, then, not just that Donatella 'knows' but that she has the authority to 'know', the authority to decide and to carry out decisions that will in turn shape the final wine. Apprenticeship offers 'participation in communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:49), but apprenticeship can only take skill so far. From there the secret is in the personal quality of meaning.

12

# L I S T E N I N G | H E A R I N G | S T O R Y T E L L I N G

Listening

*Listening on the Record*

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Hearing

*Hearing Exchange*

*Hearing Memory*

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StoryTELLING

*Twice Told Tales*

*Untold Stories*

Listen *here*.

What do you hear?

‘So many people’ Sylvia Plath said are ‘shut up tight inside themselves like boxes, yet they would open up, unfolding quite wonderfully, if only you were interested in them’ (1953:93).

*“there are many ways to perceive one's surroundings. Being with people, too, is a lot more, er linked to how, to what happens that you don't see. Having an augmented sensitivity, for all the senses and a clarity, a greater sensibility for what you feel, I reckon, also helps you to be around people and among things” (Maria-Sole, Track 4).*

Recording life stories is a time of listening, intensely so, but like a swan, serene above water, beneath the surface the body as a whole is also at work, affording the appearance of effortless motion. In *Making not Knowing* Ann Hamilton says ‘listening hasn’t kept pace with speaking’ (2010:67); or as Les Back suggests, our ‘capacity to hear has been damaged and is in need of repair’ (2007:5). Hamilton wonders how words might become the material to make art out of. Back poses listening as both the responsibility, and the art, of the social sciences. Making an art of active listening takes practice, but as much as practice it requires us to dwell more in what it means to listen. During the work for this thesis and beyond, listening, this ‘fundamental medium for human connection’ (Back, 2007:4) emerged in many forms. The ‘art of listening’ goes beyond what can be heard by the ears (ibid). Listening must be adaptive as well as active, to hear the different things we might listen to. Back shows us how we might listen (actively) to small and marginal stories, something this work takes up, although the margins are different ones, or how we might imaginatively expand listening to the eyes as instruments for ‘listening’ to an image. Returning to the example of digging, it transpired that digging was a site of listening across genres, of listening with body and ear, and the ‘augmented sensitivity’ of which Maria-Sole speaks. Digging was the engagement of the sensitive body —feeling through the fork tines to sense the soil—to find the physical way to engage with it, to know it, but it was also time for listening: a time for learning a way that the soil could ‘speak’ and we could respond, and a time for story telling, for remembering. Combining doing with recording life stories was a means of being around different types of stories and different forms of recounting. Digging was a means to hear and to learn in practice about the subjective importance of the practice to one man. Within that, however were also stories of the experience of a place at a particular moment in time, and an engaging and narrating of evocative objects, material suggestions that other stories had gone before. Triggered by association, stories precipitated from doing, and acted to relate the immediacy of the action outwards. Life stories, on the other hand, helped to story the meaning of practice in a different way, and gave access to some of the reflections that go unvoiced during practice itself, that nevertheless lead to practice, emerge because of practice, or thicken the meaning of practice.

*Listening on the Record*

The hut on the site of *La Maravegia*, was not, perhaps, the best choice of recording venue, given its lack of electricity or doors that shut properly, but Stefano had insisted. As the interview unfolded the darkness was swelling around us. It came slowly, not as if light was fading but as if there were a greater amount of dark molecules around us and those molecules were also cold and began to accumulate

The spoken word is movement, of the vocal chords in their vibration, of our tongue, our lips, our teeth 'those movements end in sounds and I hear them. Like crystal, like metal and many other substances, I am a sonourous being [..] I hear myself with my throat' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 144). The movement of the spoken word emerges from within a moving body.

between us and on our skin. It was as if Stefano was becoming pixilated in front of me, I strained to keep his outline distinct. The cold was making my body tense and yet he was flowed-away recounting the relationship between him and his grandfather *Nonno Leone*. Head tilted back he seemed to watch his memories play along the ceiling. Smoking, hazy eyed he seemed unaware of the night and the now-vanished warmth and so I tried to still and hush the skittering chill in my body, not wanting to break the spell of story and memory that seemed to have descended there. His outline blurring, I stared in the direction of his eyes, the high pitched mosquitos in his lulls keeping some awareness *here*, tying the body now to the story, smelling the smoke from his rollies curl around the smell of evening—that damper scent the soil releases as it breathes out the day. Even in the dark that gaze is needed, you can feel a listening gaze even when you can't see it: returned, shared, complicit. There is no switching off, the listener is poised, giving, receiving. Listening is doing, is relating, is relationship, is work.

Darkness led to different silences. Silence can make the inaudible audible, silence isn't empty space or simply the exclusion of sound, it can have all sorts of textures and tensions, it can be a place where both the speaker and listener feel. For, as Peter Brook (1968:25) says, there are so 'many layers' that silence can contain, 'there are many potentialities; chaos or order, muddle or pattern' fallow, implicit. Partly through the dominance of the written word we have ceased to be attentive to everything that the silences are saying, to remember they're there and allow them in. Silence is something that barely registers in transcripts and although perhaps we don't know hear where they lie in finished written work, like the inaudible 'inventory of behaviours' their force can direct our attention as researchers, shape our understandings or what we give importance to. Silences are something that I didn't have the maturity to allow to unfold in my first interviews but, with practice, I learnt to live in the discomfort of them, to listen to them and where they lead. Often they led to beauty or difficulty or a combination of the two that, even if tangential, thickened experience adding meaning via association. 'Maggiorina Mattioli wanted to talk about her love story' said Alessandro Portelli, 'and I wanted to hear about anti-Fascism; and, once again, she was right [..]' (1998:30): 'there was more history in her personal love story than in her reminiscences about the anti-Fascist underground' (ibid: 26). The capacity to embrace the depth and breadth across which the narrative of life stories wanders can be as challenging as it is rewarding. It is terrain that teems with potential routes to be pursued, paths criss-crossing and re-hashing and many possible and beguiling turns left un-taken. As much as the terrain is unknown to the interviewer, each story across it is different too for the interviewee. 'In language and life, human beings are meanderers; we continually take detours' says Stoller (1989:142), and in life stories we hear the importance of what may at first seem superfluous. Stefano told me a lot about plaster board, and in those musings were fascinating details about attitude that permeate through into this thesis; Neil told me *a lot* about partying in the '90s, depths I have left unplumbed but may hold worlds of insight for future researchers.

There is more than a small amount of joy at arriving at the point where an interviewee loses any vestiges of formality and awkwardness at the unfamiliarity of the requested situation and, with curiosity and vulnerability, verbally wanders at will. The circumstances of each interview, and the relationship in each is always different. As Cathy Courtney, an interviewer for the British Library's National Life Stories said: life stories are 'neither inner monologues nor streams of consciousness' yet 'the ample space' of these 'extended conversations' gets us far beyond sound bites into realms that are 'sounding with ever greater resonance' (2016:12). As well as producing striking testimonies, each interview is a learning experience for the interviewer.

After an interview the listening body wilts, the attention melts, for me there is a moment of transcendence, giddiness and then a trembling collapse where I need to bend and speak and I can't listen anymore. That crumbling, as if after great exertion, shows up the strain, the *abnormality* of listening fully. Each time it makes me think how little I must listen in this way in everyday life[1]. Often, after an interview there is a sense that interviewer and interviewee find themselves in very different places, but Emily, the young gardener at The Walled Garden reflected that same strain emerging from the recounting "mentally, it was a little bit draining and I had a little bit of a wobble afterwards —maybe because of my introversion" (Track 11). 'All that taking your life quite seriously' she told me 'or your life being taken quite seriously, afterwards you need to go and be ridiculous' (field diary).

The often-emotional nature of the interviews necessitates an interviewer as audience that must listen with emotion and respond via the emotion we show in our bodies. Listening in life story interviewing is particular because it's not possible to remain passive to what is spoken, there is no set next question onto which you can move. As Portelli says of the 'thick dialogue' of life story interviews 'questions arise dialectically from the answers' (1998:30). Lapses in attention feel like betrayals of the joint commitment interviewer and interviewee have entered into, this joint navigation through story.

Sometimes, during recordings, we are aware of all of the things around the speaker too: listening, perhaps anxious for the recording (the buzz of a fridge), of impending distraction ( someone approaching the room), or just grasping at the texture of that poly-temporal moment as a whole. In my interview with Neil there is a track in which a dog barks continuously. Suddenly the place that we had chosen for the interview—a one up, one down cottage where we wouldn't interrupt or be interrupted by family life—felt like a trapped space, we couldn't get away. Listening back to that track it is audible that I cannot relax as an interviewer and marked too that the barks break Neil's normal style of narration. The interview remains shallow at this point, there is very little reflection. It shows up that facts alone add very little to understanding. In the two tracks with the dog barking Neil relays information but it conveys the stark difference between talking and storying. An inventory alone is sterile without the sense-making story that creates relation within the archive, that gives feeling, that gives meaning: what has chronology alone, 'has no memory' (Hejinian, 1987:13).

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[1] A great exception has been listening in new languages, the same depletion, the same acute awareness and engagement of the other senses, forced into a greater listening 'around' the words themselves.

As the interviewer, there is both hyper-body-awareness and forgetting of body. Some moments I am acutely aware of my posture, temperature, smile, my engagement, the movements I cannot make, the sounds of both interviewer and interviewee bodies. At the same time I'm aware of their form, posture, in relation to me and in relation to their story, their meaning: clenched fingers, weariness, avoiding my eyes or seeking them. There are speakers that speak out past me, and then, my eyes trained still on their face ready for the moment their eyes look back for—is it support?—I notice other details: the grain of their skin, the shape of the words in the jaw. Sitting together there is an awareness of the movement and exchange of words, created within one body, expelled and drawn into another. An exchange that is almost inevitably lost when oral history material is employed in texts. There is inescapable, sensory intimacy. At times this is comfortable and at others awkward, because it is a relationship sped-up, falsely-fast and those states of comfort and discomfort are audible, visceral, exaggerated. Because of their form, things come up in the interviews that may not have been shared even after, or because of, years of friendship. There are moments in which I'm swept away with the story, a consumer of plot or a companion in empathy, or moments of involuntary transportation, led by association to remember my own past. At the same time I'm thinking about what is being spoken and remembering the things I want to return to, to question further; at the same time I'm considering how this question might feel for the interviewee; at the same time I'm deciding not to pursue something touched upon; at the same time I'm aware of the blood in my ears or it being a really inconvenient moment to need to pee — or I'm not aware — until afterwards how dry my throat is, how hungry I am, how chapped my lips, how tense my shoulders, how shallow my breathing, or perhaps how much of their emotion I've put into my body. Because it's absorbing, not only the story but the simultaneous happenings demanding fast consideration: how long do I leave a pause to unfold, how do I ask a particular question: should I shouldn't I, watching, feeling for direction, sometimes asking for permission with my body or showing them all the things I would say in response with the lines and motion of my face. After all, as Brook notes '[a]n audience affects actors by the quality of its attention' (1968:24). Norkunas (2013:82), neatly distills the state of the above paragraph, the experience of the interviewer into two words: 'embodied presence'. And she adds, that it is by inhabiting embodied presence that as listeners we can be transformed; '[a]ll subsequent interviews are different because the listeners are different' (ibid: 82). Returning to Mol's '*is*', listening too is always particular (Mol, 2002).

*BB: How have you found this process, doing this interview?*
Neil: “Er, I dunno, I feel like I’m just so boring, and like WHO, y’know I feel sorry for you, putting up with listening to me, just dribble on about my life and my views, and uh, yeah, I don’t know, it’s been alright, I mean, like, the first start of it, I dunno, thinking of the past is quite hard ‘cos you don’t really wanna necessarily fink of the past, I mean, again, lesson in life, is just don’t dwell on the past, and just every day, new day, smash it. Y’know, fankful to be alive, I mean the sun’s shining through where we are now, the blue skies, it looks lovely out there, I mean, it could be a totally different in’erview tomorrow ‘cos it’s gonna rain all day. But I mean, because it’s today, I feel quite sort of nice, and yeah, I’ve enjoyed it and it’s been nice spending time with you, to meet you and that, and have you help me, I mean truly, I find, you’re going to be a friend for life, and yeah, Tom as well, I just find like, yeah, I’ve met some really beautiful people so that’s been well worth the process, um. The interview, yeah, yeah, it’s been alright, it’s been I don't know it’s something I’ve never done before, um, and I can’t say I’d never wanna do it again, ‘cos I just can’t imagine, ANYONE, listening to it, or whoever did listen to it would think fucking, what a *boring*, *weird*, kind of, I dunno. Um, yeh, but it’s been nice” (Track 10).

| Hearing

What are we listening *to* when we listen to life stories? What do they allow us to *hear*?

Oral history is a political (and social) project that seeks to change the hegemony of who is audible and what is preserved (Thompson, 1978). Sheila Rowbotham influenced many oral historians to record the voices of those otherwise 'hidden from history' (1973). "I'm just so boring" Neil repeats "I just can't imagine, *anyone,* listening to it". Neil's disparagement around the value of his interview sums up, for me, the importance of recording it. Oral history (the broader home, within which life stories are a particular form) strives to broaden the audibility of experience, to increase polyvocality, and to increase the worth of how everyday life is perceived, the detail of which is frequently submerged under simplified, generalised or institutional narratives (hence the oft-repeated phrase 'history from below' (Smith, 2008:np)). Oral history reminds us to ask who's story?, who's speaking?, and who can we hear? It is not just about 'uncovering the unspoken' (Kynaston, 2017), it is about hearing what *is* spoken. Life story interviews value personal stories and sense making —individual lives. They also seek to situate individuals as related beings existing through particular moments in time. Neil's life story interview, for instance, tells a vivid portrait of childhood within the attitudes and norms (domestic, economic, gendered, classed, material) on a 1970s Bristol council estate. His professional life gives us glimpses of the ever-changing landscape of food production mediated through individual encounter. Whilst oral historians and sociologists are often keen to point out that these individual stories tell us much about social transformation at large (Jackson and Russell, 2010) there is great value in considering it the other way round: how life stories humanise, particularise and challenge, giving new and plural voice to the quotidian realities of those more general atmospheres that we are already aware of in broad but not particular stories.

A quick example of this would be the appropriation of terms such as traditional, authentic or artisan, or indeed the appropriation of individual stories by large-scale, industrial food manufacturers. Pep, a wine-merchant who takes a central role in looking after the vines of *Laguna nel bicchiere* blames industrial food producers for decreasing consumer understanding of how their food is produced, seeing their use of such terms, and their deploying of images of small-scale, rural idyll as deeply damaging both to consumer understanding and 'artisan' viability. It has become a fairly common narrative that large manufacturers sell with a story (Freidberg, 2003), placating a consuming 'audience that has become suspicious of industrialised methods of food manufacture', capitalising on an increased demand for 'artisanal' at the detriment of the 'artisan' who can't justify his craft alongside the economises of scale and competing 'story' of the supermarket (Jackson, 2013:24). And yet the narrative in Ernesto's life story interview complicates this, arguing that the dissemination of these stories in louder voices, on the one hand disseminates understanding, even whilst on the other hand it steers the narrative out of his grasp.

> "The turning point was Bisol. Because also, though everyone criticises them, for that which they do, me too, I'm critical of the fact that he never talks of me, that he came here for eight years and used my wine, that he tried my wine, that I gave him the vines that he never talks about these

> things, but he was the only one who acted against the flow—that emphasised, *this* wine, *this* doesn't exit anymore, but I want it. In all those knowledgeable in Europe it's me that recognises it, that wants it and he was the only one that followed this wine so, with all the criticisms, which I make too, of his behaviour, but he is the only one that has brought *Dorona* to global recognition, and no one else in the Veneto has this, has understood this, so with all of this, I say always I thank Bisol. Not for his behaviour or because he doesn't make my part in it all heard but still I thank him for me and my family that he saw that the wine is good. Afterwards, this is autochthonous, original, *Dorona* was born here and lives here but that which Bisol did was make people understand" (Ernesto, Track 3)

Bisol, once a large Prosecco-producing family on the mainland, now owned by a multinational corporation, took cuttings from Ernesto's *Dorona* vines and planted a vineyard on the Lagoon island Mazzorbo. Despite their 'creation story' talking of discovering a grape thought to have been extinct, and removing Ernesto from the narrative altogether, (a perfect example of the appropriation of story and the silencing of individuals), Ernesto credits Bisol with both increasing the value of *Dorona* and its wines but also with giving needed weight to his own convictions of the importance of the link between grape and place: "Bisol made people understand" (track 10). "*Dorona* was always disregarded, scorned, as a wine, but also *Dorona*, if it doesn't find its own soil it's not the same" <*Donatella: "it's nothing"*> "understand? because all autochthonous things want their own soil" <*Donatella: "now all of Sant Erasmo want Dorona—everyone"*> "but they don't have it" (Ernesto/Donatella, Track 3). Despite acknowledging that he goes unheard, that his role in the propagation of *Dorona* has been intentionally 'hidden from history' under Bisol's story, Ernesto still feels that the appropriation of his story valorises him rather than diminishes him.

Ben too, adds to what it means to be an individual producer, crafting cider on the fringes of giants. Ben and Bella's orchards are in the heart of 'traditional' cider-making country and the majority of the surrounding harvest will go to large-scale manufacturers. But Ben feels that the advertising of these brands has helped not hindered them by widely circulating images akin to their practice—of hand harvesting and aesthetically-pleasing landscapes of cultivation and biodiversity where trees, bees and humans collaborate.  It gives people a reference point, he says. This is an enormous strength to the life story method, that it is expansive enough to make other opinions heard that can cause us to question or enrich our means of understanding. These examples also serve to highlight how stories in circulation—that depict the way we relate to the past and the stories we tell about it as a 'terrain for the "creation of meaning"'—have social and commercial implications more widely (Jackson and Russell, 2010).

*Hearing Exchange*

Whilst it may not always be audible, what you hear when you listen to a life story is an exchange and a relationship. A life story interview is a genre of its own (Portelli, 1998). Whilst the interview process might be an exchange, it is based on inequality in various ways. Not only does the interviewer aspire to disappear in the recording —to the extent that standard practice is to withhold the vocal accompaniments we are so used to providing in conversation, saying yes, yes, or no, or oh!— but so often, texts citing oral narratives will write out the interviewer which encourages us to forget that the testimony was produced within a particular form of exchange. (In this thesis I have, where I can, kept

my questions in the text, sometimes showing the transitions of narrative by including what came before the question too). And yet life stories aspire to widen authority and part of this fading out of the interviewer can be seen as an attempt to give 'ownership' of the story to the speaker[2]. Bella expressed feeling like my participation and the life story interviews —someone taking an interest— have legitimised her and Ben's decision to make cider and juice. And Ben, more than any of my interviewees had a distinct idea about what he wanted to transmit though the life story, the stories he wanted preserved for a future audience (see also Smith, 2008:np on oral history's engagement with 'shared authority'). Nevertheless, every interview is a co-production, both interviewer and interviewee cannot help but shape the interview: it is an imbalanced but negotiated realm (Portelli, 1998). Emily's comments following the interview are striking in this regard: 'I hadn't thought of it like this until now, but doing this you're creating a piece of art aren't you?'. The 'you're' in her comment was orientated towards me. In this case then, contra to the aims of 'shared authority', this places me in a clearly hierarchical position in which Emily feels like I'm the artist of her story. And yet her comment is also beautiful in that by positioning it as art I think it acknowledges the craft of the story. Together we'd produced a material, lyrical, performative and deeply-haunting thing that came about grace of the experiences of her life but also the particular relationship we had and the particular moment the interview was spoken[3]. As an interviewer you occupy a strange place in the process, somewhere between control and surrender, present and absent (Stoller, 2009; Norkunas, 2013).

When we listen to life story interviews we often don't hear the paradox at their heart. They are both enduring things, made to outlive their speakers and yet they are ephemeral constructions, completely un-repeatable in their form. As Neil said "it could be a totally different in'erview tomorrow 'cos it's gonna rain all day" (Track 10), but whatever tomorrow held, we are guaranteed that the telling would be different. Perhaps this coupling could be a limitation unless we acknowledge that stories are an ongoing form of sense-making by both interviewer and interviewee in tension. They are not comparable, they do not necessarily give us facts but they give us ways in to the meaning of experience, they are a window onto narrative-self-in-creation and encompass worlds of detail. As Hejinian says in *My Life*, 'there were more storytellers than there were stories, so that everyone in the family had a version of history and it was impossible to get close to the original, or to know "what really happened"' (1987:21). Whilst the past is already determined, the way we remember and interpret it in the present is always open to change (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). Perhaps, rather than seeing their interpretive nature as different from fact, we should revisit what is fact, what is true. Truth, Nietzsche tells us is sensuous and fantastical, a swirl of metaphor and metonym that through frequent use has come to seem 'firm', 'obligatory' and

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[2] This is of particular concern in oral history when the gap in education between interviewer and interviewee increases the hierarchical power dynamic. Oral history particularly sought to record pre-literate societies (Vansina, 1965), or 'ordinary' individuals (Samuel, 1975). Whilst I interviewed individuals with PhDs and those who had left school at 11, a certain sense of the interviewer retaining authority remains in all cases and should be acknowledged.

[3] Bella too, revealingly says: "I'm not a big storyteller so, um. Y'know, I'm not even particularly one to sit in a pub and retell, y'know anecdotes [..], I don't really do that. Um. And the few times I do I always feel slightly awkward 'bout it and **feel like I'm not telling it quite right**, so yeh, um, [the life story interview] it's a bit like that but *longer*" (Track 7, my emphasis in bold).

singular (1976:47). These interviews explore that expansive, exploratory, nebulous quality. They blur certain and uncertain to probe the meaning of experience through memory. Storytelling is active, it does work: motivating, manipulating, protecting, resolving, comforting, changing. It draws together particular things, it takes a perspective, it omits, re-jigs and judges, rearranges, melds, fragments, creates meaning then changes its mind, it asks where the truth in experience lies, and whose truth and to what end?

In that they persist, the recordings are also open to alternative interpretation—more than field notes and un-archived interview material (for discussions of re-use, its strengths and limitations see, Jackson et al. 2009). Importantly, and unusually, this PhD positions life story material within wider ethnographic experience. Whilst at times the relationships formed through participant observation helped the interviews, and facilitated access to be able to record them, at other times they hindered them. This is not, however, hugely different from the 'cold' interviewing often heard within the National Life Story archives. Chemistry is not a quantifiable or predictable factor. From my wide listening within the archives I have heard speakers open up to strangers. Sometimes it is precisely the lack of relationship that seems to help interviewees to answer difficult and intimate questions. But there are also audible instances where interviewer and interviewee don't 'click' and there's a sense of access to narrative being withheld. In any case, my relationships are entangled in both process and product of the interview.

"You come to realisations, don't you, when you, when you're sort of made t' talk about something" (Bella, Track 7).

The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E movement was a poetic-political movement in the 1970s in the Bay Area in San Francisco, and the work of these poets helped me in two ways to think through what I was hearing when I listened to life stories. The first is their emphasis on flow by association, that narrative has a linearity that is inherently its own, (that is also called non-linear): that poem or life story move by a means similar to water cohesion, one drop drawing the next to follow it, memories, associations, tangents triggered by a particular starting point. The second is their insistence that the reader/listener is in part responsible for both hearing and creating meaning within those words and their understanding of story as process, in whatever form, as happening between people and out in the world (For example Silliman, 1987; Hejinian, 2000).

In this thesis, life stories add layers. They help to understand the relational and storied nature of experience that compliments and complicates the practical present-tense experience of participant observation. But we mustn't forget our role as researchers in bringing these partial but powerful, strange but familiar narratives into being. "It's been interesting to see what I chose to talk about" said Ben "but most of the things I've spoken about I've reflected on mostly before and so I kind of knew what I was going to say about a lot of it [..] [but] when you were asking questions, it pushed me to think in ways that I'm not just telling the story I always think it is" (Track 6). Cameron suggests that attending to 'small stories' also works to question the ways in which scale itself structures geographic inquiry' (Cameron, 2012:579; Cronon, 1992). Whereas there has been a tendency within the social sciences 'to locate the importance of the particular [only] in its capacity to be scaled up, however

messily', now there is more unease with clean narrative arcs, and an appreciation of 'the narrative construction of knowledge' as heterogeneous, multiple and always particular (Cameron, 2012:579).

*Hearing Memory*

When we listen to life stories we listen to how memory as process crafts a story, how recollection associates and juxtaposes to suggest meaning, how narration collapses time, makes paths, joins re-interpreted bits together—putting past, present and future in dynamic relationship—and drawing on the 'mnemonic imagination' for fluidity, for a sense of wholeness and verisimilitude (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). 'It is only through the act of recollection that experience becomes illuminated' say Keightley and Pickering (ibid: 36). 'Narrative is the form in which the relation between [the] distinct modalities [of past, present and future are] conjoined, whether this consists of significant personal stories or stories with a broader cultural resonance' (ibid: 35). It is through narrative that different facets and understandings of experience co-exist and give sense to each other. It is because of this that when we listen to life stories we do not hear a chronology of happenings exactly, nor experiences in their totality. Instead we hear not only how individuals navigated experience and the passage of time but how they continue to do so. How the infolding of (the always contingent) meaning of the past into the present shifts our means of navigating as our present unfolds. Narrative allows change but is always able to lend it a sense of continuity, of mattering. What we hear is the relationship in real time of memory and the imagination, as one eases the disjuncts and gaps of the other, the discontinuities between past and present, creatively imagining the links, the reasons, the story, thickening the present (Keightley and Pickering, 2012; Crites, 1971).

'[W]hat we bring back, and bring together, at any particular stage in time' is shaped by the 'imperative need of the present' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:25). I was interviewing individuals for this research during the time that they were working as food producers. This offers us a very particular sense-making narrative of why producing matters to them. Not only would they be different interviews on a different day or with a different interviewer, they would inevitably be very different interviews if the period of life was different: A different 'end' point, that is a different *present* to make sense of would shift the trajectory of the whole narrative. Through life stories we make audible not only experience but the workings of our memory, how past experience matters, illuminates or relates to the present. Recollection is relation. Life stories then, are a means of situating the present—which we can experience through participant observation—in relationship with memory-paths through the past that we can only experience through story. Whilst both are partial, they are complimentary, they thicken each other. It is difficult to experience those webs of meaning that surround the everyday practices of other people, vast, precise and in motion as they are. Life stories offer one doorway into that web.

In the unusually expansive storying of the self, life stories have the capacity to be a revelatory or cathartic process. As well as affirm that sense of self, however, by straying into realms that have been intentionally silenced they also harbour the potential to disturb stories of self. Whilst it is often the case that memory is reconfigured in story, through the mnemonic imagination to serve the needs of the

present, this story is also limited, to some extent by our actual experience of the lived past, including areas of harm that create difficulty in the dynamic between memory and sense of self (ibid). Whilst interviewing food producers might appear benign, the interviews for this PhD also included stories of abuse, illness and trauma. Whilst as researchers we might find the past difficult to access, at times, from the practices of the present, we must bear in mind that "thinking of the past [can be] quite hard 'cos you don't really wanna necessarily fink of the past" (Neil, Track 10). Through life stories we not only *hear* a greater emphasis put on recollection, the past and the centrality of memory than may be the case in everyday life, we *generate* it. The importance, then, of combining life story interviews with participant observation is to also accept that the inaudibility of some of these stories in everyday life, some of the silences are active remembering rejected. Whilst it has seemed, at times, that participate observation is put put to work because of a distrust in the accuracy of what people say about what they do (Simpson, 2006:15), this research does not approach it in this capacity. Rather a combination of the two methods allows us to listen differently, and to *hear* different forms story put to work.

"it's kind of strange
talking about your life in this
way
to somebody
'cos you just don't
—with anybody—
—*ever*—"
(Emily, Track 11).

*Twice-Told Tales*

Life stories, as Alessandro Portelli, put it so memorably, are 'untold stories' of 'twice-told tales' (1998:22). We tell stories of ourselves, to ourselves, of and to the world around us. We are storied creatures and so, often the stories that come up in life stories have been told before, often never quite the same but they are familiar (ibid). This is not just a comment on storytelling but on the process of memory itself. Sometimes memories and stories become concertinas or symbols. As Hejinian puts it 'so much of the "way things were" was the same from one day to the next, or from one occasion (Christmas, for example, or July 4th) to the next, that I can speak now of how we "always" had dinner, all of us sitting at our usual places in front of the placemats of woven straw, eating the salad first' (1987:22). And yet, the telling of these repeated stories cements narratives of sense-making, confirms that that is, 'in fact', how we came to be that way. Continuity of the self in memory and recounting is reassuring because we craft it to be so, re-crafting it over time 'in the context of the changes which the passage of time has brought, with memory itself changing in its interconnected patterns of meaning, significance and value' (Keightley and Pickering, 2012:25). The feel of continuity exists, not in static stories but in ones that shift subtly to continue to relate present and past. 'We strive imaginatively to re-engage with past experience and carry it forward as a relatively coherent narrative' (ibid). I find the following story, told by Marco, particularly revealing in this sense. It is audibly a 'twice-told-tale' (Portelli, 1998:22), a 'sort of family mythology' (Hejinian, 1987:22) and he tells it with great performative attention. Although I haven't included the story in its entirety here, in my framing of the main section of Marco's story I've tried to stay true to the feeling of the original storying:

> As a young man Marco set off to find something. He didn't know what he had lost but he knew that he had lost something, or was, in some way incomplete. He wondered aloud as he wandered *"where shall I go to find this thing, whatever it is, that I have lost?"*
>
> *"Santiago di Compastello!"* the answer declared from directly above. So focused on the pavement and the worlds and questions beneath them that he'd walked blindly into the belly of a Venetian tavern owner. *"Santiago di Comapstella it is then!"* he said.
>
> Searching for it on the map he found a grand pilgrimage route, all roads winding themselves towards Santiago di Compastella a place he'd never heard of. So he got on his bicycle, the same un-special bicycle that he had had since he was 14

years old, and off he rode with a map, a tarpaulin, 2 pans and a sleeping bag. First he took the *vaparetto*—a ferry—to the lido, cycled down the sea, then the ferry across to Pellestrina, and all of the island of Pellestrina to *Terra Firma*—the mainland—at Chioggia. *"I was afraid of going, with no money, but one morning I just departed, very sad, but I went. [..] In those moments you either fall into a depression or you leave, you go on a journey"*.

*"That first evening, in hideous weather, I arrived at Badia Polesine which is practically the home town of my maternal grandmother the one that was the head of the family. I stopped there. Badia Polesine—badia means convent, la badessa is the head of the convent—and there were various convents and I knocked at each to ask if they could give me shelter and no one would take me in. It was raining like the sky had broken"*. That night the only place he found to sleep was the open-sided fish market in the centre of the town.

*"I woke and there was a beautiful sky, a beautiful sun, early morning, like six o'clock and I remembered, also five o'clock perhaps, and I remembered that my grandmother was originally from a quarter of this Badia Polesine—'salvaterra'. I arrived in this little hamlet, four houses really, and there was… no-one. Then I turned a corner and there was a person crossing and I remembered the surname of my grandmother and I said, 'listen: there isn't any Ferrone here in this town is there?', 'no, oof, look' he said, 'Ferrone, no there's no Ferrone here, I'm sorry', but them I remembered the name of my great grandmother, ok? eh—Casarotti, and I said: 'and are there any Casarotti?', 'Ah yes, yeah, Casarotti, yes, there's the oven and those that bake the bread, they are Casarotti' he said. So I went there and I said: 'Good day, my great grandmother was called Asunta Casarotti and was originally from here'. 'Ah, yes! That's my aunt!' no? says this old woman. 'Ah, dai—come on—I'm the grandson of Edi Ferrone', 'Ah! No way', she says, 'Edi Ferrone is my cousin and here and there and so many years that I've not seen her'. They invited me to breakfast. And there, it's usual to do, they were making this bread, that, typical Ferronese bread, 'pan biscotto', they bake the bread, they put it in the oven and bake it hard like a biscuit, so, this bread, endures for a long, long time. So I departed, with no food, with no money, but with this kilo packet of pan biscotto on the back of my bike. [..]Each day as evening fell I would light a fire, prepare whatever I had found to eat—I had two pans—and I saw every sunset and every sunrise alone. Always alone. I would choose a place where I couldn't see anything, not even a house—now that idea makes me shit my pants—and I slept out, always outside, just in my sleeping bag. [..]I stopped in many places, cycling the roads less trafficked and this bread, eh, I finished the last piece of this bread when I reached the border with Spain. The day of my 29th birthday. Not bad eh? So, accompanying me throughout this journey was a piece of my family. Like a part of my family had been my companion along the way"*.

*"Alongside the physical path I followed a personal path [..] When you're good physically you become good mentally [..]. The transformation was really slow [..] it happened after the bread was gone. [..] I was away for 3 months and the experience changed my life. I really came into contact with nature—sleeping outside does that—and I came back different, really different, it was as if I was no longer afraid of anything, I was formed"*.

*(Marco, Track 1)*

It it the *telling* of the story that really draws you in. In this section Marco is very in control of the recounting, it's a theatrical performance, drawing on all of the devices, pathetic fallacy, changes in pace, volume, tone. His face is expressive, his arms adding accents, checking in with the audience, doing the voices of the different characters and setting the tale within the genre of epic stories. There are biblical echoes of Joseph and Mary being turned away from the inn, he moves through liminality and transitions into something new "no longer afraid of anything, I was formed". He entertains, but like a fable, there is

‘[M]y voice is bound to the mass of my own life’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:144).

a message. He even nods towards a self-conscious-ness about the pleasing nature of the story: ‘not bad eh?’ he says when the plot makes a neat resolution. And yet, that he is telling this story again now, suggests that it’s still important, a reinforcement perhaps that now he is doing the right thing, he has the authority to create, control, assist and there is the enduring symbolism of food and family, nourishment and becoming. It echoes his belief within his work that through a physical story, a relationship with place, and a ‘connection to nature’, one can re-write one’s personal story. Perhaps Marco tells this story within his life story because he feels it helps to make sense of, and give plot to his life’s story overall. The importance of the story is less about its content than about its resonances, about what it makes possible. In the re-telling of stories they ‘pick up density and texture [..] their significance lies in the intensities they build [..] and the feelings they make possible’ (Stewart, 2007:3). Stewart is talking about ‘ordinary affect’ but isn’t this also at the heart of the stories we tell? The bigger question beyond what these stories might mean or their factual make-up, is how they allow different means of ‘knowing, relating and attending to’ (Stewart, 2007:3). As Ben says of his interview “somehow I’ve chosen these things, and that’s like, stories you tell yourself, but yeah, how close to reality it really is, or how well you remember, I don’t know, you maybe create a picture for yourself of what you think, of what you want to think of yourself as” (Track 6). As Bella narrates there are times when stories feel necessary and times when the way of telling them or the audience changes.

“the last comic I drew, I felt like my life had changed as well, it was just a little bit less exciting—I was drawing comics about like, y’know, chickens rather than riots [laughing]. So that was a bit different [..] less interesting” (Bella, Track 4).

Over fifteen years, Bella drew an autobiographical zine of her life, “I once [tried] to draw comics about other things or historical things or wherever” she said, “but I don’t think my storytelling was particularly good in that way [so] I just had to, sort of tell stories about my own life and that was, and that worked” (Track 4). “Zines weren’t just art, I chose this particular format because that suited me and what I enjoyed making. I enjoyed drawing little cartoons about things I’d experienced”, “[they’re] uncensored, direct stories of peoples’ lives [..] grass-roots communication[s] about things that people were interested in”, particularities, “people’s obsessions” (Track 4). The scenes of the zines made up scenes of Bella’s life story too, they’re particular moments that she’s both already storied but also “things that I’ve recorded for history in some kind of way already. Um, but they're also like, they’re only one part of my life, and maybe 200 pages. I've done a lot more, there’s a lot more to me than those 200 pages. I’d hope”. Although she says that her life story goes far beyond her zine, she reminds us that these are partial, they are not life, they are something different. “Although I’ve probably put across more in my comics than I think” she says (Track 7), gesturing at how the cumulation of stories move beyond the sum of their parts—true, too, I think, of life stories. Whilst partial, they are also whole, in the sense that they are a thing in and of themselves. Ben said “I feel there’s a sense of completion now. [..] It’s weird that you can summarise your life an’ things into that length of time” (Track 6),

*BB: How have you found this process?*

Emily: "Uhmm. Intense. Ha, ha haaa. Sort of good, cos this is the kind of stuff I like to think about and um, but yeah, also odd in a strange way. I couldn't say why, but it has felt a bit odd in a way. It's a bit like, that making sense of things when probably, y'know, who really knows what's behind why you've really done something. And, taking yourself a bit seriously maybe [laughing] um. But yeah. Uh, yeah. It is funny. It is completely, I guess it, it stimulates you too, as much as I spend a lot of time reflecting 'cos I have a lot of time by myself —I go there— it still does stimulate a lot of reflection that you might not necessarily do, y'know, and it's sort of odd. Good, but it's still challenging to think of your life and about, think about things in that way, y'know, it's all part of that. And it's good because it helps you grow but it is challenging I think".

*BB: How do you think our relationship has affected the interview process?*

Emily: "Yeah, I think I was telling this to you, about this to you the other day, and I'm sure it does, because I talk to you about certain things and on a certain level and I'm remembering certain things in a certain way that with somebody else I might talk 'bout or remember different things but I guess from the start I've talked to you quite a lot in this reflective sort of a way [..] because I actually feel like I've *got* to know you quite well 'cos you've been at the garden and been around for quite a long time. And I'm definitely someone that takes me quite a while 'til I feel comfortable with somebody or y'know or until I can work them out if you see what I mean, as much as you can't work somebody out, but, um, always a little bit cold, oooh, y'know, I just don't really give immediately, uhmm. I've sort of reached that stage where I feel really comfortable with you, so I guess, I talk to you again in a certain way that somebody else that hadn't shared any experiences or talked about certain things before the interview process —just naturally in conversation, um, maybe I'd have said things in a different way, um, yeah. Yeah. [..]it's strange, it's kind of strange, talking about your life in this way, to somebody, 'cos you just don't —with anybody— *ever*— um, so it's funny, I wonder what kind of, y'know, what y'know, it's just interesting, how that, say you stayed here for longer, how that would *affect* our relationship, if you like, 'cos you know all of these things about you. It's like, it's odd isn't it, it's quite funny, you know all of these things about Neil and that's quite funny. Like y'know you said, it's probably nothing I don't know. but I reckon there's probably a lot I don't know, y'know? And it's funny, and it's not appropriate for me to ask certain questions or whatever but you're in this amazing position [laughs] to find all of these things out about that *I'm* so fascinated in all of these people but I'll listen to this archive. Yeah.

(Emily, gardener at The Walled Garden, Track 11).

Whilst the stories might be familiar, the life story interview, however, is a very *unfamiliar* way of presenting one's stories, a single narrative of one's life. As Emily says so acutely, "you just don't" talk about your life in this way "with anybody —ever—" (Track 11). Each life story is a single version of the many possible ones, and the experience of telling it varies hugely.

Asking interviewees to reflect upon the interview process is something almost always included within National Life Story interviews, and yet Emily brings up an aspect I have never heard reflected upon before. She considers not only the relationship within the recording, but what might happen to this relationship afterwards. Her comments speak to the increased intimacy, and the often very private content shared in life story interviews. Participant observation had cemented a camaraderie between Emily, Neil and I, a sense of togetherness, but, she asks, what if I were to stay? How would that work? The recording of life stories, she suggests, disturbs the normal course of things. Suddenly I am in a different power relationship where I know more about Neil and Emily than they do about me, or, she worries, about each other. I've had more (perceived at least) authority to ask questions to them than perhaps they feel they do in return or with each other. I think she brings up a fascinating dynamic. I can't answer her for our own situation because I never returned after that to live in Bristol for more than brief periods, and though I still see them both, it is in a manner far less immersive than my fieldwork time at the garden.

My first interview was with Bella. Listening back I worried about the number of questions I'd put to her. It always felt like I'd come in too soon, a novice error: what would she have said if I had left more room? But talking to her afterwards, where I felt regret, she felt relief at questions as prompts. It hadn't been a relaxed interview and her words, responses, stories they all raced, spoken at top speed and then left hanging or with a very definite stop. And yet she felt that having a listener facilitated her reflection, that she needed me to ask to allow her to tell, and that had allowed a type of consideration that she hadn't had alone and that culminated in realisations that she had not previously arrived at. Emily, on the other hand had felt her stories were neatened up by the telling process, that the stories had sense only *because* there was a listener, that this was not their natural form.

> 'I probably wasn't really telling it to you, [laughing] no offence!" Ben says but "this was for something else [..] not for you or me [..] I feel like I've been more of like a storyteller rather than like, yeah, like, if I was to sit on the stage and there was an audience and I was to tell my story" (Ben, Track 6).

Ben was the only one that mentioned how much the idea of his life story as contributing to an archive affected his telling of it. Almost always, speakers talked about our relationship, about how it had felt telling *me*.

> "I think that's one of the things I found weirdest — the way I've spoken. As I say, now you see, I'm, I've spoken the whole thing through, not in the way that I would talk to somebody like I'm chatting normally. I haven't felt like I've spoken directly to you, completely, like I've been very aware that I've been recording it as, for people to listen to, like a bigger audience. Maybe there

> won't be. But it's possible, potentially an audience at some point in the future, who will listen to it as a story. So I think I've told it more like that as me telling a story rather than me telling it to [you]. [..] I probably haven't made much eye contact with you throughout. And that's part of it [..] I haven't been talking to you specifically" (Ben, Track 6)

Emily, more than any of the other interviewees for this project narrates stories but then undoes, unsettles the ease at which they appear to make sense, first giving something significance in a certain way and then finishing with phrases like 'when probably, y'know, who really knows' (Track 11). In her interview, life stories audibly become a place in which stories are crafted but stories (and their status) are also challenged. The cumulation of these different reflections on the life story as process usefully bring into question the role of storying in identity-creation. If memory is narrative (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012), and identity is intimately related to remembering, then identity is inescapably caught up with story. But if identity is narrative, which narrative (Polletta, 2011)? However, using life story interviews alongside practice shows up the way in which individuals draw on experiences made narrative from very different spheres of life and continue to refigure them in order to make sense of practice in the present. Whilst story was not absent from practice, fragments of story in practice became more complicated, polytemporal narratives given the opportunity to expand in life stories.

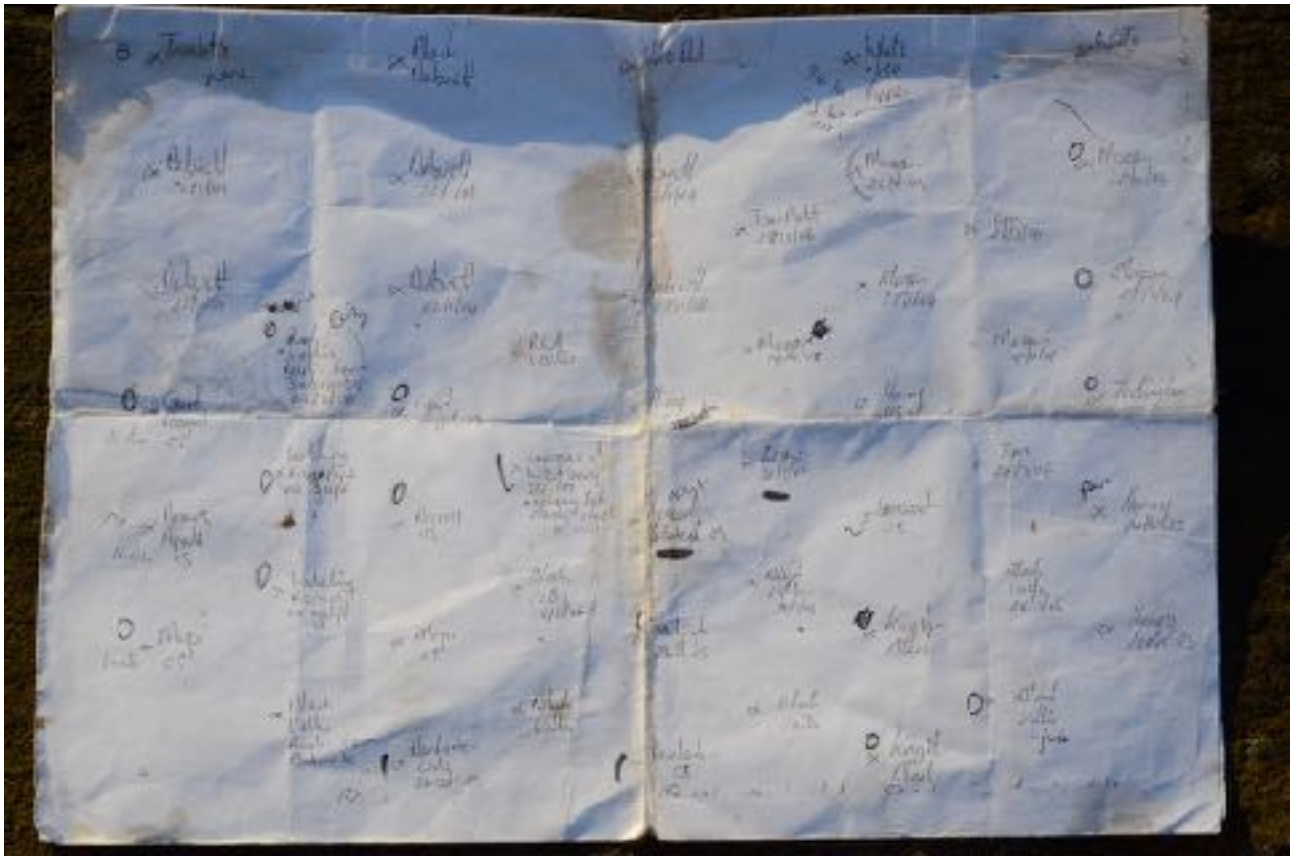
13

# APPLE WORK

This is not a comprehensive description/depiction of juice and cider making. Nor do the field notes correspond directly to the photographs. But both provide a way in to some parts of working with apples. In section 14 Bella talks about the meaning of the process. This grounds and speaks to her narrative, making some of the practices themselves audible alongside how they are made sense or why they matter.

**November 25th. Cider.**
I'm wearing full-length, jazzy thermal leggings underneath my jeans, a coat that comes down to my mid-thighs and my secret weapon—finger-less, rough wool gloves. I discovered these trying to photograph abandoned buildings in Scotland in the pouring rain. They still have the sheep's grease in them so they are almost water repellent, but their fingerless-ness means that I can keep my dexterity. The orchard is beautiful. The grass is ankle deep and the blades have a rectangular groove in them that holds the water. It squeezes out underfoot and soaks into our boots. The trees are planted far apart in rows, Bella says this is the traditional way. There's a long tool with a curved end—a crook for shaking the last apples from the branches. I can't see the windfalls but I can feel them cobbling the ground underfoot. Bella calls it an Easter egg hunt but it's led by feel rather than sight. Only occasionally is one rounded edge of an apple visible in the grass. We crouch down trying not to break apples underfoot. We move our toes through the grass feeling for their hard forms in the wet green. Then it's almost like snuffling with the hands, moving fingers through the grass roaming over and through all of it systematically, encountering apples, making a decision whether they are good enough. The evaluation happens as you pick an apple up with your left hand, shift it to your right swivelling it, feeling it as you go, popping it in the bucket if it's deemed ok and discarding them—chucking them further from the tree if not. At first our fingers are virtually immobilised by the cold and damp but then the sun and the movement begins to thaw them. At first we chat but then we get into our separate zones, crouched beneath different trees, fingers snuffling away. We tip the full buckets into green bags or blue Ikea bags, drag them to the Landrover and heave them in.

Rattling apples down | Picking apples up | Bella



Map of the apple trees in Barley Wood Orchard | Dabinett cider apple tree in Barley Wood Orchard

Picking apples from the tree | Washed apples in trays

**December 17th. Cider.**
We do a double wash. The cider apples are in really bad shape today. They're markedly different from apples that would go into juice, which have to be more pristine. These have a lot of superficial frost damage. It looks like the whole apple is bad but feel it and it's mainly hard. Cut it open and you see only a shallow curve is bruised. There are different levels of bruise-flavour too. In the case of today's apples the skin is unbroken so there's just some brown flesh, but it's still firm. The problem is when the apple is damaged and might be mouldy or rotting. That's one reason why rats are such a problem because they mince-up a section of sack partially damaging many apples which then begin to decompose.

There's a round, yellow apple patterned in black. Ben doesn't know what it is. He cuts it in half and bites into it, mmm bitter cider apple he says and throws it in the scratter. 'There are darlington mill here and those yellow ones from Ian's orchard at Burlington are late… something' he says.

We pour apples into the first trug, Ben washes them with his bare hands pushing them down, pummelling them like mill peddles so the water thrashes and the apples use their own surfaces to rub off dirt as they roll against each other. Even when the load doesn't appear very muddy the water is filthy afterwards. He chucks them into trug number two where I use a red sieve (that they bought at a car boot sale) to turn the apples over in the water. It's almost a kneading action, I pull the apples over from one side to another pushing them under in a circular action. Once I push too deep and the cold water goes over my black rubber glove and soaks into the wool ones below. I don't enjoy the chapped, feverish-hand-feeling that comes with doing everything with bare skin. Ben says he likes the cold and the contact with the water and the apples. The work is hard on the middle hinge of the back, and the wrists. We are standing, bending down to knee height, and lifting colanders of apples and water to chest height, tipping them into trays and repeating. There's an eye and a feel for it — working out which apples are still ok but Ben and Bella have got less picky, or less worried as the season's gone on. Their anxiety lies in the deteriorating quality of the fruit—those apples already picked and now being stored or those still to be picked (up). Losing the grip on time management is frustrating them.

There is a metal work bench with three trays on it. We lift colanders of apples from the water to fill them. Then another person lifts the tray to head height and tips it into the scratter—a yellow piece of machinery that pulps the apples. The process resembles those charity boxes that were in supermarkets and airports when I was a kid where the coin spiralled round and round before dropping into the centre. The best thing to do with the scratter is sort of scatter the apples around the machine's trumpet so that they spin and drop in one at a time. If you put too many in at once then the blades can't get their teeth into the apples and the spherical fruit move and the blades dance ineffectively. You can hear it when this happens. I've got my ear in now, the tone changes. Normally it's a chomping, whirring sound, but it becomes more of a hum when the blades are clogged by whole apples. The pulp comes out of the bottom into buckets. You have to tune into the speed with which the whole process, between the three of us is unfolding. As one bucket fills to the brim with pulp you have to be their to replace it. As you take a bucket, there must always be an empty one at hand. Get the pace wrong and the pulp falls to the floor and oxidises. The pulp changes dramatically depending on the apples. It can be like dry white flakes, it can be pink or red, it can oxidise immediately turning to brown slush in moments, it can come out almost as juice or be lumpy and solid.

Whole apples going into the scratter[1] | Dismembered apples coming out of the scratter | Ben

[1] Machine with internal blades.

Apple pulp full of juice | Squeezing the cheeses[2] of apple pulp for their juice

[2] A cheese is a layer of apple pulp wrapped in cheese cloth. The cheeses are layered in the press.

Apple juice squeezed from the cheeses | Discarding the cheeses' juice-less pomace

Pasteurising the apple juice in boiling water and washing the bottles | Sealed apple juice cooling

**November 9th. Juice.**
Bottling is done by gravity, so first the juice needs to get up high. The cider barn is a cylinder topped with a cone. There is a mezzanine upstairs looking down on the ground floor which slopes towards a central drain. The water comes from a bore hole drilled into the earth. There's a lot of cleaning, between each action, more cleaning. It's a wet process and as winter advances the wetter we get the colder we get. After pressing the juice is held in big white plastic vessels they have an acronym: IBC —'Integrated bulk containers'. A pump moves the juice up through a pipe, from one vessel to another. To get it going we have to suck on the end of the pipe to break the sort of naturally occurring airlock, but then it moves fast. The first time, holding the tube into the second IBC I couldn't judge the rising level through the opaque plastic, and Ben couldn't hear me shouting over the noise of the pump. Juice overflowed and dripped down the woodwork.

Before bottling, we wash the bottles. The bottle washer is two nipples in a metal basin with a hose coming from the bottom. Push the bottle upside down over the nipple and a jet of water shoots to the base of the bottle, rinsing it. The waste water flows down the tilted floor to the drain. Put the bottle drying stand within reach of the bottling machine. Fill the bottle stand from the base up, fitting the neck of each bottle over each red plastic spike so they're vertical, dripping into the green plastic base. Once the juice is upstairs, we link the pipe to the bottling machine. It's an upright machine, with three metal teats pointing downwards over a metal tray. The juice passes through a filter and into each teat. There is a moveable bar to stand the bottles on. Tilt the bottle, put the teat inside the mouth and neck of the bottle then push upwards. This opens a valve and begins the flow of juice. By pushing upwards you can get the base of the bottle onto the metal bar and release your grip on the bottle's body. The trick is to stagger when you put the three bottles onto the teats. With your right hand push the bottle under the teat and onto the bar. With your left hand take an upside down bottle from the bottle rack, turn it the right way up. With your right hand remove the full bottle, pushing up to stop the flow and release the last drip in the chamber, filling the bottle to the optimum level—half way up the bottle neck. With your left hand replace the full bottle with the empty bottle you're holding. With your right hand put the full bottle on the counter and slide towards the end. Take a cap and push it down onto the bottle. With your left hand grab another empty bottle and repeat. I can feel the ache in my arm, my shoulder and my neck, it's quite a lot of pressure to push the bottle onto the bar that supports it. When I take off a bottle I must jerk it a little too much because the other two bottles always judder and shift forward, though never quite enough to fall.

14

# R U P T U R E and R E P A I R

This section considers forms of alienation encountered and responded to through food production. It also seeks to emplace and give particular bodies to the discussion. Longer extracts from Bella in Bristol's margins and Maria-Sole in the Lagoon attempt to grow a familiarity with their specific voices and the way that they story experience. Description locates these voices within their environments: Bella alongside Ben, working at Barley Wood Orchards; Maria-Sole within the context—material and affective—of *La Maravegia*. What follows, and forms the bulk of this section, is the nuancing of more abstract ideas of connection and alienation through the individual terms, experiences and particular environments of these food producers[1].

The main work of this section is to particularise. When explored through individual practice and articulation, common narratives of social alienation, or alienation from nature are shown to be inadequate for understanding how feelings of disconnection or means of connecting are experienced in everyday life. Instead of a focus on social bodies, or 'grand' nature, these producers story rupture and repair within the body, the plot or a particular practice.

[1] Whilst I draw particularly on the narratives and experiences of Bella and Maria-Sole in this section, these experiences are not unique to these two speakers. Other voices are included to contribute to the discussion. Any necessary re-introduction can be found in sections 3 or 19.

Maria-Sole

_____

Alienation

_____

The Sensory Body

_____

Bella | Barley Wood Orchards

_____

The Process

_____

The Sick Body

_____

Connection to Nature

Maria-Sole.

'*Nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language*' Raymond Williams (1976:219).

*'If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world' (Camus, 1942:52).*

She says she would return at dusk. The exact moment when it could no longer be called day, when afternoon had bled into night. As a child, she says, that was the rule. Even when her mother called and called she held out. "Summer, winter, autumn, spring we were always outside until it got dark" and if she hurt herself, she'd hide it from her parents. I didn't want my world of wandering to be reduced she says "I remember we had so much freedom". Playing was everything, inventing. "I was an unstoppable fount of games" she says, each one springing from the last, bikes and dens and corn dollies with hand-stitched dresses. "Playing free in the fields, climbing trees—I spent so much time climbing trees, in trees, going around chatting to the people who worked in the fields" she says. "Hay" she says "fruit to eat" she says "and we loved going along the river banks" she says. "I was alone a lot, but I like being alone a lot with nature. I was just right" (Maria-Sole, Track 1).

Maria-Sole rarely looks away as I interview her. Her eyes are striking. You notice the very first time you meet her. Her irises are pale and clear —like circles of sky at dawn—those ephemeral moments before the day solidifies. We sit cross-legged atop our chairs or with our heels tucked under us, or our knees pulled up to our chins and the stories she tells are of movement and stillness, of bodies and politics and place. Sometimes, in those moments of remembering, before the recounting, her eyes take on shadows becoming the texture of smooth, round, stoney-blue pebbles.

"*Guardavo*" she says "—I observed, I looked a lot, maybe sometimes I spoke, saying out loud what I had in my mind" she says "but I could also just be there, gazing at the earth, looking at the blades of grass underneath me, it was a relationship like that, very simple, I don't know. I felt myself to be a piece of nature, I don't know, so going up in the trees, I'd be there, I don't even know what I'd be looking at, what I was doing, because I'd be up there for ages. But I was good. Like, having a place, where you can be" (Maria-Sole, Track 1).

**And yet**

"it was quite a closed life in one sense" she says of her childhood in the sixties, "we were free to go off into the fields but mine was not a household where I could bring friends back [..] my mother never played with us". Liberty alongside limitation. "Well!" she says "l*e femmine!* for the girls!". Her voice is low as she recounts the inside of life, a portrait of Italy: patriarchal, religious—"I felt dis-attached from the idea, the whole modality", the severity of school nuns, soups whose smell made her sick, the endless chores of woman-hood, such gendered labour alongside the absent explanations of female bodies. "We were very poor", she says of the burden on her mother to cook for them out of the meagre resources. Barley, bread and cheese, sometimes sugar but I never saw jam, she says. Food was prevention and cure. "I was made to eat it", she says, "a raw, fresh egg in the morning [..] as a medicine", she says, "as a charge of energy". Only later, food became pleasure, only later—growing food—did she begin to *feel* food as medicine (Maria-Sole, Track 1).

“I was in a terrestrial paradise until 9 or 10, I wasn't woman or man, I was completely” she trails off and then she says “I began to feel a difference and to note the difference in my mum's behaviour towards me and my brother”. Because I was a girl. And she tightens her arms around her knees, a current palpable in her tone: it feels like hurt more than anguish. “I remember asking why me and not him? And I remember the first time I was answered like *that* and I didn’t know what that meant” she says (Track 1).

Venice too can be a city of divisions: of both urbanity and stone and one filled with the flow of water —“Venice’s garden” she calls the city’s aqueous basin. When she moved to Venice in her thirties she often felt encroached upon by stone, new to city life, she’d say to her lover “let’s go down to the garden darling” and, limbs dangling from the boat, they’d spend the afternoon reading in the ‘garden’, locks trailing beneath the surface of the lagoon, fingers interlaced with water (Maria-Sole, Track 3). As she says this I realise this is the first time we’ve been inside together this year, not out in the fields of the Lagoon but inside, in her kitchen, and yet she is full of wriggles and movement, chair, table and body presenting multiple ways of ‘being seated’.

My spirituality grew “with nature” she says. “It came to me from there. *Guarda*—look” she says “I talked to the trees, for me, nature was like me. Then, yeah people say ahh eyh, but what do you want? I was little. For me, between me and the leaf I didn't make a distinction, I really lived” (Maria-Sole, Track 1).

[D]issolved in the transparent air, flowing with its every variation, sensitive to its shallowest comas, shivering at the slightest breeze, given over to the world and mingling with its outbursts, thus do I exist' (Serres, [1985]2008:94).

According to Merleau-Ponty our bodies belong to and participate in the world's 'universal flesh' with which we are reciprocally 'intertwined', not only our material selves, but also thought is relationship (1968:145)[2]. It is this ontology of nature in which the reflective body is part of the continuous fabric of the world which emerges from Maria-Sole's experience. "[In those moments, working outside] I'm thinking, that in that moment I'm in the right place, in the right time and that I'm in a situation completely of fusion with what's around me, *c'é*—that is, this current of well being, that goes inside and outside, without skin, without barriers of any kind, *quindi*—therefore I'm full of what I see, the pleasure of colour, of light, for me, light and the forms, and I see myself there in the middle and I'm light and form me too and that is the moment for me of happiness when I feel this state. That in reality you come out of your body and that's beautiful" (Maria-Sole, Track 3). Our gaze 'envelops [things] cloth[ing] them with its own flesh' which 'does not hide them' but in 'veiling them, it unveils them' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:131). It is through a reciprocal, sensory intertwining that we come to know, that we come to feel, and, Merleau-Ponty hints, that we come to be: 'the look is itself incorporation of the seer into the visible', 'through flesh', 'vision is question and response' (ibid). Where this framework for understanding the relationship between people and nature becomes inadequate, however, is in helping us to account for the many ways in which individuals do not experience the world thus. This is something only hinted at in Maria-Sole's narrative above and what this section will explore further.

Maria-Sole had her own patch within *La Maravegia*, adjacent to the mulberry tree. I had met her once before, on my pilot trip the previous year when I'd been staying at *La Maravegia*, on Sant'Erasmo with Stefano and Dario, two of its founders. When I returned to Venice the following year for fieldwork, Maria-Sole's garden—a collaboration with *La Maravegia*—was beginning to take shape: a backbone of medicinal plants: edible and curative, fleshed with petals, fronded aromatics, and a hummadruz of pollen-seeking bees. The flip side of the plot was that it was also on hard, hot ground, pecked up by hens and a target for the ash-like fluttering of tiger mosquitos. It's hard to really remember the humidity now, which was oppressive, heavy in the air, and often coupled with a heat that scorched the soil's surface to a gnarled rind that curled and cracked. Choosing rivers of sweat over the punishment of the mosquitos, Maria-Sole would work in an all-in-one, gauzy, white body suit—the type sported on forensic crime-dramas. Her plot was populated and edged with *erbe spontanee*—unbidden plants (weeds in other people's mouths) with properties she sought and valued, afforded by the nature of the cultivation of *La Maravegia*. Their springing up was both allowed for and applauded.

I was grateful for Maria-Sole's presence at a time when the relationship between the two men—Dario and Stefano—hung heavy over the plot. Angst, friction, absence, anger and helplessness were almost always palpable. The situation left Maria-Sole in difficulty. The continuing existence of *La Maravegia*, and therefore her ability to grow there, was in question, a limbo that was unresolved throughout the

[2] Marx too talks about 'species-being' (*Gattungswesen*), the fundamental relationship between human and nature which produce each other ([1844]1967:293).

‘Storytelling [..] [doesn’t] purge the phenomenal world of the immediacies of raw experience but [..] transports us [..]. The journey away always brings one back to where one began, though with a transformed understanding’ (Jackson, 2002:253–4).

months I spent in Venice. And yet my time spent with Maria-Sole: our hands in the soil, tending those beds, or talking to people about the properties of the plants, felt very straightforward. When I recorded her life story it related both estrangement and connection across the spheres of her life. Her life story interview reinforced my ideas of the complimentary nature of participation and life stories rather than the more directed interviews often carried out as a part of ethnography. Many of the ideas that emerged hadn’t been vocalised through work but they also weren’t sought out in the interview, they came out as we wandered and zigzagged across chronology and subject matter. It was Maria-Sole who first storied and got beneath the skin of the phrase ‘connection to nature’ that I discuss more later in this section. She mapped it back across childhood, moments of anxiety, loss and joy, of living elsewhere, and, from those seemingly uncomplicated acts that we shared, unfolding effortlessly, emerged layers of meaning that went beyond the present, and beyond the tactility of the experience. ‘Stories are a form of situated thinking’(Jackson, 2002:252), they open up multiplicity, they complicate and augment and re-orient experience even within the particularity of place. My experience interviewing Bella in Bristol was similar in that it complicated ideas brought up in the doing. The way in which she articulated her life story afforded prominent place to alienation. This sat in direct contrast to our practical experience. Whilst the practical ‘in touch’ and the storied ‘out of touch’ were inextricably related, indivisible, at times causal, they occupied different spaces of narration. In Bella’s case one form of recounted disconnect as told in her life story was felt to be resolved in the explicit connection practiced through juice and cider making that the story precipitated. And yet her life story also told a more complex story in which alienation was less easily repaired.

| Alienation

Alienation is estrangement, it compartmentalises the world and interrupts dialogue. It creates people and things as objects in isolation (Tsing, 2015). An alienated world is cut up, divided, bounded, with blank space between things. Alienation produces rupture where (we imagine) there would otherwise be connection. Depending on the context, alienation, as a word, as a concept, has been put to many different purposes (Williams, 1976; cf. Marx, [1844]1967). If nature is the 'most complex' word in language (Williams, 1976:219), then Williams posits alienation as the 'most difficult' (ibid: 33). Alienation changes landscapes, bodies and means of relating. Alienation exaggerates the sense of distance, it makes the familiar strange, but it also works to objectify and neaten the world, to deny enmeshment and the tangle of subjectivities.

'Contemporary alienation' James and Rose claim is 'intensifie[d] in two main directions: alienation from nature, and alienation from each other' (2017:245), but, starting from disconnects from nature and distance from social bodies, the narratives and practice of these food producers story this more acutely to tell not only of an alienation from nature but also from place; not only from each other, but also from our own bodies, from the narrative and relationship of our senses.

Can you hear echoes of John Cage? His famous performance 4'3", in which he opened the piano but did not play, removed the sensational to reveal—and to draw attention to—all those tiny everyday stories ongoing underneath, usually un-noticed or even un-happening, drowned out by spectacle.

Seremetakis' work suggests ways in which 'modernity' (re)organises human relationships with the world (1994; see also Frykman, 1994). Drawing on Braudel (1980), Benjamin ([1955]1969) and Bloch (1991), Seremetakis conceives of 'modernity' as the narrator and propagator of a 'dominant myth': a narrative that moves chronologically from one stand alone event to another, lingering on the 'sensational' and hushing the 'sensory' and everyday—that dwelling place of individual stories and domain of active intertwining with the world (1994:19-20). Omissions proliferate, she says, and this imposed way of seeing the world becomes naturalised, helping to conceal the ways in which the reproduction of social memory is leaving behind a myriad of un-narrated (and unheard) spaces (ibid). Alienation results from, and produces this re-organisation of the world. Each sense, for example, becomes a separate but divided asset, the connections silenced. We become, not a part of the world but other to it. Rather than a 'common place' nature is configured as 'a physical place to which you can go' *out there* (Haraway, 1992:296). Human and nature as external to each other, could be understood as one such dominant myth reproduced through practice and narrative even as this false dichotomy is uneasily experienced in the spaces left behind. It tends to set up an over-exaggerated distinction between nature and the urban, or nature and personhood. For instance Bella, now a cider-maker in the countryside outside Bristol had to physically shift geographies in order to shift narrative: "moving from the city to the countryside has really changed me, quite noticeably and that's just, y'know a material change, your circumstances and things around you shaping how you see things and do things" (Bella, Track 6). Only through geographical intimacy with the rural could a reconnection to 'nature' be conceptualised.

Seremetakis is not alone in identifying the modern narrative as 'sensational', nor in her urging us to challenge it and (re)value the everyday stories unfolding beneath it. This call is echoed from the corners of many disciplines, storying and contextualising this concern in a variety of ways. John Cage, the composer, for instance, captured this sense acutely when he said 'silences are the basis for my work, that they form not only an integral part of the performance but that the sounds that do occur [..] are sounds accepted by me rather than imposed by me' (Cage, 1963 cited in Kuhn, 2016:284, original underlining). Nan Shepherd's (2011) meditation on the Cairngorms Massif asks us to follow in a shifting of attention, as Macfarlane notes in his discussion of Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*: 'circumambulation has replaced summit-fever; plateau has substituted for peak' (2015:64). In its tangent-tolerant, long, undulating, detail-heavy form, the project of the life-story in oral history is the same: to steer away from the event, to value the everyday. And from geography Caitlin DeSilvey (2006:318) asks how we might tell stories with mutable things, 'allowing other-than-human agencies to participate in the telling of [less heard] stories about particular places'; or how photographs might be used as ways in to the vastness of the everyday (DeSilvey et al., 2013).

This thesis includes food production as a necessary sphere of attention. As Bella says "so many problems arise from the way we feed ourselves it's just this huge, [..] whole messed up thing [..] causing massive environmental destruction and deprivation" (Track 6). "How [food] is grown, what goes into that, no, we're so far from those knowledges now" says Pep, one of the members of *Laguna nel bicchiere* (Track 1). The alienation of consumer from food production has become audible: it has become commonplace to consider this alienation problematic even whilst the disconnect between people and food has become widespread and normalised. But what does this alienation and the unravelling of that alienation sound like, feel like? Emerging from Ernesto's narrative also comes a picture of food producers as increasingly alienated from food stuff, plot and the process of production. If we listen to the surface story we hear general complaints of a disconnection from nature, a breakdown in community but as this section will show, beyond this there is both rupture and repair unfolding not only between individual and nature, not only within social bodies, but within individual bodies and between bodies and place. Whilst it was through food production that many of these individuals resolved alienation it was also how they felt out areas of alienation to begin with.

Modernity, according to Seremetakis does not affect what exists, but what is heard, or deemed hearable. As Cage says of 4'3": 'the piece is not actually silent [..] it is full of sound, but sounds which I did not think of beforehand [..] [w]hat we hear is determined by our own [..] receptivity'; we hear to the extent that we are able and open to do so (Cage, 1954 cited in Kuhn, 2016:176). Making stories audible—not those anticipated 'beforehand', but those that become heard when we are able to listen actively is the work of this thesis.

Evoking disaster: ash falling, covering over, silencing, insidious, quiet, pervasive, Seremetakis (1994) uses the metaphor of dust settling to describe the numbing that happens in order to allow this re-organisation, this breaking down of connection, and unfolding of a blanketing, sensational narrative to happen, to be accepted. Dust settles over the experiential world until forms of alienation become

naturalised, seeming inevitable—vital even. It was striking that in some of the narratives, an awareness of alienation did not exist prior to a turn to food production for these individuals. The proliferation of separations, divisions and areas of 'inattention' were first encountered there, uncovered at the margins of the food industry, and secondarily challenged and unravelled. Through the *doing* of food production a renewed or novel sense of connection was experienced, identifying a previous sense, now identified as disconnection. Through healing there was found to have been sickness, and through beginning to hear there was found to have been static. What Seremetakis's account of dust blots out, however, is the response, the reaction, the resistance to and the reversal of alienation. The effacement of difference. sensorial awake-ness and lay memory, does not go un-acknowledged. And the process of numbing is not always as invisible as she suggests. Numerous, everyday strategies emerging to counter disconnection, to shift attention—to kick up the dust—can be heard through the narratives and practices of the producers in this thesis.

*— "We lived it in our skin" —*
(Dario, Track 2)

Maria-Sole narrates various areas of silence and re-storying, rupture and repair. Whilst she talks about food production's capacity to (re)forge social relationships, or those between body and world, she understands this process as beginning through an acknowledgement of disconnection and the need for reconnection *within* individual bodies. Her narrative focuses on undoing estrangement, re-orientating ourselves so that various connections become familiar again.

By paying less attention to the interconnection of the senses, Maria-Sole says "our skins are changing", our "state of being, our health, our relation to 360º of life" is breaking down, we're losing a doorway into pleasure and understanding (Track 4). "The vibrations of the colours, the smells, the tactile, they provoke attention, sensation, they give you [a way in] to manage how you feel, to improve" (Maria-Sole, Track 4). It is worth quoting Maria-Sole at length here because of the way in which she nuances and qualifies Sutton's statement that the senses are 'a type of communicative and creative channel between self and world' (Korsmeyer and Sutton, 2011:471):

> "The senses are important for being human, I think that it's important—but these are personal convictions born by themselves, out in the world. I think it's important that people know how to use their senses. And that 'sensoriality' infuses us, it's the body's toolkit (/ instruments) for life, it's a positive armour, a good armour that allows us to live better, there's so much to say but if we want to put it in two words: *live better*. Living potentiality fully, with wherewithal. That's so important. It's important that we live in reflection, within perception, that we have grace of our senses. Our psycho-physiological equilibrium comes from our capacity to 'feel' things well, to read them clearly and that they are able to resonate inside of us. [The senses] are a guide, a manual of behaviour. To have our senses well activated is to perceive, to feel, acutely. And to live well. And we, now, we're losing them.
>
> [I notice that loss] in how we behave, when I see that little attention is paid to these things as if we are preoccupied with other things [..] I feel it missing from behaviour - it's difficult to articulate but it's like a changing of expression, the skin is different now it tells of a different state of mind. [..] Eeh, touch is a sense that we have lost a lot, I think. Smells, also these, yes, we are very selective, we hardly, with difficulty we explore a place with our nose through its smells, we tend to explore place through our eyes, not, not ehm, and all those other perceptions, all those sensings of place, that, *apunto*—exactly [she gestures with her fingertips at the invisible substance of the thought around her]—perhaps should also be linked to the eyes—for me, eyes, sight is one of those senses without which, I don't know, it would be almost impossible to live without because I draw so much pleasure from seeing colours, things, the forms. But it's also true that, if you take away the eyes, you become aware that there are many ways to perceive one's surroundings. Being with people, too, is a lot more, er linked to how, to what happens that you don't see. Having an augmented sensitivity for all the senses and a clarity, a greater sensibility for what you feel, I reckon, also helps you to be around people and among other things" (Maria-Sole, Track 4).

Maria-Sole echoes Emily's assertion that our bodies are a form of community. Whilst Emily was referring to the ecosystem of organisms on and within the body, the sentiments are similar, that what should work as a community (in this case the relationships between the senses) needs to be re-perceived

as such to function. To live better—within ourselves—and in the world we need to first recognise the increasing separation and isolation of the senses from one another and bring them back into dialogue in order to better sense the world. As Seremetakis says, removing the 'dust' in-between things returns their legibility (1994:35). Without using the words of theorists: 'modernity', 'alienation', 're-organisation', Maria-Sole nonetheless expresses the sentiments of Seremetakis and others through her own experience: alienation noticed out in the world, in people's changing orientation towards themselves and their environment, the breaking up of interconnections. She suggests interconnectedness as a protection of our humanity, positing growing alienation as damage. If having our senses 'well activated' is to 'feel, acutely', then disconnection is to numb feeling, to lose touch with the world around us.

In her cultivating project Maria-Sole tries to grow the affective relationship between people and things to decrease the distance and lack of shared language between them. The senses, for her are a means of connecting, perceiving, a guide, a means to feel in its broadest sense, to find better ways of living in the community of ourselves and the community of the world.

The importance of the relatedness of the senses is key to the work of David Sutton (2001). Sutton argues that the synaesthetic qualities of food provide a route back, through memory, to a reassembling of fragments into a whole[3]. However, whilst Sutton suggests that synaesthetic experiences are widespread and everyday (ibid: 100), especially 'when culturally elaborated as they are in Greece' (ibid: 102), Maria-Sole posits this interconnection as unfamiliar, or not automatic, within the everyday experience of many. Being able to facilitate a re-familiarising, a regaining of the everydayness of connection is key to her purpose. As much as her growing produces herbs for culinary ends, or to be used for their curative properties, she wants to grow a point of (re)encounter—with the sensory but through a relationship with the matter, and mattering, of plants in place.

In her collaboration with *La Maravegia* Maria-Sole taught people how to cultivate and use different herbs, fruits, seeds, as both sustenance and cure. Educating people about wild plants she tries to draw out this feeling of something shared, something remembered or known. She says of the experience of her 'students': "it's really a re-recognising of things that perhaps you already know in some way or" and she's laughing as she says "you *suspect* their existence" it's something on the tip of your tongue, not quite within grasp "and you can see it happening, it's a bit like re-meeting someone, like knowing someone—a person—you've come to know a plant, that you can eat or use in some other way and therefore, it makes up a part of who you are, your baggage, deep inside of you [..] like they've got to know someone of whom they had heard talked of [..] linked to the world of taste, also this is a pleasure, no? It can be enjoyed simply—to discover the taste of a herb or a plant. To know and re-know again is a pleasure, a reason to be outside, the excuse of having an aim for being out in..' (Track 4).

[3] In his exploration of ideas of a return to something whole, Sutton draws heavily on the work of the work of James Fernandez who conceptualises wholeness as a 'state of relatedness' (1986:191), that also resonates with the work of Maria-Sole.

The concept of collective memory can be problematic in the way that it can be used to treat the social body as if it can remember cognitively in the same way as an individual; or in the treating of social bodies as homogenous wholes (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). This feeling from Maria-Sole, however, of a knowing, a memory, latent inside us, a recovered familiarity and connectivity between ourselves and things in the world, is more revealing for the way in which it shows up a common *unfamiliarity* with interconnectedness, felt across the individuals she encountered. Relation between the senses, or between the material, the sensory and the storied, undoes alienation, relating resists disconnects, connections reappear. This follows the convictions of Merleau-Ponty that the world and our experience of it are enmeshed. Our experience is both produced in relationship with the world and produces the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). It's about 're-educating (/re-knowing/ re-directing?) attention' Maria-Sole says (field diary), allowing our attentions to wander, to slide down avenues of recollection in which we find we already possess means of relating. This attention is both orientated towards the particularities of individual plants, but also those journeys that encounter opens up inside. Encounter as doorway. Doorways as experiments.

In her project, Maria-Sole tries to grow this protective faculty of perception. She recognises the senses as a way to come to know—that taste is a way to know, that ingestion is a re-orientation, is relation, is a re-familiarisation. Food blurs the boundary between self and other, it draws on the relationship between the senses to make sense of it but it also makes our bodies. For Maria-Sole these plants go beyond their capacity to connect and to nourish. As foodstuffs they are destroyed through eating whilst they regenerate our bodies, but their curative properties lead her to perceive them differently—not as extinguished through ingestion but becoming the body's companion, accompanying the body's transformation (explored later in this section). Her gardens are places of getting back into relationship, getting back in touch—metaphorically and literally, 'one sense educate[s] and enculturate[s] the other [..] where one sense [becomes] the meta-narrative of another through memory (Seremetakis, 1994:25). Remembering is a form of (re)relating and (re)imagining connections through story. Remembering is to bring different paths through the past into community with each other and the present. New or rekindled material relationships trigger immaterial movement—feeling.
"[My plots] of different colours, different smells [..] create a pleasurable place always linked to the senses, to engaging sensory perception" but where "part of the pleasure also comes from knowledge and the ability to recognise, remember and name. A name, or the taste of a plant, for a child for instance, can forge a really strong connection", Maria-Sole says (Track 4). 'Without a name in our mouths, an animal or a place struggles to find purchase in our minds or our hearts' (Dee, 2014:np).

Written in the mid 1980s, Michel Serres' *The Five Senses* was part of a sensory turn pushing back upon the dominance of discourse and the text within Western thought; pushing back upon that which silenced and dismissed the importance of the senses and concealed or dismembered whole, sensing bodies; and pushing back upon the hierarchy that located language and the gaze at its pinnacle. '[S]peech and language cross these spaces, neither smelling nor tasting' says Serres, 'they anaesthetize the mouth, which finds the zestiest conversation tasteless. The most wide-ranging eloquence, the most sonorous poetry, the most incantatory song, the liveliest dialogue transform the palate into a musical instrument,

The body is a site of 'sociopolitical struggle and cultural change' (Rodaway, 1998:7)

> which nonetheless remains numb to fragrant flowers, to the scent of the earth, to the powerful fragrance of musk and skin; or worse still, chases them away. Neither acidic nor astringent, sentences refrain from awakening our tongue to anything but them selves. Sapidity slumbers beneath the narcosis of speech. Frozen: frigid' (Serres, [1985]2008:153).

Due to the context within which it was written, language is conceived of as frigid, numb, senseless: alienating the body rather than being a part of it. Whilst Serres, like Maria-Sole challenged the division and paring off of the senses and showed them to be interconnected, the stories and work of these food producers go beyond this to challenge not only the alienation of the senses but also the alienation of language and the body. These producers variously show that body and story are intertwined, that it is possible for one not to alienate the other but to complicate it, thicken it, provide more ways to connect. As Serres himself says: '[a]ll dualism does is reveal a ghost facing a skeleton. All real bodies shimmer like watered silk. They are hazy surfaces, mixtures of body and soul' ([1985]2008:25). Alienating language and body depletes the sense-making of both: to read things clearly is to feel them well in Maria-Sole's words. She gestures towards the way in which the sensory body can go beyond the capabilities of the individual sense organs, to read between the lines, to feel the un-spoken, un-shown story. A textualising of the world is what sensory scholarship works against (Stoller, 1995:30), and yet, Maria-Sole refers to reading the world or being read as a positive mingling of communications: words and body, an engagement with story as three-dimensional, textural and connective rather than a reduction or flattening of the layers. In the political intensity of the 1970s she was a dancer, performing street theatre in France. Of the politics she says: "it was political obviously but [..] this was really a way to live ones corporeality, even though it's not through physicality, but in words, it was a way to touch, no, the body, somehow" (Track 2). She talks particularly of politics giving form to the female body, bringing it into focus in a way it never had been in her childhood. Whilst politics and language gave her the tools to explore corporality, theatre gave her the means to turn that on its head and to explore politics and language physically. This complicates the phenomenological stance that we can only come to know through the body, re-involving language in the dynamic relationship with the physical.

To sum up, attentiveness, for Maria-Sole is about having the capacity to experience 'well'—to have access to the meaning that story lends to sensory perception and memory, to have authority to story, to name, to remember, to relate. What Maria-Sole recognises in others is a losing touch with the knowledge of how to wield the senses as tools of relation. A diminishing recognition of the senses *as* vital tools. The storying of our body, she says, is becoming unfamiliar, forgotten. The individuals discussed by Sutton are fully aware of the fragmentation imposed on them (largely through migration). Their lips 'burn' from a strong sense of what is missing and food is sought out and devoured as an act of auto-care, a return to the 'whole' (2001:79). In Maria-Sole's case, however, fragmentation is presented as a process less widely acknowledged—the settling in of Seremetakis' dust (1994). Whilst to an extent, Maria-Sole echoes Seremetakis' sentiment of the 'imperceptibility' of loss (ibid: 19), the doing of food production also disturbs this dust, uncovering ruptures that can then be repaired. Producers seek to

return interconnectedness to others through facilitating encounter. Re-awakening, re-engaging is a form of remembering and the re-storying of everyday perception.

One of the conclusions of this section is that language is an important tool in unravelling alienation, not a form of alienation from the body as we might assume. Whilst Maria-Sole suggests that reversing the alienation of our senses equips us better to reverse other silenced spaces, Bella stories it differently, showing up how a changing attentiveness and connection in one direction can lead to increasing distance in another. Bella stresses sensory interaction in a different context: as a means of control—relationship as empowerment. Where Maria-Sole emphasises the interconnection of the body itself, the relationship between the senses, Bella stresses the interaction between body and apple as a way to grasp her place in the world, her role within the process of transformation of foodstuff as a very human act and a way to resist alienation with the world.

Bella.

Bella | Barley Wood Orchards

Bella, Ben and I are 'not morning people'— Bella especially — so much so that the autobiographical zine she drew of her life for fifteen years was entitled *Morgenmuffel* roughly translatable as *not a morning person*. On first encounter Bella came across as feisty, self-assured, a little guarded but quick to joy. She was always dressed in black, her high-gloss, hip-length hair bundled up and tied with a red and white spotty neckerchief. Ben towered over her, his movements lopey and long in comparison to hers. He seemed more open, more prone to talking, less time aware—at times to the irritation of Bella. I'd arrive into an atmosphere of hurry, a feeling that we were already behind even as we stepped from the car to the cider barn. The hours we spent together, we spent working together, and afterwards we'd rush homewards in the dark—me back to the centre of Bristol—and Ben and Bella back to the farmhouse they share with eight others around the corner from the orchards. 2016, the year I was with them for fieldwork, was the first year Bella and Ben made cider and juice commercially so the rhythms were new and there were many unknowns. This working pattern is also a symptom of a seasonal product, where picking must shortly be followed by pressing whilst there is still more picking to be done; and the nature of the work itself: each person in a different tree or around the noise of the scratter—the machine that pulps the apples (noisily). I knew them within the process of processing apples into cider and juice. Perhaps more than any other site I felt viscerally mixed up with the matter of food stuff and its transformation: apples as beautiful, scented symbols, but also as idiosyncratic, individual objects: pocked and freckled, lacquered or scabbed or knobbly. Not only apples in different forms: whole, smashed, squishy, juice, pomace, or firm or sagging or rotting or oozing, but also the other things in the worlds they moved in: orchards, icy blades of grass, wet gloves, wasp-inhabited plastic sacks, barns, water sloshing in buckets and sluicing the floor, colanders, bottling machines and crown caps. And our bodies in there too. As Bella says often, the feeling of transformation is very 'immediate', very 'direct'. These things and states of things came together in a somewhat frenzied choreography that made it possible to rapidly transform the apples we'd brought in from the orchards into bottles of juice and tanks of fermenting juice that would end up as cider. Whilst the process is repeated and repeated, with different lots of apples, and sometimes the processes are divided up—picking for three days in a row without pressing, or pressing but not bottling—the whole metamorphosis could occur in a matter of hours.

Bella expresses her feelings of alienation—from nature particularly—very early on in her life story. Born to a Korean mother and a German father she spent her childhood first in Korea, then Hawaii and later Germany before coming to England in her twenties. "I grew up very, very alienated" she says. "Seoul is one of the most densely populated cities in the world, no one has a garden" (Track 1). On rare occasions, "odd outings" to the countryside left her uncertain, not really knowing "what this is" or how to relate. In Hawaii the only non-urban areas were jungles or sugar plantations, it wasn't nature you could "be in" she says (Bella, Track 1). In England she lived mainly in Brighton before moving to Somerset and then the rural peripheries outside Bristol in her mid thirties. In Brighton she lived first in squats and then in a co-op, setting up a co-operative social centre and a mass catering company: *The Anarchist Teapot*. Bella was highly politicised, an activist and an anarchist. She still is, but she has

swapped one "direct action" for another. "I wasn't really very connected to things" says Bella "like, the natural world, sort of everything that was a bit more direct and hands on about living" she says "and y'know like I really wanted to [..] plug that gap" (Track 4).

> "I feel like, we're very alienated in the way we live. Um, like we're, we don't, y'know we go to the supermarket we buy things, we don't maybe even consider where they're from or how they were grown or how they were flown across the world or, or that they're in season or not, or all of these different things and we go and buy like a pack of weird ready-made meal that y'know that was made in a factory and that's going to be our dinner then. I feel that, that that's caused a massive disconnect between people and a really fundamental practice which is feeding yourself and nourishing yourself. [..] but I think alienation is a massive erm, deal, in the world, that we've built, in the Western, capitalist world, it's a very hierarchical society so there's top and bottom so you feel you know, your place is really hard to find and, and feel purpose in, and there's a lot of expectation, a lot of discrimination, a lot of y'know we also have managed to y'know with our big cities and all of our concrete and all our machines and big buildings and all these things, like y'know, we've built this unnatural world around us, so obviously we also feel alienated from nature and the natural world" (Bella, Track 6).

Whilst this extract largely expresses a now conventional narrative, Bella goes on to personalise it through her life story interview. Already, in this extract she begins to unravel the feeling of alienation—that hierarchy or compartmentalisation does not feel like knowing "your place", suggesting that our place can only be felt relationally, within messier, flowing webs rather than isolated spheres. What begins as an alienation from the foods we eat —the alienated consumer —becomes more particularly about an alienation from whole processes, the place-ness of process, and our ability to 'grasp' the transformation from one thing to another, to understand the 'product'. Bella also feels that an alienation from narrative disempowers individuals to repair the ruptures imposed by alienating systems:

> "It's massive y'know um, for me, and like [I'm] having to make quite an effort to be able to feel comfortable or confident and um, and like, and like I can, I can, er, y'know, [..] feel like comfortable and confident making something, creating something, feeling like empowered to do that like, y'know, yes, this is something you can do even though it's not been part of your life, in this kind of way for, um, you've never had the opportunities to do, you know, whereas for Ben, he has had the opportunity to have land, to have space, to, to grow things, to feel connected to nature, he's always had those opportunities. Um, and he loves it out of the tradition, because it's always been in his life and he's appreciated it. And I love it because I've not had it in my life, and like, I've appreciated it that way, so it's quite a different type of appreciation" (Bella, Track 7).

"I could have stayed" in the city she says, but "I did feel like something was a bit missing" (Track 4). "[M]oving from the city to the countryside has really changed me", she says, "I think about things slightly differently from being in the countryside, I think from having more space around me. and sort of just, I don't know it's given me a bit of a different grounding or understanding" (Track 7). An imposed ontology of nature as something other and out there is still audible in Bella's narrative, showing it up as something difficult to hear through, the imposed becoming the supposed. For her to 'plug the gap' that alienation from nature produced, she felt like she had to shift geographies. But not just that. Her means of unravelling alienation with nature, to come into relationship with it, was through the process of food production, landscape transforming into 'taskscape' (Ingold, 2000:201).

Whilst Maria-Sole talks a lot about non-alienating relationships, interconnectedness, relations that seem to spread out in open-ended webs, Bella focuses in on processes. Being able to control a whole process is her means of connecting disconnects—contracting processes and resisting division of labour and geography (echoes of Durkheim, [1893]2014). "Making juice and cider [..] was like the *least* alienated work I'd every gotten to do [..] more so than cooking [..] 'cos you were making, *doing* the *whole* process [..] and I've never really done that before" (Bella, Track 4). That grasping of sensory interconnectedness described by Maria-Sole is put to work more by Bella: it is her toolkit, her means of feeling both process and product of labour.

> "Anarchism picks up on a lot of Marxist ideas. I mean alienation of labour, I mean basically producing things without being in control of the wider process, [..] that's a massive part of that, that alienation. Which is then translated into wider society now and has just become the norm. No one really knows what they're doing, or what they're making, and it's very difficult to make a sort of actual connection to what you do. To kind of see and feel and understand where you are in a wider scheme of things [..] Um, like I've tried doing things like work in an office or work in I don't know, it all just feels like just big paper tigers, you know? [..] I've really needed to see and feel, what I'm doing, um, and feel like I've got some control over it. [..] Which is probably my problem with gardening. I literally like, I try to, I've actually labelled individual seeds so that I can figure out which one turned into what so I could see it but it doesn't work that way [laughing] they're *reallllllly* small and then they turn into a pumpkin I just don't get it! [Laughing] I wish I could see it better!" (Bella, Track 6).

In section 13 I included some fieldwork notes on the process of juice and cider production. Whilst I don't analyse these directly, Bella's discussion of process and product is rooted in those particularities, those materialities, those means of relating. It is through specifics that they gain meaning for her. Anarchy is not loss of control but re-configuration, re-orientation of control. To see and feel in the particular, in her body's impact on, and contribution to, the transformation from solid, bounded apple through mush, to juice also helps her to feel her place, how she relates in the "wider scheme of things". Marx identifies four broad forms of alienation: from nature, from each other, from the process of labour and from the product of labour ([1844]1967). It is these latter notions of alienation that Bella in particular stories further (and with Marx in mind) but her narrative shows how resolving alienation from the process and product of labour is a sensory unfolding. For her, displacing alienation is to get a sense of one's material place in relation to that product and as a part of that process:

> "I actually prefer not wearing gloves, again, 'cos I then have the direct contact [..] like we're in control of what's happening, and also [..] you can just grasp it all better [..] if you're just using your hands. Um. Yeah, but both of us just really like using our hands, um, I think we both find a lot of satisfaction in it [..] rather than just pressing a button and something happening. [..] I think it's um the hand contact helps you feel more involved with what's going on rather than having those kind of detachments [..] It's nice to [pause] it's nice to sort of see it, also, the, that you've been doing something like both me and Ben got a bit fascinated that our hands were looking really gnarly and like half way through the season [laughing] like all these weird brown lines and little cuts and stuff and they look really a bit rough[laughing] um, so yeah my hands have recovered again a bit, but, [..] it's just pleasing, it makes you feel like you've, you've, you've actually made something rather than someone else has made something for you. Maybe that's the best way to describe it haha, [..] um. I like, I like the touch of it. I really like, um, y'know like just building the cheeses, and squishing around and making it all nice and flat" (Bella, Track 5).

At the end of this process “you’ve stayed in touch, [..] refused the capitalist logic of efficient, alienated labour and y’know um the chopping down of processes” (Bella, Track 5). There is a coming together of the intellectual ‘grasping’, and the bodily being in touch. Bella feels like this process also creates a non-alienating product; not something that will remain detached and removed from her consumers. “This is something I can directly see, make, and consume and it will nourish me” (Bella, Track 6). It matters that it is food. “I like it that it’s something that people put inside their bodies, which is really off putting isn’t it that description. I’m not going to put that on our advertising [laughing] yeh it is, it is definitely, I like that. It makes a connection I think that’s more direct. It doesn’t feel like, it doesn’t feel like we’re adding random stuff to the world that the world doesn't need. It feels like something more, more real” (Bella, Track 6).

Part of the appeal for Bella of being in control of the process as a whole, is the ability to share the experience of that with others, not only through encounter through consumption but encounter with production. Of the satisfaction of the individuals that have come to participate in juice-making days she says:

“I mean, and that again is just really, goes to show that like, our lives are a bit, that we don’t get those chances, we don’t have those opportunities but when we do, we re-discover something that’s very human and, and something that we obviously *want* to be doing [..] to see and feel what you’re doing” (Bella, Track 6).

And yet she acknowledges obstacles, and a certain elitism now, in the access to these opportunities: “it’s a really, sort of romantic idea isn’t it, that people can farm or all be involved in food growing in some way, y’know, especially with the amount of people we have in the world, it’s [..] quite, er, utopian” (Track 6).

This demonstrates again the dimension of power wielded by dominant narratives in making alienation feel inevitable, throwing up divisions and separations. Neil too picks up on the difficulty of escaping a dominant ontology. Rather than understanding his re-orientation towards control of whole processes and narration of otherwise silenced spheres as political he diminishes the every day politics of his actions because they are still shaped by the dominant narrative of a modern, capitalist system:

> “Um. I don’t know, mine is my own sort of, sort, my sort of ways and stuff are kind of like, I, I, I’m, I’m a punk. But I don’t dress as a punk. I’m, I’m an inward punk. It’s like, I’m an inward anarchist. I’ve got anarchist views, um, I love the thought of anarchy but I wouldn’t go to a, a rally or a riot or y’know. I’m, I’m like a boring anarchist. I’ve got all of these views and I’ve got my own little way, my own sort of my own views on things, I, I, I love that punk sort of ideology and that DIY thing and I don’t think you need to have a Mohican and sort of wear Doctor Martins and have a ripped shirt to be a punk it’s more of a kind of way of life and the way you think, and again, we talked about it with music and that, I love that kind of doing it for yourself, that’s my anarchy and you know it’s hard to be an anarchist, I admire people that totally live that way of life, y’know that kind of fuck the system, and that sort of way, but unfortunately you must toe the line to get on and to survive” (Neil, Track 10).

Despite the overt political stance of Bella, she too expresses her shift in orientation, from the direct action of participating in protests to the direct action of making cider, as “less exciting”, less easy to

narrate. Despite understanding production as political, whilst Bella's Brighton days are set down in her zine, as her drawings moved from riots to rural life, the zine no longer felt like the place to narrate her stories (Track 4). What these food producers are expressing is not a homogenous turn from alienation to (re)connection but something patchier, and always in the particular. Whilst Bella feels more connected to what she is doing and that gives her a sense of locating herself within the world, her shifting orientation leaves her feeling, in other respects, more detached. "I'd never lived in the countryside before but I had these romantic notions of it" she says, "[I do have] a little bit of sort of guilt, almost, that, I'm not, *engaging* with the wider world quite as much as I used to, and I would like to. But then again, like, my sense of the wider world is better, and healthier I think, than it was before [..] I feel sort of truer to something" (Bella, Track 6).

Bella changed geographies to counter alienation, still influenced by this dominant 'modern' ontology of nature as somewhere else, which, in Seremetakis' understanding drives our unintentional 'collaborat[ion] in the sensory and narrative re-figuration [of rural and urban in a way in which] worlds of memory are rapidly replaced' (1994:33). More than a generalised notion of nature, however, as she unravels her feelings of alienation and works to counter them, she does so through highly specific relationships to process, apples, orchards and story. Cider-making provides Bella with a place in a story as much as a material location and role. Whilst for Bella, the managing of whole processes of food production is key to repairing alienation, juxtaposing this with Ernesto's experience complicates this, for in his narrative he articulates ways in which the control of production, in and of itself, do not always diminish detachment.

As noted in Section 9, Ernesto's concept of nature as Mother Nature, is embodied by the particularity of place. The attunement of the sensory body over time is, for him, essential for being able to hear the nuances, needs and demands of his plot. The relative speed with which agricultural methods have changed within his tiny, island community means that there is now a gulf of recognition between 'old' and 'new' practices. The diminishing recognisability of his own practice increased alienation between Ernesto and the other producers. So whilst all the island agriculture surrounding him is necessarily small-scale, that other farmers and winemakers around him are in control of whole processes, for Ernesto, doesn't stop these producers from being alienated from place. He describes the way in which industrially-produced fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides level any soil to a place-less, 'clean slate' where Mother Nature is ignored and defaced. Whilst they are in control of the process, the process has been divorced from plot, growing-time, and from Mother Nature with whom 'they have no relationship' he says (Ernesto, field diary). It is not a process and an environment grasped, but a process imposed, a sense of place removed. He narrates the increasing social alienation of the farming community in parallel with an increasing distance between person and territory. 'A language is being lost' he says of that distance of human from land, but also of the decreasing dialogue between Venetian citizen and Lagoon. 'Who can teach you to hear? No one because, with the push of chemicals no one has to listen anymore, and even if they did, they could no longer understand what they were being told' (Ernesto, field diary). "One who works with nature, works for years to learn, because first you have to know the land, the soil, how plant and patch are related, what suits what" (Ernesto, Track 3).

Alienation between food producer and plot, aided by machinery and commercial inputs, has also increased alienation between foodstuff and consumer. Ernesto recounts that, in previous decades, the artichokes were prized for the soils they were grown in, the season was shorter and more anticipated, he would have a queue around the bend in the road for the first *castraure*, 'now there is no-one waiting for them' (Ernesto, field diary). Now few people even understand the word. *Castraure* is the very first head the artichoke produces. It's eaten raw and is considered a delicacy because the plant has put all of its energy, all its hope for reproduction and a future into that one bud. It's a special ritual, Dario tells me, to cut and eat the *castraure*. Doing so castrates the plant Dario says, which lends the bud its name, and castrate, he says, means to transform, and so you force this transformation. The next four buds to appear are known as *botali*. It's an incredibly limited production, one *castraure* per plant and then four *botali*. Ernesto's plants will go on to produce another ten artichokes, whereas those produced with 'chemical' inputs might produce closer to thirty. Twenty years ago there was no other alternative than to wait for the artichoke's season. The *castraure* were so highly prized because they were also the most anticipated. As growing practices have changed and sourcing geographies increased, so the knowledge, and language of the artichoke's season has decreased.

As Ernesto explains it, not only has space changed, but time has changed: "those that work with fertilisers get more days, they start days ahead, and no one now remembers when the artichoke's time should be" (Ernesto, Track 3). The increasing alienation between Ernesto and the producers around him, and their perceived alienation from place becomes the driver for food producer as moral role to emerge for Ernesto. He feels a responsibility not to only to decrease alienation between consumer and foodstuff but also to decrease alienation between producer and plot in the next generation, to bring place back into process.

Emerging out of these narratives comes a conceptualisation of the isolated (/alienated) body as sick. This is a social body, a material body and a body that is in itself a community. Out of all the producers with whom I worked, Maria-Sole's production is most explicitly about healing. In different ways, however, food production was, for all of these producers, the means of combatting different forms of (alienation)malady. Superficially, Maria-Sole's production is about healing sick bodies through the (material) curative power of food stuffs that cross over into being medicinal. As I have explored through her discussion of the senses, however, she also seeks to cure the sensory alienation within and between bodies that she conceives of as damage and vulnerability. She does this through cultivating relationships and affect—between people and plants, between the senses, between memory and matter. The ability to relate in its broadest sense is the beginning of repair which for her, bleeds into care. Where Bella talks about the importance of being able to grasp control of whole processes—to feel what's going on in order to locate oneself—Maria-Sole introduces the idea of needing to *feel fully* to control health (in its broadest sense). In particular, she describes the importance of making relationships and being able to perceive what goes on inside the body to 'live better'.

> "Using plants as medicine is definitively different from my experience of using chemicals [..]. The way in which plants work within the body to make you feel better has the sensation of being an organic relationship that provokes changes in your state of health that you almost understand. You feel what your body is doing to heal and that, in reality, these herbs, often accompany this healing. They are companions. Your body has a relationship in which it is more he, the body, that is doing the healing. You feel this. When you use chemicals you feel something other arrive. Boom. It puts the body in a cage, it does things to my body, but when it goes away I'm at zero, alone as before, whilst with plants it's not like that. With plants you never have this crazy fall, because they lead to a body which is seeking equilibrium [..] you gain a clearer perception, a grasp on what is happening inside your body, the matter of your body itself. And this is a positive charge that shouldn't be underestimated" (Maria-Sole, Track 4).

This comes back to Maria-Sole's convictions about the necessity of being able to feel acutely; to be in control; to perceive both damage, and the journey back to health. To have access to the meaning within one's senses is to increase the legibility of, and dialogue with the world. Being in relation is balance, is health, her narrative tells us. To re-quote her: "Our psycho-physiological equilibrium comes from our capacity to 'feel' things well, to read them clearly and that they are able to resonate inside of us" (Track 4).

An alienated cure, in which there is no dialogue or relationship between body and medicine continues the body's alienation, which isn't able to make sense of either the harm or the remedy and returns to a state of isolation and vulnerability once the medicine leaves the body. Maria-Sole suggests that conventional medicine like dominant narrative is external, imposed, narrating only the sensational and not the sensory everyday. It puts her body 'in a cage', dividing it from the world, alienating it, 'does things' *to* the body rather than with the body, coming from and returning from a space with which the body has no relationship, speaking to the fragmentation of the world. It is being cut off, that makes your place really hard to find as Bella states. For Maria-Sole, part of the healing power of the plants is that her relationship with them pre-exists using them as medicine. Through cultivation or having a

relationship with the environments where these plants are nourished she has come to know them "in the flesh". Therefore, by the time they enter the body they are already in relation; they are not disconnected, place-less objects (Track 4). On the contrary, ingesting these plants becomes a further means of growing and being in relationship with place. Maria-Sole talks explicitly about approaching place through wild plants: 'they have no barriers' she says of them, 'they take up everything' (field diary), this is what makes them dangerous, but also affecting, because you are forming a relationship through plant to place. Unlike the 'place-ness' of the *terroir* concept in wine which gestures at the perceived capacity of wine to articulate place: soil, sunlight, slope through flavour, Maria-Sole is interested in how elemental (mineral-chemical) aspects of place articulate themselves within the body as a form of relationship or a co-production of person and world

Feeling well, feeling one's place within interconnectivity is as much about story as about matter and place. 'Not being able to connect to some sort of collective story, not having that narrative' Emily says 'is one of the things that makes me unwell. I really struggle with that. It's one of the reasons I've not left the garden' (field diary). Whilst our identities might emerge out of our continual re-storying and re-relating of experience through remembering and recounting, what Emily recounts is that locating the self within our own memory-story of self alone is insufficient. Even when we are able to position ourselves within a web of personal stories, we must still be able to grasp how that self relates to the storying unfolding around us (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). As Maria-Sole says of external medicine, she feels alone because she is unable to grasp the relationship. Despite there having been a material encounter between medicine and body, the lack of a connecting story leaves the body disconnected from the process.

Articulated explicitly here by Emily, this importance of story to feeling related, crops up elsewhere too. Bella says: "When you choose to do something like say, make cider [..] you're sort of participating in that, in that history being continued [..] I really like seeing myself and considering myself in a process, that's a bigger process because it's always nice to see yourself in a bigger thing [laughing] and not just isolated and, or even just like, just replicating, I think it's nice to be, it feels more creative to be, to consider yourself in a larger process of making things, and making them better—hopefully" (Bella, Track 6). The way in which food production is practiced or storied produces the means to forge relations within which to be located.

> Ernesto: "Look, it's important to me to make wine not in the sense that I drink it. I don't drink wine. I, I, I prefer milk, you know? Because I taste it more with my nose than with my palate. Why is it important to make wine? Why?
> —because wine is a medicine—
> since ancient Roman times. If you read the history of wine it's been used since the ancient Romans, with honey, wine is used to cure oneself, so
> wine is a cure,
> and when I give wine to someone, no, it's on my conscience that I must not, *I cannot*—whether you like the wine or not—I must give you wine, *not poison*. I'll give you wine that you'll like but this is grape and wine, this will cure you and the other [wine] will kill your liver, or it will kill your brain", < "or it will kill you" Donatella adds >; "for me, wine *must* be a medicine" (Ernesto: Track 3).

For Ernesto, wine's un-alienated status is linked to its location within story. As practices change and Ernesto becomes alienated from the agricultural and wine making techniques around him—ones he suspects emerge from place-less, man-made time, aided by alienated substances that the human body can't grasp—wine becomes poison. The detachment of product from place, its narrative-unfamiliarity and its subsequent ingestion contaminates bodies with alienation, sickens them.

Whilst Bella and Ernesto draw attention to the collective story of a process, Maria-Sole stories connection and disconnection from place in a variety of ways. As well as having a relationship with place through engaging with a plot, or ingesting produce understood as somehow emplaced, 'collective' story' is also something that produces her meaningfully and *able* to relate. As Bella says "you're the product of where you've come from" (Track 7).

In her early thirties, when she was living in France as a dancer, Maria-Sole's partner Christian died suddenly and she returned to Italy:

> *BB: "And when you said that you had to come back to your roots/ origins to look after yourself a bit* **< Maria-Sole: "mm" >** *"(BB) er, before, not after the death of Christian but before"* **<** **Maria-Sole: "yes, yes, yes it was before" >** *"(BB) ..what was it about being in Italy, coming back to your 'roots' that acted as what you termed a 'cure'?"*
>
> Maria-Sole: "Eh, it's very tied to modality (*modalitá*: form/ practice/ mannerisms) of life, of the inter-relations between people. Where, what I did would become read… right. [..] there was a correspondence, a matching up of shared symbolism. [..] that fact of feeling in a familiar place, what does that mean? It means that you are recognised, they know you, and you recognise the modality [..] even by people who don't know you, you have a shared language that's simpler, less that needs interpreting, you have to explain less, there's that shared, thing. [..] When I was with Christian, I asked him to come to Italy to see where I came from no? And, when he came, one day he actually said to me: 'it was good that I came, for many reasons, but more than anything, now, I understand why you do certain things, in a certain way, what it means when you do it like that, because I saw it, because I saw you here, how you are here, in this place, or with your friends, how it works between you, so now I can interpret in the right way that which you are'. *Ecco*—here, that is what it means to take care of oneself, to heal oneself" (Maria-Sole, Track 2).

Here, relating is healing, health is experienced as dependent on being in relationship—of being read well. Maria-Sole was not alienated from nature in France but she felt alienated from a shared historical, cultural, linguistic, geographical story that gave her meaning. That Maria-Sole had to return to Italy where others would share and therefore be able to read her gestures and practices well suggests a dividing up of place, a cutting up of stories and obstacles placed into the interrelations and flows that would otherwise enmesh places and stories. In a different context, Maria-Sole, like Bella experienced the need for a geographical shift in order to conceive of being able to repair an area of rupture. She describes being in a place with more 'legible' connections allowed 'place itself to become medicine'. Here, Maria-Sole's narrative has moved away from food production. This is a strength of life stories, however, to hear how sense making spreads through different terrain and relates different spheres of life. It also works to deepen how we might think about the other narratives presented here, in which people seek to locate themselves and relate in a variety of ways. Italy, for Maria-Sole works as the garden seems to for Emily who expresses feeling similarly recognised, read, within the garden's particular fabric—both of a specific place and time—and a historical practice of producing and nourishing.

*BB: "We were speaking a little bit off tape and you'd said a very lovely thing—of this period of caring for yourself, in Italy—that the place itself 'became a type of medicine'.* **< Maria-Sole: "Yes" >** *And you were touching your heart gesturing that this was a cure for your heart, your soul* **<Maria-Sole: "yes, yes, that's it exactly" >** *And, er, may I ask you a, er, a difficult question, you don't have to answer if, but what was the medicine that you used to cure yourself after you lost Christian?"*

Maria-Sole: "*Allora*—well, [sighs], when I lost Christian, mm, in that first period, my medicine was being in a particular place. [..] [And with] a person that knew how to be a medicine [..] to understand what that was. This was medicine, because, *appunto*—precisely, I had a place in which to stay, sheltered away, like a nest, a den [..] there was a harmonious relation of understanding. [..] *Ecco*—here, that was the medicine: the ability to live through fully this state of mind that I had. I wasn't forced to hide it, or put it aside (Track 3).

"I wasn't forced to hide" she says, visibility as medicine, resonating with Merleau-Ponty's 'universal flesh'. As Pep from *Laguna nel bicchiere* says of working in the vineyard, "it makes you remember" he says "that you're made up of earth" (Track 1).

"The benefit came really from the simplicity of the relationship that you have with nature. [The tasks involved in producing food] they're tasks that take you back a primary—a primeval—practice (/modality). And this, on one hand *it makes you feel,* you learn a sort of security in yourself because *it doesn't ask you for a performance*, where you have to demonstrate your ability, and already this offers a level of tranquility [..] a sort of calm, a serenity, a lightening the state of the soul of these people burdened down by something. [Even those] who don't like this environment, it's a moment in which a person

re-finds themselves
in front of themselves
[..] at least you've taken contact
with yourself
and with the world
and yourself in the world

in a simple way this is the thing, this is what I saw, then I saw people who discovered something through—I don't know—the pleasure of doing this, working with nature, [..] of taking care—I saw something born in them. [..] working with nature also brings, a feeling of time, of rhythm, [it] gives you basic tools and concepts that can help you to do completely different things too" (Maria-Sole, Track 3).

Bella too picks up on this idea of the direct relationship as healing when she talks about making juice as a means of mourning and resolution after the death of her parents. This suggests another form of interconnectedness: that a resolved contact and sensory wholeness with process increases one's capacity to make sense of emotional fragmentation.

"You can't help but feel better after [because] it's such a direct process, it's not mediated through other things or it's not, y'know it doesn't involve like, all the interactions and other sort of levels of alienation that we've put on our world. It's just like ok, there's the trees, and the apples, and we're sitting here and with our hands washing them and then chucking them in this thing and building this thing and pressing juice it's like y'know, it's pretty direct isn't it, it's about yeh as direct as you can get. [..] And to do, and engage in really sort of connected work [..] is healing [..] I like dealing with things with, by doing things, I guess. Like I've, I've never been one to sit around and talk very much so this is quite confusing sitting here for hours, talking. Ah um, I, I don't really do that very much" (Bella, Track 6).

In much of the narration, it is the positive face of connectivity through food production that is emphasised. But these positives are entangled within the tensions and precarities of living from the doing of food production.

> "If you're not going to turn to chemicals to falsely charge the place, then the earth asks you for a huge physical input. When you use alternative systems [to industrial agriculture] it demands a lot more manuality, a lot more physicality, more time, more fatigue. [..] The reality is that you can't just be a *contadina*—farmer (/field-worker/ connotations of peasant). To do only that becomes very heavy, in a physical sense but also in a sense of self—it's a very physical typology of work, one which needs to be lightened and by necessity you have to nurture, to literally give nutrition to all of your various parts—you need interrelations, swapping of cultures and also a different typologies of work no? [..] I couldn't imagine just being a *contadina.* [..] Now the *contadino* has rights to all the rest: those aspects of culture, of knowledge, of movement and mobility, not to be tied, its a new formula, a new form of being a *contadina* that, of course, asks you for a total commitment in some moments, but it can't be twelve months" (Maria-Sole, Track 4).

What Maria-Sole is suggesting is that in order to live well, to be in health, attention needs to be paid to "all of your various parts—you need interrelations". This resonates with Marco's ideas of permaculture, that no one connection can be too strong or it suggests that elsewhere within the web of relationships something is being negelected. Ernesto forcefully disagrees. He believes that any attempt to straddle worlds (which he perceives to be urban vs rural, modern vs traditional) will lead back to an alienation from nature, will compromise a rootedness in place. But Maria-Sole throws light on the fact that a full-time *contadina* is almost inevitably alienated in other ways. Indeed whilst rooted in a relationship with the place of his plot, his increasing alienation from those around him is something that Ernesto openly acknowledges. As explored in Section 9, Ernesto begins to estrange his apprentices too. Stefano and Dario want to pursue a practice more akin to what Maria-Sole is describing. They are struggling under the weight of what they have to give up in order to produce food. Ernesto, however Ernesto believes sacrifice is the only way and understands their adopting of different methods as a slow return to alienation from the historical story of agriculture.

These discussions nuance ideas of alienation and connection as well as conventional notions of healthy and sick. The strength of life story interviews is demonstrated here: to deepen themes that emerge in fieldwork, to form connections between seemingly disparate discussions and follow them across many areas of life. What was distilled and vague in fieldwork— the unqualified phrase 'connection to nature' belied a complicated, negotiated realm. To come to understand connection and disconnection in practice was to understand much about the sensory body, the social body and the sick body, both within food production and beyond it.

Thinking about his interviews with elderly scientists Paul Merchant (2013) argues that it is not that these (scientific) identities and interests are formed in childhood but that looking back, in creating life stories, things of profound importance in the present find counterparts, familiar markers by which to navigate the roomy realms of the past and thread them with a sense of continuity. Memory always seeks to forge a connected-up self, it is human to desire continuity and relatedness to make sense of our selves and our place in the world (Klein and Nichols, 2012). And so the stories within life story interviews show up what is urgent, what is pertinent to their roles now as food producers. Whilst Sutton notes that

individuals turn to the past in order to interpret their present (Korsmeyer and Sutton, 2011), I want to suggest that the process is more complicated, less linear than that. The recognition of relatedness that these producers have found through their work, and the urgency with which they pursue connection cannot help but permeate their understandings of the stories of their pasts and the way in which they remember and recount them now. As well as past experience informing the present, their pasts are also (re)interpreted, given different significance in light of the present.

‘ “*I am not a part of nature. I am alone. There is nothing else in my world but my dead heart and brain within me and the rain without*” [..] one may too easily take the natural world as companion, friend and salve. Nature can cure but it can also be brutally mute, shocking in its disinterest’ (Macfarlane, 2012:339 on—and including a quote by—Thomas, 1913:281).

‘Connection to nature’. This phrase came up a lot in, and at the time of, fieldwork, but I couldn’t get a hold of it, its substance was allusive. The phrase seemed to be everywhere, bandied around, not just in the fieldwork, where in the production of food it seemed obvious, but also among my peers and in the media at the same time. It was always alluded to vaguely and unchallenged, accompanied by the assumptions that a connection to nature was a necessary and positive act that had been lost and whose subsequent pursuit needed no further interrogation or explanation. The explicit, particular ‘connecting’ happening in my fieldwork seemed to render the non-specificity of the phrase redundant. Only my eccentric neighbour in Venice, Francesco, the cast-out, melancholic, gondolier hinted at another, dangerous ‘un-heeding’ face to nature. ‘The thing I like about Venice’ he said ‘is that it’s completely city. It has nothing to do with nature and that’s why people like it, they feel safe in it, because nature is inhospitable, nature is savage’ (Francesco, field diary). It was returning to my frustration with this phrase, trying to come to terms with it that this section really came about. Grappling with it, it became apparent that connection to nature was a catch-all-phrase that didn’t begin to hint at the areas of alienation, isolation, repair, control and (re)narration that were unfolding. Describing nature, the producers within this research variously nominated it as ‘everywhere’, ‘unfamiliar’, ‘a part of us’, ‘a teacher’, ‘a resource for transformation’, ‘something we could lose’, ‘something we have to seek out’, ‘a necessity’, ‘missing’; there were the ‘laws of nature’, and there was nature to be pacified, ordered (field diary). Marco distills this into “there are many ways to live nature” (Track 2). This fragmented sense of nature hints at multiple areas of connection and disconnection. What this research was able to encounter were less narrated areas of rupture and repair, beneath surface narratives, those not so easily named: the relationships between the senses; the particular relationships with place and plants; the entangled connections between person and people, people and place, place and world.

In 2018, at the Royal Geographical Society, I went to hear a paper on the connection between nature and well-being (Bates and Singer, 2018). The speakers were investigating and advocating the importance of ‘connecting to nature’—particularly beyond the visual—for health; and yet they were struggling too. When they asked their participants to describe the benefits of being ‘in nature’ they were unable to get past references to fresh air, the pleasure of smelling flowers and freshly mown grass (ibid). What was more audible in the presentation of their findings so far, was their their participants’ *estrangement* from nature rather than their purported connection with it. ‘Connection to nature’ is complicated to narrate because it is only experienced through connections of particularity that can go unheard within the generality and vastness of this phrase. The connections unfolding through food production were not only about pleasure and healing, they were filled with fatigue, hurt, uncertainty, other types of alienation. Relation is messy, it is not simplistically good nor straightforwardly negative.

> "The people were different to me but, *ecco*—here, this another thing about working in these environments, working with nature like this in these landscapes gives you a sense of shared-ness with other people. You find yourself really with this shared underlying fabric. Of exchange, of really sharing at the level of work, yes, but also of that which you live. [..] Even on the old farm on Vignole [another lagoon island] where [another producer] used agricultural methods that made my skin crawl and brought me out in goosebumps, nevertheless the *feeling* itself you recognise, you share it—we even became affectionate towards each other because you come face-to-face and you know each other through that, in that passion. And that happened to me frequently, finding this communication. It's a job that kills you too for which, that too, the *exertion*, you see it: the face distorted with the strain, the sweat of the effort, the heat er, *c'é*—that is, you share a physical condition, no? Of odour, of exhaustion, of [heaves a sigh] but this too, means that, when you stop to drink a glass of water—phew—it's pleasing to you, it's pleasing to them, oof, you share the gentle breeze that refreshes you, the sky, those are also things that you share, those are beautiful moments" (Maria-Sole, Track 3).

Certain feelings, meanings that don't quite precipitate into precise wording during practice, can find the space to do so in life story narratives. Whilst some positives and negatives of food production were explicit in the doing, the relationship between states of health and harm, satisfaction and stress were nuanced, complicated and contextualised through narrative. Narrative can re-story practice or show up tensions in understanding. Meaning cannot be located solely in language or in practice, for sense making unfolds through a combination of the two.

This section got beneath accepted, but insufficiently considered, areas of alienation: from nature and from each other (James and Rose, 2017), to reveal the ways in which these producers were (re)relating and re-narrating their relationship with the world through the immediacies of their own bodies and plots in food production.

When we examine how specific material, affective, storied realms are put into relation, it becomes clear that connections are cultivated or neglected according to changing priorities, changing forms of attention. Different orientations lead to different means of relating. For instance, Maria-Sole is concerned with the breakdown in communication between sensory webs; Ernesto the continuing of a practice; Bella towards the control of whole processes. Depending on the direction of their orientation, these individuals notice, build networks, facilitate attention, care. All of these happenings could be glossed by the phrase 'connection to nature' without hinting at the substance and particularity of those relationships and actions that sustain them. Whilst practices of repair through food production might be ongoing, these newly un-alienated areas of relation and narration are patchy. When we orientate towards something we are also orientating ourselves away: including and excluding.

If we track the roots of our etymology we move from *humanitus*, back through *humando* (burying), to *hummus* meaning earth (Macfarlane, 2019:30; drawing on Harrison, 2003:xi). But the Anthropocene brings new meaning to this relationship: the human story recorded in things, buried and preserved by the earth (cf. Altman, 2014 who parallels waste dumped in the earth with waste within her body). Whilst in the Anthropocene our relationships with 'nature' take on a different urgency, this section has responded to Macfarlane's call for the need 'for fresh vocabularies and narratives that might account for the kinds of relation and responsibility in which we find ourselves entangled' (2016:np). What these stories have

shown, and call for in answer, is a re-orientation: from our intangible relationship with nature, to our everyday relationships, the domains where ruptures are encountered and repaired.

Shifting our attention from alienation from nature, to an alienation from place or process or body, shifts the geographies of both consideration and action.

15

# ARCHIVE : APPLES

16

# T R A N S L A T I N G | T R A N S C R I B I N G | (T H E S I S) W R I T I N G

Translating

*Tussling Over Words*

*Leaking In | Leaking Out*

———————————————-

Transcribing

*What Have You Saved?*

*Against The Transcript | For Transcription*

———————————————-

(Thesis) Writing

*Means of Crafting*

*Intermediary Zones*

Translating, transcribing and writing a thesis. On first appearance, the areas discussed in this section all exist in the realm of the text. This section, however, disturbs the ease of those categories whilst laying bare the processes involved in this research. It shows how translating, transcribing and writing all came about through experimentation, in relationship and dialogue with experience.

| Translating

'The word 'translation' comes, etymologically from the Latin 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained' (Rushdie, 1991:17).

'A good writer, like a good reader has a mind's ear….writers need to train their mind's ear to listen, [..] to hear as they write' (Le Guin, 1998:16). Although Le Guin is talking about writing skill, this sentiment is something I try to follow with translation, to translate what I hear, not just the words but a sense of the person speaking them, the flow, the narrative, how it felt as well as the words themselves. The point is not to make something an easy read (Temple, 2013:101) it is to valorise the texture of language, its feel and the capacity for feel to carry as much meaning as, and more emotion than, the individual words themselves. Languages are put together differently, they move differently, and so to stay close may, ironically, involve re-forming, approaching from a different starting point[1]. Translation is a realm I grappled with in my Bachelor's degree[2], and my first time living abroad (in Italy). Translating texts took on more meaning once I'd had the experience of trying to translate myself, my character, my voice into another language and cultural context. If I struggled to translate these things, how could I translate other people's words when their words were the only clue I had to their feelings, intentions, sense-of-self?

'*It is difficult but important to grasp that much of the business of understanding spoken language is a task of interpretation, not of hearing in the physical sense. To take a simple example, in spoken language there are no aural breaks between words, no silences that those little blank white spaces on a page purport to represent*' (Maitland, 2008:98).

Whilst in certain circumstances translation is understood as subservient to authorship (Simon, 1996), translating also wields power of interpretation. These hierarchies introduce ethical dimensions into translation. This exists in translating texts from one language to another, but also '[t]he very act of research places the researcher in a position of power in representing others through language and in the interpretation of the meanings other people give to their lives' (Smith, 1996:163). It struck me that I wouldn't have had a section on translation had I not had a 'foreign language' aspect to my research. 'Translation' though, as Simon states, 'has to do with loss of boundaries, loss of control', so in this way, all participants, despite language, are to an extent losing control of the way in which they are interpreted (ibid:135).

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[1]This is the reason that automatic translators—translating each individual word literally, and at times, in isolation—can do their job and still entirely lose the meaning.

[2] It was a strange degree in many ways, living as it did in two universities and three different departments: one of literature already written (in English), one of foreign 'modern' languages (Italian) and the third of writing. Modules on translation, poetics and non-fiction writing created a dialogue between them.

Thinking about the translation issues I might face in Italy made questions of interpretation within my mother tongue more audible. This made me attentive to my exchanges in English and brought a greater reflexivity to the way in which I created field dairies. Rather than considering them unmediated material I could see that this form of recording was 'faithful' to experience, and yet also already a translation and transformation of experience into a different (selective and creative) form. Though my fieldwork conversations were in English, Neil and Emily, Ben and Bella were already, inevitably, becoming translated. After conversations or exchanges of interest, I either noted them down with pen and paper or recorded myself re-creating that conversation. To distinguish between speech from life story interviews and speech from fieldwork I have used double quotation marks for the former, and single for the latter. Whilst I returned to check my understanding of words and phrases with my Italian interviewees, I also checked some of my representations of conversations in English to decrease the possibility of having put words into my participants mouths different to the ones they themselves had used. Whilst I clarified the sense of some words and phrases with my Italian participants, as none of them spoke English they could only make clear their meaning in Italian but could never agree or disagree with my translation of that meaning into English.

*Tussling Over Words*

Understanding in Italian is different from translating from Italian into English. With growing familiarity of a language, understanding becomes swift practice, but *translation* suggests sharing what's going on in one context, in another. It is not enough to understand. Translation suggests selecting a word—from a raft of English words of subtle semantic gradation—that will allow understanding to travel. Sometimes that's easy, 'second nature' but sometimes, the lack of linguistic equivalence means that to allow a word to travel, the meaning of an entire story must be re-considered. Words, literal and figurative, do not stand alone but are thronged by connotations that have knock-on consequences for meaning. But that meaning is not just at stake in cross-lingual translation—if our words are 'marinated in memory', in the soup of our own associations, meaning is never fully shared, heard or replicated (Poet W, cited in Mort, 2015:208). To translate in any way is to choose one interpretation among other possibilities.

With my Italian interviews, the process was translation on top of transcription, a changing of form, from spoken to written, from Venetian and Italian to English. A 'tricky business', a process of 'thoughtful interpretation' (Andrews, 1995:49). Rejecting a conception of translation as an innocent bridge easily connecting two equivalent points across a divide (for what if there is no counterpart directly opposite?), is to understand that the position of translating is a hierarchical one with ethical implications. Translation conceived of as a journeying through, rather than a hopping over the difficult terrain, acknowledges the process of translation as gathering texture in sense, affect and sensory realms. Something is gained (Rushdie, 1991), but there is also the possibility that we emerge somewhere completely different. This does not dilute 'truth' but recognises that it is produced anew through process, it has had to travel and transform and in doing so has become a hybrid thing, a collaborative thing.

Transcribing interviews first into Italian and then translating them into English felt like removing both the speaker and myself from the translation. It became flat. More of a bridging than a journeying through. It was hard to remember the *way* that those words had been said, to remember where the word had set out from. And so, having tried both, I translated my interviews simultaneously, listening in Venetian and Italian and writing directly in English which, to my ear, sustained the sense of something spoken to a greater degree.

Simultaneous translation leads with feel, and, allows the translator to bring the weight of their relationship with the speaker to bear on their understanding and translation of their narrative. In this case, through the combination of methods, there is a significant relationship and shared practice that necessarily has an effect on understanding. Heart and gut play a role in this form of translation. Herein lies both its strength and its limitation. Anyone wanting to use the transcripts other than the original translator must trust the transcript-in-translation or return to the oral accounts. Whilst transcripts are undoubtedly a great aid in navigating the overwhelming volume of life story interviews, a lot of texture is lost in the translation, not between languages, but between oral to written form. Therefore *not* having two transcripts—in two different languages—helps prevent any greater distance between forms than is necessary. Whilst having an English transcript of each life story kept these stories whole, it also encouraged me to treat the interviews always as an oral rather than a written source. Rather than rely on the transcripts for sense, I have always returned to the recordings.

In both my transcripts and my thesis, I have left some word-level questioning open or overt. In cases where I wasn't sure which words would best carry meaning I've left 'other' possibilities within the text in brackets so that 'the reader can see how precarious and unstable the whole enterprise of interpretation actually is and how this instability of meaning [might] actually thicken meaning' (Taussig, 2006:viii). For example, during fieldwork I had heard Maria-Sole—a grower of medicinal plants—use the word *modalitá i*n a variety of ways. In section 14, talking about home-culture as a form of cure, she says that a sense of healing was drawn from a shared '*modalitá*'. I chose to translate it as modality, but left 'form', 'practice', 'ways', and 'mannerisms' in brackets. Whilst in English, modality perhaps isn't the automatic choice, it feels slightly jargon-y, not as smooth as it does in Italian and yet it hints at the other words. Maria-Sole studied linguistics as well as the movement of the body so it makes sense that she might engage a more 'technical' word. And yet, modality, for her, was about flow, about being, about moving: she used it a lot to talk of different worlds, and the theatre, so perhaps 'form' would have been a better choice in terms of its connotations and its sound. This is an example of the back-and-forth, 'tussling-over' which is the work of translation, but it breeds great familiarity with an interview and fosters attention.

Over more than nine months of working together I had heard the ideas of my Italian participants recounted in many forms and, more so, *participated* in the realisation and enactment of those ideas. Translating their words was not a decoding of a text, or a scripting of disembodied voices, but a part of sharing their lives and work and the world that they included me in. As Simon states '[t]he solutions to many of the translator's dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of

the way language is tied to local realities [..] and to changing identities' (1996:130). It is 'less to do with finding the cultural inscription of a term than in reconstructing its value' (ibid: 131). Meaning emerged from the words of the interviews themselves but already thick with the experience of practice that had so far accompanied them. Parts of the narratives, now formalised in a recording were ones common to me from the fields. Familiarisation ran in both directions in my relationships with each producer: we came to share a sense of each other, inhabiting the same skin of place and language and meaning for a while at least. The lessons I learnt in Bristol, as I have already mentioned, reinforced the importance of elongating the time I spent with my Italian participants by running fieldwork at each site over the whole period rather than separating them into blocks and pursuing them consecutively. The length of our relationships allowed for greater trust, and, I believe, a diminishing distance in the interpretative work of translation. In this way participatory methods thicken, enrich and change narrative methods, valuing the meaning arising in both elaborated and fragmented stories.

Tillmann-Healy's (2006) 'ethic of friendship' is perhaps risky in its concealment of the hierarchies and power reactions that are inevitably at work within the research context. It is worth noting, however, that friendship engenders trust relations and forms of responsibility that go beyond those distilled in the consent forms signed by my participants. Being able to 'reconstruct the value' contextualising the narratives in my hands, therefore, was an important part of respecting and sustaining those relationships as well as the job of translation (Simon, 1996:131).

*Leaking In | Leaking Out*

'Translation is a process of exploration of meaning, and as such must be attentive to the moments where meaning overflows what is said, where the words fall short' (Krzywoszynska, 2015:316).

Anna Krzywoszynska recounts a story from her doctoral work in Italian vineyards in which she videos a viticulturist explaining in Italian how to prune a vine. At night she translates his words into English but they remain meaningless to her. Returning to the video the words become part of a context where the viticulturist is also 'running his thumb up and down the pruned part of the vine, across the knots and scars of previous growth and cuts [hinting] at a world of knowledge beyond language' (Krzywoszynska, 2015:315). She describes the words in this scene as 'broken words' following Harrison (2007), and feels that those words are 'attempts' at speech where 'in telling we recognise that there is nothing there for us to recognise and when what is communicated is the failure of communication' (Harrison, 2007:591). At first she feels that if she could just understand the words she could understand the practice, but she comes to believe that 'the meaning of viti/vinicultural work was in its doing', that the 'words were not where the meaning was' (Krzywoszynska, 2015:315). Language, for Krzywoszynska, didn't hold the sense she was seeking: 'the meaning leaked out' (ibid).

My experience was slightly different to that of Krzywoszynska. As I describe in the case of digging, once I had translated the word, I thought that I *did* know the meaning of the verb *vangar*—to dig. Whilst the verb appeared self explanatory, however, without learning again how to dig in the particular, I would never have questioned my surface understanding of the word nor the complexity it belied. There wasn't

a moment where language was left behind and physical practice begun, rather words continued to be a part of that practice, one tool working among others. Among gestures, things and manual practices were also words. Rather than broken, words were only part of conveying meaning. Marchand dubs this 'dynamic syntax' (2010:s106). Whilst communication is not solely verbal, and the verbal not always primary, a combination of the words themselves, tone, the movements of the body and the dynamic between these and the material world and the things in it *communicate*. Rather than 'the emptiness of words' (Krzywoszynska, 2015:315), language was shown to be relational, not failing, but working—connecting. It didn't follow practice, or pre-exist it, but *co*-existed in it. Communication went beyond language, but language was not redundant to physical practice. Ernesto never articulated how digging mattered in a single narrative, rather it was articulated in a cobbled-together-fashion between bodies, forks, soil and sky in action-dialogue. In enacting digging, language remained meaningful within practice in two ways.

Firstly, language communicated pace, care, and attunement, created intimacy, reinforced Ernesto's role as teacher and grounded everything in the particularity of *Venezian*. '*Vanghemo*—we dig', made us a unit. Interjections: '*varda*—look', or '*cussí*—like this', guided my attention. Animated nouns populated the soil: '*budél*—"good" worm', '*xe ben, scoase lu ga rigorde*—it's good, rubbish that has memories'. Without having participated in the localised matter of digging, I still could have translated the word, but enacting it, I understood how it *mattered*. 'Dig' is still the word I would choose to translate this practice, but now I can story it. Without practice, the relationships within digging would have remained absent.

Secondly, our hours digging were an important time for Ernesto to recount stories that were produced out of and entwined into the practice of digging. These stories located digging in different narratives. Digging could no longer be considered as a practice in isolation but was shown to exist in dynamic relationship with issues of identity and place. Not only was it a physical-linguistic practice but one that enacted multiple ontologies of tradition. To repeat digging was to be reminded that knowledge is not a fixed thing to be passed from one person to another, but a state of knowing in 'constant flux, update and transformation' (Marchand, 2010b:s12). Each time was different, therefore the words that accompanied it were never articulating fixed things, rather, digging 'is a kind of "knowing in progress"' (ibid) always becoming.

Krzywoszynska eloquently captures the way in which meaning emerges out in the world, in doing: '*Capofrutto* and *sperone*[3]' she says 'were not significant because they were *named*, they were significant because they were *done*' (2015:316). 'The meaning of the word was not pre-existent; the words were not imposed on the world from the outside; they emerged from it' (ibid). I agree with Krzywoszynska that 'meaning overflows what is said', but rather than an experience in which words were revealed as 'empty', mine was to experience words as open. Digging *thickened* in the doing, through the relationships between the sensuous and the storied. *Doing* digging allowed more meaning to leak in.

[3] Parts of the vine: fruiting cane and spur.

Talking about practical skill Marchand states: ‘As with any sort of knowledge, the level of motor-based understanding is dependent on the individual’s experience and direct physical engagement in the activity. The more experience one has of an activity, the finer the detail ‘noticed’ and ‘grasped’ (2010:s104). Sharing work environments is to locate words within shared associative webs, through which our semantic understanding spreads. Working alongside people allows us to ‘construct more value’ when we translate words (Simon, 1996:131), because we have inhabited the same socio-linguistic context. For example, two people can smell a wine and both share the sense that it smells of vanilla. The more time spent in a vinous context, however, the more meanings vanilla gathers. For instance, you might learn that the smell is thanks to Vanillin, an aldehyde that imparts this taste to wine spending time in American oak. Specifically, the oak must be new in order to lend its aroma to the wine. From fact to speculation: new American oak barrels are costly so it brings with it associations of wealth —this was made by someone who can afford to keep replacing barrels. It might hint at the type of winemaker but also their customer. At the beginning of this century wine critic Robert Parker favoured concentrated, juicy, highly alcoholic wines, with a sweetness lent by the high ethanol and the oak barrel. Customers sought out his 100-point wines which demanded huge price tags, and winemakers began to tailor their efforts to ‘parker-ize’ their wines in order to move up the ranks. So, vanilla comes with baggage. In order not only to smell, but to understand the resonances of what we smell, time is needed for vocabulary to grow thickness.

Those webs of meaning that surround words are also highly context specific, subtly changing environment and the associations and connotations of words change too. With Ernesto, for instance, the smell of vanilla meant poison, intervention and contamination. This reminded me of a comment by Lave: ‘we are all apprentices, engaged in learning to do what we are already doing’ (2011:156). This involves language as much as it does practice. To hear, but also understand what’s going on in a work environment one must acquire the same resonances of vocabulary. Rather than ‘just words’ those words become deeply associated with the more ‘jagged relationship[s]’ at work within language and can be carried along in translation (Spivak, 1993:181) In this sense, working practically alongside the producers I interviewed becomes an ethical project as a well as curious one.

In the end, both Krzywoszynska and I acquired ‘skilled visions’ (Grasseni, 2004). For her, spurs and fruiting canes became visible where before had been an impenetrable tangle of vine matter, and for me digging became a complicated social, physical and ideological choreography where before there had been a simple verb. To become part of a ‘community of practitioners’ (ibid: 42), I had to come to dwell in a shared linguistic, visual and practical register with those with whom I was working; to understand words as irrevocably tied up with ways of being, belonging and knowing whilst, at the same time without ‘reducing what people know to what they say’ (Harris, 2007:13).

*What Have You Saved?*

Ernesto has a striking way of speaking, combining oratory, pedagogy and dramatic storytelling. He places words down very intentionally with a little pause between each word. When he talks of vines, and his wife Donatella interrupts, he increases the volume and the weight of the pauses. He mixes Venetian and Italian—Venetian coming heavily accented when he speaks emotionally. In the final part of his interview, for instance, a section on vines is delivered with an urgency that feels frenetic and yet sags with what is perhaps a tone of resignation. He is trying to deliver a message, and whilst it is the same message that he has delivered during work, and moves through many of the same emotions—protectiveness, pride, precarity, urgency, fear, anger, love, gratitude, it also carries a vocal signature of the moment in which it was given. Before the interview, Ernesto had collapsed bleeding while he waited for the water-bus. The interview was held before he had received the medical reassurance that would subsequently arrive—but the couple were in an uncertain and uncomfortable limbo which imposed a sense of frailty they were unaccustomed to. They had just been to visit the owner of their plot to pay the money for its lease, which, whilst the plot had been managed for generations by Donatella's family, has also brought to the surface their uncertainty for its future. Palpable in the interview is their attachment to the plot, their fear of a lack of continuity. Adding to the pressure is their understanding of themselves as repositories of cultural knowledge, their lack of an interested family member to take over their work and their distrust of the agricultural practices growing around them.

In section 9,  I relayed Ernesto's powerful listing of the things he had 'saved', before turning to the deficiencies of others. The extract below is what came next, directed at people who graft their vines. (Although I didn't produce transcripts in Venetian/Italian I've included English and Venetian here to gesture towards the production of a transcript as a double transformation in form and language). The translation moves differently to the original language and yet, the English transcription in isolation reminds me, both of the time of transcribing and the interview itself. The interview had been difficult. Whereas I had imagined the avenues of recounting that Ernesto would make audible, Donatella was overbearing, cutting in, cleaning up, contradicting. But she wouldn't allow us a private space because of the fear of another collapse. It was the very end of my time in Venice, the winter days were short and Donatella was keen that they catch the *vaporetto*—the water-bus home. But Ernesto didn't want to stop. He was sat very close to me, and in this emphatic delivery on vines, he sat bolt upright, hands shaking slightly. The extract above was delivered as a crescendo, staccato in Venetian, his mouth forming the words almost violently. It was enveloping, moving, upsetting. I wonder now, about my own emotions. Partly I feared for him and was sad to leave him. Partly I wondered if it was ok doing the interview around impassioned and stressful topics—despite his desire to do it *and* whilst wanting him to go on. And partly—perhaps—I felt guilty, knowing, if I were ever to plant vines, I would surely graft them to escape phylloxera.

| | |
|---|---|
| “Cossa ti ti te<br>GA<br>*salvati* nella tua vita!?<br>Cossa ti te ga *salvá*!? | “What have<br>YOU<br>*saved* in you life!?<br>What have you *saved*!? |
| Cossa ti te ga su..sul..sulla…sulla natura<br>cossa ti te ga salvá!?” | What have you i..i..in..in nature<br>what have you saved?” |

(Ernesto, Track 3)

Whilst it’s a simple representing of his words, were it embedded in a block of transcript-prose as: “What have you saved in your life!? What have you saved!? What have you in nature, what have you saved?”, would I still remember it? It’s already hard to maintain the same feeling of emphasis in translation because in Venetian, distinct from if it had been uttered in Italian, the words finish bluntly and the weight is in the end of the word, all the force hitting there. (Emphasis also comes through from the inclusion of the first ‘ti’ in ‘ti ti te ga’, which pointedly includes more direction onto the person rather than letting the verb indicate it. It’s the difference in Italian between ‘hai’ and ‘tu hai’—something we don’t have in English because the conjugations of our verbs rarely indicate who is carrying them out—you always have to define it ‘you have’ because ‘have’ alone tells us less). The tone changes dramatically after these sentences: Ernesto’s voice deflates and turns very soft. “We’re not normal, we’re not interested in money, [..] the first thing for me is to go to the doctor tomorrow and for him to say that everything's alright. If I have a, something—my world will fall in, fall down. [..] Our family, the Finotello, Vio, our family, we saved the *Dorona*. Others appropriated the story, others profited from it, but we saved it” (Ernesto Track 3). I treated the two parts of this extract differently because they were spoken differently, the latter half returning to a more prose-like flow.

A limitation of this written thesis is its dependency on text. A future avenue for this work would be to make these spoken accounts more audible, not just through access to them in an archival home, but to showcase their orality / aurality. Nevertheless, it is the distinctive textures, as heard in life story interviews and experienced in everyday life that direct attentiveness, therefore leading to argument, which ultimately makes emphasis re-hearable in different form.

*Against the Transcript | For Transcription*

In the section on different forms of listening I spoke of the importance of the orality of the interviews, of what is lost or sacrificed or altered in transcription. As Michael Frisch has said: ‘the quick transition from engaging with oral material to engaging only with it in textual form is oral history’s “Deep Dark Secret”’ (2008:223). ‘[T]he shift from voice to text is extensive and controlling’, and yet as Frisch says, there is an overwhelming culture that only in flattened, textual form, can analysis be effective, despite our understanding that meaning lies in the telling as much as in the words told (ibid). During this research, the transcript never replaced the recording as a primary resource. Whilst the transcribed text of

‘The spoken word can very easily be mutilated when it is taken down in writing and transferred to the printed page [..] People do not usually speak in paragraphs [..] Continuity, and the effort to impose it even when it violates the twist and turns of speech, is another insidious influence’ (Samuel, 1972:19).

the spoken word becomes a shadow-y companion, nonetheless, I found much to be gained from the *act* of transcription as a means of actively engaging with the interviews’ orality, rather than forsaking it. The ‘Deep Dark Secret’ is increasingly grappled with.

Conducting an interview is a very different form of listening—as I have discussed—it is, in many ways to become the listener that the speaker needs. ‘In solitude’ however, as Bennett says ‘you don’t need to make an impression on the world, so the world has some opportunity to make an impression on you’ (2015:np). The act of transcribing and listening back allows you to notice differently, there are no longer two bodies set in relation to each other, you can forget yourself completely, no-one is watching. Through the conscious attempt to reconstruct the ‘value’ of the life of those words impressions change, develop, macerate, become (Simon, 1996:131). Whilst transcription can feel like a betrayal of the spoken word, it can also, more generously feel like another form of participation, a time of ‘engaged immersion’ (Smart et al. 2014:7), or ‘deep listening’ (Madison, 2005:35).

It was only undertaking the transcription process that I began to understand that it is not a neutral exercise, and therefore, acknowledging this, it took me a while to figure out what form of transcription would fit best with the life story interviews I was listening to. First of all I began transcribing my interviews following the conventions that were requested by the British Library—where my interviews in English will be housed following my PhD. Before my PhD, working with interviews from National Life Stories, I had mainly used summaries (produced by many authors/interviewers), rather than transcripts of the recordings. Whilst at times I had found summaries to be a frustratingly inadequate tool for navigating the oral accounts, I hadn’t considered that each transcriber was adding his or her interpretative ‘thumbprint’ to either summary or transcript (Abrams, 2010:165), or what that meant for me as a transcriber[4]. Tedlock, who practices ‘ethnopoetics’ suggests that we ‘treat the relationship between performance and text as a field for experimentation’ (ND:np) and this reminds me of Mills (1959:211) and his assertion that the sociological imagination must be playful. Slowly, transcription became a time of both remembering and experimenting.

Different researchers have formed various strategies to put the act of transcription to work: as a means of dwelling more among the words, of paying attention to the detail within the whole, or as a form of reflecting on the performance that is part of spoken accounts. Riessman (1993, 2001) argues that transcription is an important part of analysis, and I agree with her that the attentive nature of

[4] Unlike many oral historians I first worked with interviews, and their summaries or transcripts not created by me but by other people. Struggling with these written forms as ‘ways in’ to the National Life Stories archive undoubtedly influenced the way I approach my own. Summaries particularly, varied widely in style and extent of imposed interpretation, often unintentionally concealing what was recounted and reflecting the particular lens through which the original researcher was approaching the interview. Whilst summaries can be an essential help in navigating the bulk of these interviews, it is important to acknowledge that the way something is summarised can lead to a surface appraisal of recordings and their dismissal rather than to deeper listening.

transcribing can make different connections audible. However the cut and paste technique Riessman uses to group transcript material into thematic ‘stanzas’ and ‘scenes’ quickly bypasses the messy interconnections of narrative (ibid) (See also Gee, 1986 who was the original inspiration for Riessman). As ‘transcriptions are themselves theory-laden’, it is a decision about how to pay attention, and I wanted to stick with the nuance forged through those narrative tangents and layers (Riessman, 2001:707).

Rather than producing only dense blocks of prose, organised and punctuated by imposed grammar, I found the ethnopoetic practice of letting speech flow from line to line following its delivery, in a style more akin to poetry than prose the most effective (and affective) form of keeping a feel for the spoken story. As Bornat (2018) says, as soon as we impose a grammar on ethnographic work, or on life-stories, originally spoken aloud—although it is impossible *not* to do this—we transform them. But this grammar-of-sorts, this spilling from line to line, still follows the contours and pace of recounting. Paying attention to the ‘[n]atural lyricism and poetical rhythms [..] inherent in the human voice’ (Foster, 2018:113) creates a place of appreciation for ‘the artistry [..] of the act of describing’ (Madison, 2005:35). Other practices undertaken by ‘ethnopoets’, which attempt to get closer to orality, for me distance the spoken word in the attempt to represent volume, intonation, direction. However, whilst ethnopoetic techniques highlight transcription problems and politics, ultimately their complexity ‘fails to solve the basic problem that orality can never be adequately conveyed in print’ (Thomas and Bornat, 2017:344). I also realised that I couldn’t transcribe the sixty plus hours of interviews that I had in this manner because they were already unwieldy and large. And also, to present all extracts from interviews in this way within the thesis would make it equally ungainly. Engaging this technique to re-think, to dwell more, however, often helped me to contemplate the sense of what was being said. Where it assists in drawing attention to meaning or emotion I have also included quotes in this form within the thesis. It was important for me to challenge and play with the conventional transcript because otherwise the familiarity of prose form quickly forgets the voice that produced it and conceals the transformative process it has undergone. Different means of transcribing pull at our attention in different ways.

Whilst experimenting with transcription, I often drew on the techniques of Helen Foster (2018). Foster is a fiction writer who uses existent oral histories as a source of coming-to-know and inspiration, to start from a human point and thread human voice into her work. She eschews existing transcripts but not transcription itself, pulling out sections of speech, giving them more room to breathe, allowing them to be considered in their own right. ‘I am not just listening for information’ she says, ‘but for inspiration […] seeds of ideas’ (2018:113).

Although Foster is creatively building upon interviews, her techniques of framing fragments of speech are a reminder to re-focus attention on the driver of the movement of the narrative, on the motifs. The question is whether it enlivens material or pacifies it. In her outreach work (she also works for an oral history archive) Foster uses digital slides with black backgrounds and text that enters the frame and dissolves alongside edited-down sound clips. I am wary, however, of editing out. Often, what is considered ‘irrelevant detritus’—the less than linear storytelling—its idiosyncrasies, hesitations and tangents, turn out to be emotionally significant (Bornat, 2010:50). The reason I chose to record life story

interviews rather than shorter, more subject-specific interviews was to acknowledge the relational nature of meaning-making beyond the frame of any particular research focus. Whilst I prefer not to sanitise speech into convenient sound bites, I was drawn to Foster's use of framing to accentuate—the black boxes are directly inspired by her work. I came to see this as a practice of pausing to hear small stories. The extract above from Ernesto—akin to the fiction of Lydia Davis (2009)—holds a story in so few words.

Here are two examples of experimenting with imposing different 'grammars'.

Artisans are really
**great** with their
**hands**
**good** with his
**hands**
he's able to
**do it**
**naturally**
he's
**not aware**
of holding it
my
**hands**

But doesn't know how to
**explain**
He wouldn't know how to
**tell**
It's very **difficult**
for an artisan
to **pass on** his teachings
Only **with great difficulty** can they
**recount**
It's with **difficulty** that they
**explain**
their ways

we
we wanna **make** stuff
because we wanna **make**
we wanna **make**
stuff **good**
because
we wanna **make** it

and we're lucky enough not to
to feel like we've got the time and space
to not just CHURN out
um CHURN out
something

The bottom two squares are verbatim from my interview with Bella, a Bristol-based cider maker and brings attention to her and Ben's making set in opposition to the pace and scale of the industrial other. The top two squares are non-contiguous extracts from Stefano's interview, following an approach favoured by Riessman (1993). They group together narrative fragments of Stefano's around ideas of the artisan's hands, bodily skill as natural, or cognitively unaware contrasted with the inability of the artisan to story his work, to remove it from the body or to narrativise it for transmission.

One of the reasons I quickly rejected Riessman's approach was that I found it over-exaggerated chosen themes and encouraged attention away from moments that didn't fit. I didn't want to segregate ideas that emerged together into separate themes but consider them as one, more complicated, story. After compartmentalisation it is too easy to forget how ideas were related and that these are not true oppositions. As an exercise, however, it helped me recognise what I was losing in this 'neatening up' process. Whilst these fragments make explicit some of the oppositions set up within the narratives, they conceal a lot too. It is easy for our thematic groupings not just to reflect what is being said but also what we expect to hear.

Amalgamating bits of Stefano's speech, a suggestion emerges in the top squares, that embodied feel, 'bodily knowledge' cannot be fully verbalised, and yet, it divides it from a more complicated story of subjective and emplaced knowledges and different forms of articulation. Rather than being seduced by fragments that reinforce each other, returning to those spoken stories returns us to the more complex context of meaning and mattering. There is similar fragmentation going on in the verbatim squares from Bella and yet, to me, these don't make such an easy argument, they feel like a beginning of inquiry rather than having a forgone conclusion. Who is churning? How is what they do different? What qualities of making resist churning out? Certainly, alone it doesn't do much work, but it can be a way in.

In summary, I am wary of transcripts and their ability to replace spoken accounts. The act of transcribing however, can be a valuable undertaking of attentiveness and of getting to know a life story better. Instead of assuming a conventional imposition of grammar on life stories, a lot can be gained from working out strategies that best allow us to (re)hear and dwell in the meaning of what is said and how.

*Means of Crafting*

‘You think: I could get to hate these people; and then: I can never do these people justice; and finally; I shall never get it done’ (Steedman, 2001:18).

John Law challenges the ability of social science methods to cope with encountering a world of ‘mess, confusion and relative disorder’, where ‘much of the world is vague, diffuse, or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn’t really have much pattern at all’ (2004:2). This is as applicable to methods of interpreting fieldwork experience as it is to the ways in which we go about encountering the world in the first place. If we ‘move away from methods understood as formal procedures and tools’ and instead undertake an ‘artisanal approach’ to research (Harris, 2007:12), then we also need to find forms of analysis and writing ‘which evoke the texture of experience’, not separate from experience but managing to integrate it with theory and method (ibid: 2). As Stefano described it, artisans have to invent and to adapt, to cobble-together and to maintain an attitude of both broad and narrow attentions.

My experiments in transcription foreshadowed, and continued to unfold alongside the coding process. Initially I went about the ‘coding’ method standard within my department (Jackson, 2001), although, following Jackson (who is also my supervisor) I opted for the more tactile and analogue means of pen and paper notation. Coding was useful in its immersed engagement with transcripts, photographs and field notes, initially gathering the different voices, experiences and places together. But it also left the oral recordings behind and, in its fragmenting of material, the texture of experience became estranged.

In comparison to Jackson (ibid) where he describes finding abstraction difficult to delay, an instinctive reaction to reading, I found it hard to increase the level of abstraction. Not wanting the elliptical forms of sense-making to be straightened out, I didn’t move far, or I found myself making one step forward and then two back, trying to retain nuance. Following Jones (2015), and Law (2004), I found that coding ultimately couldn’t cope with ‘the ephemeral, the indefinite and the irregular’ (ibid: 4). Akin to Riessman’s techniques of transcription, imposing separation didn’t suit the stories I had in front of me. Coding took multiplicity, complexity and ‘distorted it into clarity’ (ibid: 2). I no longer recognised the plots, people and practices I had come to know. Talking about the importance of keeping primary material in existence as a check and balance on interpretation (in this case he is referring to field notes) Taussig criticises social science research for abstracting too far (2011:49). Much scholarship, he says, ‘turns out to be telling other people’s stories without realising that’s what [is being] doing, and telling them badly [..]—because, like drawing, such stories are seen as mere steps toward the Greater Truth of the Abstraction” (ibid). Fearing reductiveness, and in attempting to avoid my own ‘bad’ storytelling on the route to abstraction, I was often drawn, in my first period of writing, to allow the voices in this research to tell the story themselves, not to tinker and intervene. I began to understand, however, that I was also failing to bring them into productive conversation with the work going on between scholars (Pink, 2009).

Despite fieldwork being a reflective and analytical time, as well as a practical and narrative one, when I began the translation of that experience into writing I wasn't sure where I was going. As Bennett said 'I began to write—not to make sense of things, the opposite in fact. I wrote in order to keep rationality and purpose at bay, to prolong and bask in the rhythmic chaos of existence, and luxuriate in the magnificent mystery of everything' (2015:np). Within this enchantment of writing, however, I began to realise that I was ill-equipped to make my way through this whirling mass. 'Just as [the writer] trundles papers, books, pencils, documents untidily from room to room, he creates the same disorder in his thoughts. They become pieces of furniture that he sinks into, content or irritable' (Adorno, 1978:87, cited in Back, 2014:72).

In order to deal with the complicated way in which my research participants made sense by relating vastly different spheres of experience or, nuancing and storying the tiniest detail, I followed their lead, and returned to finding my way through these research encounters using story, following stories. Rather than simply finding a way back into those existing stories and getting stuck there, I began gathering stories together: not abstracting the producers' stories into more theoretical codes, but still putting them to work, juxtaposing them, interweaving them, a messier means of 'coding', a crafting of new stories. 'You must cling' Mills said 'to such [..] notions, if they are yours, and you must work them out' (1959:212). There is a rigour in the bringing together of what is systematic and instinctual Jones says; in fact, he goes so far as to argue that it is the only productive means of exploration (2015:5-6, Jones' argument follows Sebald, 2007). Furthermore it creates space for the 'interplays of process' that the researcher is 'subject to' (and, I would add, that the researcher subjects their research experience to) to be 'expressed not simply represented' (Jones, 2015:6). This extends the idea of multiple stories-so-far, different forms of story: experiential and theoretical unfolding and coming into relationship with each other. In this manner, I avoided ever turning to sound-bites for help, or reducing this research to them. Ultimately this did much of the work coding does, to find ways of moving through mass; I simply did this at the level of stories rather than sentences.

This change in vocabulary and perspective helped me to open up routes of sense. I could hear more again, montage became fruitful. Things flowed, became dialogues. Not reducing too fast also helped me leave open interconnections between seemingly disparate pieces of experience or narrative whose meaning or relationship only became clearer through writing. In this way I hope to maintain rather than distort the nebulous, multiple, affective-material realms I encountered and participated in, whilst crafting a narrative connection between the realms of experience and theory. These stories attempt not just to use theory to make sense of experience but vice versa. Abstractions abound in literature but it was experience that determined which abstractions would become storied. Being led by the stories encountered, rather than approaching fieldwork or analysis with categories of story already in mind, created sections that are rather more heterogenous. Each section attempts to humanise an otherwise more abstract concept: place, alienation, tradition. Gathering stories of practice at Ernesto's plot with theoretical stories of multiplicity, desire and cruel optimism, for instance, brought new light into how tradition might be understood, not as a general and locatable category but as always particular. In fact it was keeping things together that appeared to clash that allowed that thinking to unfold.

Storying too is selective, interpretative, and partly led by my instinct, and partly by what seemed both important to this work as a whole as well to the idiosyncrasies of particular experience. To story was to understand that there could have been other stories taken (DeSilvey, 2007), that this work is speculative rather than comprehensive but nonetheless works to make audible paths of understanding 'noisy, fallible, and biased though [they] may be' (Campbell, 1975:191). Neither the way in which I went about encountering the world, nor the means by which I interpreted it could lead to an objective, singular or universal truth, but nor could it lead to sterile representation. In trying to craft stories that bring experience into contact with theoretical ones, I am still in apprenticeship. I found it difficult. My aim is to make these people and their productive world 'alive in the writing' (Narayan, 2012).

*Intermediary Zones*

'I hoped that by insisting on its contingent relation to both "art and reality, or intentionality and circumstance"— that is, by positioning description in and as the intermediary zone between them—I could open a space through which a person might step. In or out' (Hejinian, 2000:200).

'If you are going to get at the humanity of people' Mitchell Duneier says, 'you can't just have a bunch of disembodied thoughts that come out of subject's mouths in interviews without ever developing characters and trying to show people as full human beings' (Duneier and Back, 2006:554). It is also necessary to acknowledge that the written individuals in this thesis are a product of the research undertaken, shaped by my writing choices but also by my subjective experience in the field. 'Moving in or through a given place, the body imports its own emplaced past into its present experience' (Casey 1987:194). This impacts not only how place is experienced but the relationships unfolding there, and my ability to express their 'humanity'.

This thesis is written in a variety of ways and, in the same vein as the photographs, not all of the writing tries to do the same thing. Responding to Duneier's plea for social scientists to let people be seen as 'complex human beings' within ethnographic writing (ibid: 553), I have experimented with ways of bringing people across. I hope to combine that 'capacity to shift from one perspective to another' (Mills, 1959:211), maintaining a sense that individuals are '[a]ll the same—that is, human. Each one different —that is, in themselves [..] : a community of exceptions' Finkielkraut (2001:80). Sometimes, trying to evoke the rhythm of the voice, the feeling of expression, I have included long unbroken extracts. At other times I have employed the opposite tack as in my introduction to Maria-Sole in section 14 to try to make audible the *exchange*. Threading together verbatim extracts with concise paraphrasing, punctuating the resulting text with 'she says', and interspersing Maria-Sole's words with my observations from the interview-moment itself, I wanted to capture the feeling of the time and context that the telling took place. This takes inspiration from the way Jensen (2018:np) portrays Helen Garner through the recounting of their interview. Both are techniques at trying to keep hold of the way in which these narratives were given to me. In my re-telling of a story of Marco's (section 12), I have combined these two in an effort to maintain the feeling of storying performed. Retaining a reader's attention is a different matter altogether than to keeping a listener's. Contraction, therefore is employed to keep flow and coherency, rather than through any desire to cut the context of these extracts.

Writing cannot re-create experience, nor does the writing of a thesis set out to do this exactly. As Pink has said: ‘ethnographers rely on both memory and imagination [..] to create what we might call ethnographic places’ (Pink, 2009:38). They are crafted stories of place. Just as the places written into being in this research are not the same as those encountered out in the world, I also cannot hope to portray these producers as ‘full human beings’ because this would be to exaggerate the capacity of fieldwork. What I am able to share in writing is a sense of how those months of work and story were through my own experience, and my interpretation of what matters. My knowing of these individuals is embedded in plots and practices and produced through our relationship. I am entangled and productive of this partial knowing and understanding.

# 17

# CRAFTING PLACE

*‘“But which is the stone that supports the bridge?” Kublai Khan asks.*

*“The bridge is not supported by one stone or another,” Marco [Polo] answers, “but by the line of the arch that they form.”*

*Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: “Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me.”*

*Polo answers: “Without stones there is no arch.”’*
*(Calvino, [1972]1997:74).*

In considering place, this section builds on a long and intellectually rich and varied tradition in geography. Continuing the direction of this research it occupies itself with individuals’ particular relationships with place through plots, and the question of how food production crafts place: directly, and unexpectedly.

Juxtaposition or ‘critical constellation’ (Benjamin, [1928]1997:351) work to convey the feeling of coming into contact with place: its plurality, as always unfolding and unfinished. DeSilvey has said of these efforts of constellation that the illumination they make possible ‘works in strange ways’, dissipating and reconfiguring elsewhere (2007:404). In this case my aim is that the illumination of place becomes configured out of the cumulative resonances of various recountals—put into proximity.

By gathering together different stories, this structure suggests some of the ‘strange’ interplay unfolding between the concrete and the contingent, the crafted and the elusive in the subjective experience of place. Furthermore, as the places formed in writing about them, are not, as Pink has said ‘real’—nor existing solidly elsewhere—then through this form I also gesture towards the relationship between experienced place and ‘ethnographic place’ (2009:42).

The Map of Stories

*'Nothing but air and water was seen for forty days'*

---

The Little Magician

*'Every place had its own little protector'*

---

Flavio's Curiosity Cloak

*'The lessons from the classroom they forgot after five minutes, but that they'd remember for a lifetime'*

---

The Cemetery Vineyard

*'Connected to the cosmos'*

---

A Thousand Gardens

*'The garden of memories, the garden of dens'*

---

Place as Craft

*'Substance, dignity and grace'*

---

Crafting Place as Problem Solving

*'Doorways are portals of communication'*

---

The Green Brigade

*'From those eyes, everything came out'*

---

Thigmomorphogenesis

*'You've got to stroke them y'know, so they know you're there'*

---

Dave the Robin

*'Dave [..] hangs about and then once in a while shits on something'*

‘What is the answer?’, Gertrude Stein continued to ask, and yet her final response was to ask again: ‘what is the question?’ (Toklas, 1963:173)

During my fieldwork, two maps were recounted to me. I saw neither of them in the flesh or in the making, but they were kindled, and grew within my imagination, accompanying my thinking about place. Two maps, drawn in Venice, more than five centuries apart.

Underneath the central courtyard of the now-abandoned, Camaldolese monastery on Venice’s cemetery island—San Michele—*Laguna nel bicchiere* make their wine. The first map was told to me there, by Carolina, a member of the Association. We were sitting in the gloomy-cool at the back of the vaulted cellars, bottling wines with a decrepit, hand-powered bottling machine that only functioned with the aid of a well positioned one cent coin. ‘Can you imagine?’ she asks me, ‘five and a half centuries ago, monks would have been down here, making wine in these barrels, tending the vines out there, just as we do’ (field diary). Above us, hanging over a beam are some monks’ habits, rigid, fossilised, reminders of the previous inhabitants. ‘And up there’, she says, pointing beyond the habits to the stone ceiling, ‘travellers were sitting up there, and Fra Mauro was drawing their stories into his map, a map of a world he only heard tell of, imagined from right here’ (field diary). The map stands eight feet high and stretches eight feet wide. Drawn in 1457 Fra Mauro’s Mappa Mundi now hangs in Venice's *Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana*[1] but it was drawn here, inside the monastery. The library above us, where Fra Mauro would have worked, mapping stories, is gutted, skeletal now.

It was only through the dependence of this little, green, bottling machine on one cent pieces that I started to notice how rare these coins have become in one’s spare change. When we could get our hands on one, their worth far exceeded their monetary value. The bottler, however, powered by a spring and a human arm would often send the essential one cent piece skittering away underneath a barrel to be hunted for in the dim, duskiness of the cellar. And so, accompanying this increasingly slow task was Carolina’s description of Fra Mauro and his map.

.. and on that island, where the north wind blows so fiercely that half of the island is submerged by water, is the footprint of Adam, encrusted with rubies… (Siebold, 2015)

Fra Mauro maps a mass of land and water dense with layers of drawings, but it is also dotted with thousands of inscriptions: stories, legends, objects, and fragments of experience recalled. His map was crafted out of the stories of travellers and traders moving through Venice at that time, coming to the monastery to recount their journeys. Its pictures, and the relationship of its land masses rise out of those words, out of those oral exchanges. One inscription relates ‘a crossing of the Sea of India towards the Isle of Men and Women’. It was 1420, aboard an ‘Indian Junk’ when the storm hit and ‘fortune deserted them. The boat was pushed out past ‘the Cape of Diab’ (Madagascar), out through ‘the Green Isles’ and ‘out into the Sea of Darkness on their way west and southwest, in the direction of Algarve. Nothing but air and water

[1] The map was closed for restoration for the whole period in which I was in Venice for fieldwork. Carolina was a museum curator, hence her in-depth knowledge of the map.

was seen for forty days and by their reckoning they ran 2,000 miles'. It took the sailors seventy days to return to their course (Siebold, 2015:np). As well as drawing on these descriptions to plot the longitudinal relationships between sea and land, Fra Mauro draws on the account for narrative plot. Just as they returned to their course the sailors encountered a Roc: a bird with a wing span of sixty paces who can carry away an elephant, and whose eggs are as large as a seven-gallon cask. The map combines topography with evocation. The path of a river and the voyage of a sailor; the dwelling and the movement of people; animals dreamt and existing; spices, dyes, precious stones and the names for the winds; the behaviour of fish and the variations of religion. It talks of myths that dwell in the present. It moves from the precise to the fantastical; from the exact dimensions of a lake to its waters; filled with honey washed from the hives by the rain and drunk from the banks like golden wine. Storied, narrative-signposts swim in the sea above the shadows of monsters and the forms of fish.

Superficially, cartography is the answer to a particular question: what's there? (or, in a different permutation: where's that?). But once we have a map does that answer the question or do we need to return, as Stein does 'to ask again, what is the question?'(Toklas, 1963:173). Do we begin to ignore the possibilities beyond the depicted symbols? Do we fall for a single story? Whilst superficially Fra Mauro's map seems to go beyond the singularity of topography in offering up a plurality of stories, relationships between landscape, people and things, it is easy to forget that it operates as a 'technology of power' (Harley, 1988a), constructing the world from a particular perspective, the voice of the teller is not automatically audible, not necessarily innocent (Crampton, 2001). Crampton speculates that maps record less about landscape than they do about perspective, about who holds power when. The answer to 'what's there?' (or where's that?), depends on who's talking. Harley (1988b) calls this the silences and secrecies of cartography that, listened to, might challenge the 'apparent honesty' of a map (Harley, 1989:3).

What Fra Mauro's map conceals is the other possibilities, the unheard stories. What all maps conceal is the continual becoming of place through time and the plurality of place itself (Pred, 1984, Massey, 2005).

*Place*

This thesis occupies itself immediately with place. Whilst the dynamics between space and place are made sense of variously in theory, the proposed divisions between them felt redundant to everyday experience. If place is characterised by being meaningful (Tuan, 1977), then one only has to change perspective to find meaning, to see 'place' where it could be argued to be 'space' instead. This research doesn't understand the world to be made up of voids of space waiting to be given meaning and become place. The semantics and history of debates behind space and place, however, leave space *feeling* roomier, and place *feeling* more personal, specific, the realm of collected individual stories that can be still be heard inside the collective story that purports to be formed out of them. Rather than place and space, this section takes up ideas encountered in fieldwork and narrative of place and 'non-place'. Place

was understood to be ‘in’ connection, and so through processes of neglect those connections could also be ruptured, in which instance place disintegrated into ‘non place’.

Where Tuan (1977: 6), understands space as movement and place as pause this research follows closer in the footstep of Doreen Massey who understands place as always becoming and therefore always, meaningfully in motion (see also Ingold, 2011). Though of the two, Massey chose space, she distinguishes between space and place only gently, saying: ‘If space is [..] a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories’ (2005:130). It is this collecting together, layering, ‘gathering’ (Casey, 1996), of the particular, that is of interest to me here and the way individuals relate to and contribute to crafting this plurality.

Massey’s relational concept of place resonates with the producers in this research, although it makes itself heard differently in the work of each. As I noted in the Introduction, this thesis, but especially this section, is animated by Massey’s idea of ‘place —as [..] woven together out of ongoing stories’ (2005:131) multiple ‘stories-so-far’ (ibid: 130). Interestingly in Cresswell’s (2004) introduction to geographical theories of place, he makes no mention of place as story at all. Instead we hear place theorised as performance, event, container. Whereas Massey quickly qualifies that her metaphor of story is secondary to the idea of change, unfinished-ness, ‘open, multiple and relational’ space, I give a little more centrality to story, as mattering in this state of ‘always becoming’ (2005:59).

Massey’s ideas meet Mol’s (2002), in that she understands place as an *always particular* set of stories. Whilst conceiving of place as in movement, in process, I also try to situate these unfolding stories in particular materialities. These are not purely abstract considerations of place, they happened in motion, in specific plots. Whilst Massey conceives of place as ‘thrown together’ she is not negating the material particularity of place, just insisting on its state as an ever-shifting assemblage (2005:140). The places I try to evoke then are not captured but gestured towards, they are neither the same in their location —‘they have already moved on’ in Massey’s words (ibid: 118), nor are they the same in writing as they are in the flesh. Whilst not attempting to contain them I nevertheless want to explore them as projects unfolding.

“Permaculture” Marco says “is an approach to things that makes you keep in mind that all things are linked and therefore you have to be able to understand all of the connections between things. The more you work on the relationships between things, the more those elements / fundamentals / things are bonded, and the stronger the system, the more resilient” (Track 2).

*"When people see nature only as how it might serve them to produce something [..] then those people haven't understood a fuck about place" (Marco, Track 2).*

Marco's reedy frame moves with a great ease, his strides are long and assured, his beard combed, his greying hair—which loose, falls to his shoulder-blades—is grasped tightly into a bun at the back of his head. He has a uniform of sorts: sturdy shoes, light-green, heavy-weight trousers, a faded burgundy T-shirt, braces: always. In summer he adds a straw hat, herringbone-woven, which has its own dishevelled jaunt. He's springy: crouching, bending, bouncing up. He has a way of cocking his head, concluding his persuasive arguments with a '*giusto*—right?' before he's off again. The Friulian accent with which he expounds his philosophies is whispery, whiskery, resilient somehow; his laugh generous and wood-warm. About to turn fifty, he runs several, interlinking growing projects: *Fattoria Urbana Diffusa* (FUD)—Scattered Urban Farm (the meanings of *diffusa* are multiple, it could also be translated as rife, common or spread out); *Macchia Verde*—Green Stain; and *Oltre il Giardino*—Beyond the Garden. The projects don't have clear boundaries. They are all about city cultivation but they spread into each other, projects with architects dipping into projects with chefs or projects with his kids overlapping with projects with unemployed volunteers. This is part of Marco's philosophy. He often repeats '*non guardare solo al tuo orticello'*—don't look only to your own plot (field diary). We usually meet at Zitelle, FUD's base on the island of the Giudecca, in the expansive gardens of a retirement home cultivated by Marco, where he teaches permaculture and has an outdoor kitchen and workshop.

> "[E]ach place" he says "*can* produce things to eat but that's not what's important. What's important, *c'é*—that is, for people in this moment of time—" he says leaning forward "is that they are hospitable, *accommodating* places" (Marco, Track 2).

Food literature widely documents the inclusivity and exclusivity of commensality—of sharing food—and the ways in which it positively and negatively defines groups (for example, Mars, 1997; Fischler, 1999; Appadurai, 1981). But Marco continuously de-centres the act of eating together. The table, he says, is primarily the furniture of discussion, constantly re-made in different configurations of people. In growing foodstuffs he again emphasises the work that production affords over that of consumption. To some extent side-stepping established hierarchies of commensality, he explores the capacity to create belonging through cultivation instead. He brings our attention back to the ground itself and the nurture that cultivation offers to plot and to a sense of place, rather than production as a means of simply extracting value in the form of (food) produce.

The *Macchia Verde* and FUD projects are constellations plotted throughout Venice and her Lagoon. Places that people overlook or forget: balding grass, eroded soil, grey, flat, invisible pockets of un-built on land. Hidden behind brick walls, cultivation brings them back into dialogue with their surroundings. Before acting, Marco says, it's important to dream the possible connections of a place, otherwise they will survive but not thrive. "In every place that I go, I want to have the possibility to transform that space" he says (Track 2). But he isn't just talking about a physical transformation, he wants to transform the possibilities of place.

> "For me, it's important that in every place you find its genius loci. Its own genius loci. In the time of the Romans every place, one would say, had its own genius loci. Loci from *luogho*—place, genius from a *genio*—a little god, a little elf, a nymph etc. and every place had its own little protector that assured that that place was in equilibrium, had balance, that it was well cared for and when you say that a place does not have a genius loci it means that it's lost its, its, it's lost its soul, it's lost the magic: genius loci was also a little magician. And so it interests me that, people; you see immediately whether a place has its genius loci or not, no? You understand immediately, it's immediately evident no?, because it's something, er, it's, er, you can't verbalise it in words, *dici*—what do you say: *c'é / non c'é*—it's there / it's not there. Even from a tiny element you understand or you might be able to say: it's there, it's dying (/moribund), but from that tiny element, I can, slowly, slowly, I can start, from that one point or various, I can begin to re-find, to re-create, to re-craft connections and, therefore, the genius loci, supported by other elements can [he puts his hands to his mouth and blows sharply, there is a hard whistle of exhaling breath] continue, it can breathe better once again, the very heart of the genius loci can begin to beat stronger. *That's* what interests me" (Marco, Track 2).

Marco brings together two conceptualisations of place. As having an essence, a character, a particularity; but one that can only thrive if it is in relationship, in flows. He conceives of healthy as 'in' connection; and of helping place stay in movement, to stay related, as a human responsibility. He understands both monocultures and places in stasis as destructive to place's healthy connectivity. He conceives of place, and its genius loci as able to become alienated also through human neglect. Focusing on a single element, he says—such as productivity—turns a deaf ear to the decline of the little magician.

Permaculture is the analysis of meshwork. It pays attention to the durability of bonds between things. Once you begin to consider all of the relationships in a place, Marco says, you can pick out the strong connections between things. A strong bond can mean two things—great stability or a lack of stability, he says. "If that link becomes lacking, if it's taken away, and it's too strong, the other elements that don't have such strong connections become weak. You remove that one thing and the whole system collapses. Boom. It crumbles. So [for something to be sustained] you have to work on the multitude of connections, a web [of connections so that] even if one element ceases to be, the system remains on its feet because there are so many links and links are recreated" (Track 2). This enmeshing of elements, Marco says, is what gives place balance, the sense of place he seeks to help craft to give place back its soul and to be able to accommodate people within its process. Equilibrium also comes from that mesh moving in many directions, creating not a single web of what place might be but many.

> "Nothing is fixed. *Anzi*—rather, nature is based on, nature's balance is a non-equilibrium. Life doesn't exist if there is stasis. Life is based on movement, on the continual modification of that which is the static. Material exists because electrons move around a nucleus faster than the speed of light, so it seems still, but this blue comes into being because there are photons that absorb and photons that reflect and so all is in movement even if to us it seems still. The force of a system is really the force of the movement and the force of the people. We say *chi si ferma é perso*—he who stops is lost" (Marco, Track 2).

One day I arrive at Zitelle to find Marco already waiting to leave. 'Hop in' he says, one foot in his little boat, one hand still holding onto the lip of the wall 'we have a new project' (field diary). On another island, a man leads us through corridors and out the back door of a building. There is a square of land, the earth is hard with only a smattering of grass. A '*nonluogho*—a non-place' Marco calls it after we

leave. The custodians have asked him to come up with a plan to resuscitate it. The encounter with the non-place stayed in the back of my mind until our interview.

> *BB: Do you remember, we went to a plot on San Giorgio and you called it a 'nonluogo', a non-place. What did you mean by that?*
> Marco: "A non-place is a place where you don't understand the sense of the place. You can't feel it, it's man made, or man has closed it off. You can't understand who cares for it, [..] it's not cared for, at the most it's managed. There's a big difference. [..] You don't feel beauty. I couldn't see beauty in even one centimetre of that place" (Track 2).

| Flavio's Curiosity Cloak

One of the first things I did when I arrived in Venice was to attend a funeral. Flavio Franceschet was a man with whom I was going to work as part of my PhD fieldwork but the week I arrived in Venice he died. Throughout my fieldwork he was present in his absence. The absent man became narrative as Nadia Seremetakis (1994) has said of something already gone. I never met him but I met that absence of him in other people and they filled their lack with story. For me, and those who never knew him in the flesh, Flavio is his memory and his myth, and a strange and particular knowing of him also persists, un-forgotten in us (Seremetakis, 1994:2).

Flavio was the president of the Association *Laguna nel bicchiere* and, after his death it became a live, bodied, shifting memorial to him. Remembering and recounting the ways in which Flavio had ignited the magic and possibilities of place through story he continued as story to stretch imaginations of how a place might be crafted. And how place crafts story. Though he may have been gone externally, he existed in both the possibilities and the materialities of the places of *Laguna nel bicchiere*. He had brought the Association into being, and through his negotiations, visions, practices and narratives, un-used, out of sight, abandoned places were being (re)found. Cultivated, these places blossomed new affordances, and so he was felt there, as the one that had brought that transformation about. Flavio was instrumental to the re-narrating, the re-embodying of these places, populating them with the possible. '[B]lur and sink, blink and slur' for everything is flux (Macfarlane, 2012:332)

Flavio understood the power of stories, hearing them, living them and crafting them. He understood story as a means to nurture the little magician, the genius loci. In his work with children he frequently opened three affective doorways: through the imagination; through the body; and in place. He helped them access, conjure up and feel the multiplicities of place, to forge relationships with them. Practices as portals into other realms. 'He was a man who discovered without setting out to discover, invented without setting out to invent, who taught without setting out to teach. A man clad in curiosity from dawn to dusk, from sunset to sunrise' (Giampaolo, *Laguna nel bicchiere's* 'court poet', Flavio's memorial service).

> "Theoretically Flavio was there as a support teacher. But that's not what Flavio did. Flavio always did something else, something strange, he created the strangest of experiences. In the first grade you study human evolution no? So to teach this he brought in a massive piece of meat which he roasted over a fire in the school's courtyard. An experience of smell, of smoke—not inside a classroom—a really strong sensory experience for these kids [..]
> *BB: And why was it important this playfulness, this engaging of the senses? Why is it important?*
> Well you just have to look at the faces of the children, and you know why it's important by seeing their expressions no? To see how filled with wonder and curiosity they are; how inside of it all they were. The lessons from the classroom they forgot after 5 minutes, but that they'd remember for a lifetime" (Roberto, Track 1). "[Making wine] was a game for the kids. To press the grapes with their feet, to see what the process is for, to make wine. Eh, but it wasn't to make wine [..] [it was to experience] how one works in the countryside. [..] contact with nature is fundamental for everyone. It's only by touching the things that you manage to, you can't just recount, or be recounted to, you have to live these things" (Roberto, Track 1).

Flavio used sensory experience as a way of relating, as suggestive; to get the kids to imagine what other people may have been sensing. To show relating stories that shrink the apparent distances of time. He understood experience as a doorway to the imagination and imagining as a doorway into knowledge. He used performance to animate place and he got the kids to craft their own stories. A story is as something plucked from a murmuration. It takes a cloud of moving starlings and turns them into an arrow of geese, gesturing at a direction, temporarily, breaking away, following something and then rejoining the rippling mass. Stories show up divides as dissolvable, Venice became city and countryside, here and then and somewhere else altogether, a place imagined and experienced, stitched out of memories, desire, sensations and the fantastical.


"Round glasses",
"small eyes", "always be- hatted":
"hat with a brim",
"brimming with enthusiasm",
"a tummy",
"a moustache".
"A performer". "Cultured". "Stubborn".
"Irrepressible". "Immortal".
"A boundary pusher".
"An artist". "Anarchic". "Activist".
"A big drinker", "a big guy", "a big baby",
"expansive", "a fantasist", "a dreamer".
"Adopted Venetian",
"A realiser". "A meddler", "a chatterer".
"A creator of webs". "A great worker".
"*In brodo di giuggiole*—stickily content".
"Curious". "Controversial". "A catalyst".
"Playful". "Persistent".
"A teacher, a storyteller". "A magician".

Left: Flavio's funeral flyer, an acrostic: Passionately he frequents lived places, imagining opportunities. He fosters rebellious atmospheres. He roams, aimlessly searching for nymphs, uncovers cultures, humus like earth.

Right: Descriptions of Flavio by those that knew him, collected over fieldwork.

The Cemetery Vineyard

To reach the island of San Michele you have to take a boat from the northern ledge of Venice. It's not far out into the Lagoon, a matter of minutes. Crossing the cloisters, the floor tilts—gravestones set unevenly underfoot. When we use the coffin-carriages to transport crates of grapes from the boats to cellar, their wheels stick in the grooves and I wonder whether the grapes are heavier than the corpses. With an unremarkable Yale key I unlock the brown door below a pane reading *pace e bene*. It opens onto a corridor somehow reminiscent of my old comprehensive school, chairs on one side, dusty shelves on the other, its length flanked by locked rooms filled with files and books and tables. There is a strong sense that we have inherited this place from past practices, past inhabitants. A couple of steps in is all you need to smell the yeastiness. I've come out into a sort of long conservatory with brown plastic supports and plastic windows. From here two doors open into two very different spaces. One outwards into a grassed quadrant, bordered by vines. A central, staggering archway running the whole length heavy with foliage. An internal courtyard of sorts, the space is completely encircled by the abandoned monastery, blank windows looking down onto it, shutters hanging open. Among them the windows of Fra Mauro's library. The other door leads inwards, down rough steps, past a brick room and into a moss-pungent vault of stone flanked by barrels. The old ones, each 500 litres in capacity tell of a different volume of activity here in centuries past. The incongruousness of the place is exciting. There's a sense of clandestine camaraderie. A skull and cross bones hang above the doorway.

'I go to punch down the cap. It's September and raining. The cantina—cavernous, amazing, has almost become normal. The ferment sounds like waves from the clifftops, you can hear it shushing underneath the crust that has formed from the skins, but then as you push the cap down it sounds like a wave soaring, a crashing as if on rock, and that receding: as bubbles burst open on the shingle with a sort of rush and hiss' (field diary).

The vineyard on San Michele isn't quiet, but that's what adds to its sense of secrecy. I know that other people are close, but yet they don't know that I'm here. From the exterior, the high walls rising from the Lagoon appear to be those of the monastery embedded into the walls that enclose Venice's cemetery island. From the cemetery itself you would imagine you were looking at the wall of a building, that behind it is only 'inside' space. This little hollow of green at its centre exists outside of most people's geography of the city. Beyond the walls people go about life. Water traffic passes—constant, invisible noise.

Since Flavio's funeral I've been many times to tend to the vines or the nascent wine, alone or in large numbers. Flavio himself is buried on the other side of the wall, where each day mourners visit the dead. There, there are shelves of white marble, and dark Cyprus trees, bunches of plastic flowers and a hushed approximation of silence. What must mourners think on days when wine-making ensues and raucousness lifts over those walls mixing with those spaces of more solemn remembrance? Many of the Association have yet to visit Flavio's grave. They avoid it not only through grief but also because the other side represents a world of stasis and murmurs. 'There' he is presumed to be gone, static, and so they don't go. Here instead, motion and emotion, motion and memory are coupled (Bhatti et al., 2009:61). There is a simultaneity to the remembering and recounting of Flavio and the going about the tasks, wine unfolding from grapes. In this period, within the hidden vineyard and cellars of San Michele.

It is almost as if Flavio has become the little magician at the epicentre of its sense of place. Remembering him is for the members to remember all the webs physical and meaningful that Flavio set in motion for these places to be inhabited by them now. Flavio was an organiser, a convincer, he made things happen.

'The identity of places', Massey says 'is very much bound up with the *histories* which are told of them, *how* those histories are told, and what history turns out to be dominant (1995:186, original emphasis). The materiality of this place feeds into those stories. Whilst Flavio is at their fore, there are reminders everywhere of different layers of San Michele's past. The material memory of the monastery co-exists with the cemetery that superseded it: was added to it rather than effacing it. What is evident, however, is that each re-use has been a re-establishing of connections. Whilst the monastery was abandoned just over two hundred years ago, that coincided with Venice's dead starting to be buried here, which in itself brought the living to remember them.

We consume notions of the past, wearing them away, simplifying them. As Neil expressed of working within a Victorian walled garden, being in these spaces brings expectations of the manner in which we engage with them. Perhaps our engagement with fragments of the past is an attempt to locate ourselves, to unravel our own story-so-far of memory and experience and understand it in relation to our surroundings. As Cixous says '[w]hat time is it, I mean to say where am I, I mean to say where have I gone' (1998:58). Rather than to try to neaten up place, to fix it to one particular time, perhaps a bearing in mind of other times can help us to reach an appreciation of place as a messy coming together of different stories, that is always shifting depending on the volume—not bulk, but loudness—of the stories being recounted (Massey, 1995).

We sit on upturned crates sorting fruit. Valeria, a Venetian lady in her seventies—a close friend of Flavio's—laments the dissolving of community, a lack of people in the street, doing things together, playing, singing. And as she laments, she breaks into song and slowly others join in. What is presented as 'absence' in narrative, seems like 'presence' in practice. I think of what Marco said, that bonds break but others replace them to support place, to nourish it, to craft it always anew. It is a harvest day and around me are a multitude of members, yes, many of them middle aged, but also children, families, individuals from all over Italy and a handful from across the globe. All here, listening to Valeria's song, one that wasn't in our own memories but will be now. *Laguna nel bicchiere* is not really very 'productive' in vinous terms. Some years the quantity of wine is tiny, some years it's almos*t un*-imbibe-able . But Flavio recognised the potency of cultivating places, the centrality of the practice of production to forge new connections of time, story and geography. Here, a place of production serves to bring people together for a variety of motivations; a point to organise different sense-makings around:

> "In this historical moment we are very unbalanced, especially when it comes to knowledge about the land. These practical knowledges are being forgotten, they're going out of use, like that, forgotten, never known [..] Places like this are important. You get closer, on many levels, to many things. Those who come every so often, those who come more intentionally, you get closer to these smells, these tastes" (Pep, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

This is not to paint a picture of a harmonious community, for when is community ever harmonious? But to show a multitude of bonds that break and reform, forming a place always heterogeneous but continually re-connected in different flows and configurations through changing inhabitation.

“It's a very particular place: there’s an energy of peace [..] a breaking, a slowing down of, of our quotidian life, here inside, you enter and, *boh*—I don't know, how can I describe it? You slow down a bit. And then, well, spirituality also shines through, a bit monastic if you will. [..] When you enter inside here the dimensions of countryside and city don't exist. They vanish. The divisions disappear. I would say. Here we are beyond, yeah, there’s a bit, a breath, something that goes beyond man, in the sense of one’s structure, of one’s [inaudible/], of one’s rhythms, of one’s, it gives you the sense that a world exists, that there’s a dimension that goes beyond ours—the one we created the way we needed it, human—but this is a dimension, a bigger dimension, more connected to the cosmos. It's something that goes beyond humans. We are made of these things, we’re made up of this energy. And so here, in some way, we're a bit, we’re inside this dimension, even though—exactly—you work, we do normal things, we live, but also it’s really beautiful to work in the city, to work in this way here, with one’s hands, with the plants [..] because it makes you remember that you’re made up of earth, that plants are more ancient than you, that there’s a whole other world that’s more than human (/or goes beyond man)” (Pep, *Laguna nel bicchiere,* Track1).

“I can’t really smell, so I can’t really taste the wine, judge the wine, the bit that I love is the physical work rather than what we produce” (Carly, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

“Ha! Today I’m tired and I’m fed up [laughing] I've worked too hard and my back hurts. I like being in company more than anything, more than working. It’s not that I really like working that much, working the earth, working with the vines” (Roberto, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

‘Time is fluid and loopy, not made of increment and interval. Time can flow slow enough that a mess of green moss on the leg of a tree can be explored for an age, and fast enough that to run over leaves is to take off and
fly’ (Macfarlane, 2015:315).

Carly, an Australian, long-term member of Laguna nel bicchiere tells me “to be able to live and work in a place like that with a historical feeling, it's really moving. [..] To think that the first world map was done in the area where we're working, and that now is mainly abandoned, y’know, it's just so sad and the idea is so sad that it’s abandoned and so moving! To think that we can work there and just try to maintain something just try to hold back the, the, and keep it alive to a certain extent. [..] Rowing in the lagoon fills up my need for space, whereas the vineyard, San Michele, is the need of greenery, green grass, and history, the feeling of history, eh, well, even walking anywhere in Venice fills up the need for history—walk down the Rialto bridge and the marble on the side is worn on one side and really rough on the other side and that’s where the number of hundreds, no, millions of people moving their hands along the marble… just that our hands can consume, can erm, make the marble smooth to me is amazing” (Carly, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

"If there's any magic, it's that we know how hard it is to get to the glass of the wine at the end of it all, and yet, we still make the effort, we collaborate, we all work together to make that possible" (Camillo, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

‘To think of those barrels, hundred of years—this winery is more than five hundred years old—but those smells—they’re always the same no? (Roberto, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

‘It’s a return to our origins. To a contact with a plant through its whole cycle. But also, to drink! *Ciapa ciapa*—take’ he says, handing me a glass, ‘that’s the goal, and to make contact with a tradition that is not just of here, but puts us into contact with the whole of Italy’ (Camillo, *Laguna nel bicchiere*, Track 1).

In the vineyard at San Michele there is a bit of roof that you can clamber up on to. If I was there alone, I would sometimes go—after I'd tended to my tasks—and lie on the asphalt listening to the water traffic, writing field notes and reflections. The roof gives a bird's-eye view over the vineyard and beyond it, situating it, within water and within the cemetery. Around the vineyard there are areas inhabited by things that feel almost *out of frame*. A potting shed behind broken glass, an old kitchenette in an outbuilding, a patch overgrown in green and nettles, a shed with half a doll's house and an industrial saw in it, a run of buildings with doors hanging open with drying racks and an assortment of broken objects. To get to the roof you had to go through this medley, over cracked gravestones covered by grass. These are the histories that turned out not to be dominant, perhaps they are remembered somewhere, but never heard recounted here.

These artefacts were rarely in my photographs or my thoughts at the time but they have lingered long after I left that place. Resonant 'residue' residing in 'emergent assemblage[s] of disparate forms and realms of life' (Stewart, 2007:21). They sit awkwardly with the stories that smooth over them, joining up slickly: from marsh to monastery to cemetery, with vines weaving between the histories. But I wonder about the stories and people I cannot hear, hinted at by what is left behind. Venice fits easily into heritage narratives, and better, it is 'at risk', which tugs on the imagination. It is straightforward to locate the value of its impressive reminders of the past. The Lagoon, however, fits less easily into consumption of the past.

'[E]very object left to rot in a dank shed [..] once occupied a place in an active web of social and material relations', but are now unable to yield their stories easily (DeSilvey, 2007:403). Those objects lie beyond the stories in circulation here, now, traces left behind, present as vague absence. Even when materials persist, stories that include them fade or are cancelled out and those objects become re-narrated or not narrated at all. Their silence tells us something indirectly, however, about the uneven identity of places. As Calvino tries to tell us, Venice is both myriad and non-existent ([1972]1997).

'[U]ncountable small acts [can] shift the world, make political power, spread ideas, shape imaginations. That is what art is for—it is to remind us of our power to make the world' (Hamilton, 2010:72).

The second map was drawn in 2016 by Ned, son of Marco. It is inspired by reading Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities.* Invisible Cities is a book of multiplicity, of ephemeral solidity. It tells of a series of imagined conversations in which Marco Polo recounts fifty-five cities to Kublai Khan. It is a book that shows the particular in the universal and the cosmos in the details. It is fifty-five contemplations on Venice and her multiple possibilities ([1972]1997). And so, one day, Marco sat down with his son Ned, assisted by his little sister Rosa, and they let their imaginations run through their crayons. The map's title comes from another Calvino story *I Mille Giardini*—A Thousand Gardens ([1974]2002). If Venice is a garden, what thousand gardens could it be? Or perhaps, what thousand gardens is it already? Ned's is the thousand places of one place: the possibilities, multiplicities, a map of place in the subjunctive. Rather than multiple-stories-so-far unfolding simultaneously in different places, his tracks the dream-lines, the multiple possible stories playing out concurrently within one another. 'The garden of fear', 'the garden of memories', 'the garden of butterflies', 'the garden of dens', 'the garden of smells', 'the garden of mirrors', 'the hidden garden', 'the garden of words', 'the garden of bees'. 'the garden of dreams' (field diary). Importantly this is *not* about how many different gardens could fit into Venice; it represents a shift from a world that is ontologically singular—Fra Mauro's depiction of simultaneous stories unfolding in different places—to one that is ontologically multiple. Jeannette Winterson says that *Invisible Cities*, reminds her 'how often the controlled, measured world of knowledge fails us. So much of life' she says 'resists the facts' (2001:np). Winterson would understand Marco's game as guiding Ned and Rosa to find the gardens of Venice as they exist in slippery stories, refracted and concertinaed. To hear them is to participate in the simultaneous storying of self and city.

"And this was the input I gave to the group of engineers with whom I'm doing a mapping project" said Marco (Track 2). As they mapped the soil, they also created an inverse map, he said, this one, not mapping buildings and streets but mapping the constellation of green spaces, back ways, waterways, empty places. As Sennett has said 'the capacity to open up a problem draws on intuitive leaps, specifically on [the] power to draw unlike domains close to one another' (2008:279). In those physical 'gardens' that the engineers were documenting, soil type, size and so forth, began to appear the gardens from Ned's map.

When I first arrived in 'the field' (literal and metaphorical) I didn't have access to any depth of place. Its profundity was only as deep as the biography I brought with me. Place may be multiple but that doesn't always mean that these multiplicities are immediately graspable—ethnographic research is founded upon the belief that they are not. At first, all we encounter is 'dust' without depth (Seremetakis, 1994). As Calvino says of a Venice reflected in the city 'Chloe': 'the people who move through the street are all strangers. At each encounter they imagine a thousand things about one another; meetings which could take place between them, conversations, surprises, caresses, bites. But no-one greets anyone; eyes

‘Rikyu’s idea was probably this: bending down over the pond and seeing his own image shrunk in that narrow stretch of water, the man would consider his own smallness; then as soon as he raised his face to drink from his hand he would be dazzled by the immensity of the sea and would become aware that he was part of an infinite universe’ (Calvino, [1974]2002:172).

lock for a second, then dart away, seeking other eyes, never stopping’ ([1972]1997:51). Accessing the ways in which other people experience place as layered takes time. Physical access to a field is one thing but this is just the first hurdle; have it in hand and the trust bar goes up for further access. At first I made lists, screwing up my eyes to try to see more and still seeing in a single lot of three dimensions. I busied myself with the poetics of presentism, of stuff, stuff that I could see, touch, smell, taste, move through and name. I delighted in the doing, the listing, the naming, the paying attention to the tiny. I turned up, I did, and I waited, alert. Those lists represent my initial encounters with those plots. They are alphabets of bodily actions, of sensations, of animate and inanimate things. Plurality abounded but a layering of place fluttered only in auto-ethnographic fashion: the ways in which I was able to experience a simultaneity of body, material world, memory, imagination and speculation. At the beginning, other peoples’ worlds remained constrained to fragments of disclosure and the visible.

Reading Georges Perec’s *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* ([1982]2010), the same thing is striking. He catalogues happenings, things and the relationships between them. He shows place as a multitude of ongoing stories unfolding simultaneously and goes someway to creating the vibrant, higgledy-piggledy, moving thing that is place:

> ‘An apple green citroen van. The urgent sounds of a car horn are audible. [..] A postal delivery tricycle, a postal van (is it time for the mailboxes to be emptied?) [..] A meter man with a bad cough puts a parking ticket on a green Morris. A man wearing a Russian astrakhan fur hat. Then another. A little boy wearing an English school cap; he crosses, making sure that he steps only on the stripes of the crosswalk’ (ibid: 19–20).

But his inventory never gets beyond that first layer of access. It goes someway to exhausting the visual, the ascertainable, the surface of place; but by representing place as happening through these events, there is a suggestion that even at this level it is not possible to ‘exhaust’ place because it is a set of happenings, always coming into being.

I remember in the first days, in my first field site at The Walled Garden, Emily said that part of the pleasure was the way in which the garden allowed one to ‘just be in the moment’. And I remember thinking that this rhetoric simplifies the experience it purports to describe. Beyond the idea of my own perception brimming with memory (Bergson, 1912), ‘people [who] live and work in landscapes familiar to them [..] their immersion in [those places] is temporal and memorial as well as performative, embodied and spatial’ (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012:87). Whilst I wanted to get at these non-material layers to place and the meanings they brought to its experience, initially I had to suffice with getting on with the tangible, visible practice of crafting the materialities of place for food production. The most regular, systematic work I was involved in in the Venetian Lagoon was alongside Ernesto and Stefano respectively to whom I return again now.

‘Craft still stands against the anonymity of mass-production and for the personalised object.

Craft still stands against ugliness and, on occasion, for beauty.

Craft still stands against big-money capitalism and for small-scale entrepreneurship.

Craft stands against corporate labour, where most workers are replaceable parts in a bureaucracy, and for individual self-determination.

Craft stands for the rich potential of the human body at work and against disembodiment in all its forms

Craft continues to be a social movement, often intuitive and without leadership,

I see craft as a collective attempt to relocate personal meaning in a largely indifferent world.

As a teacher and observer, I constantly see how craft functions as a vehicle to construct meaning and how it gives substance and dignity and grace to individuals’ lives’.

(Metcalf, 2002:16-17)

> *'Luri—they*, they wipe the slate clean, those who work with chemicals and machines, they don't see the places they have, they don't know how to value what's here, because they don't know how to figure it out, so they erase place and construct anonymity. If something is anonymous you can treat it all the same. It has no character' (Ernesto, field diary).

To grow vegetables is not to craft *them*, but to craft place *for* them. Other than resulting in edible goods, one of the most explicitly tangible things that producing food does, is to craft place (both inevitably and intentionally). Or, to craft non-place. In order to look at the ways that place is physically crafted for and through the production of vegetables, I draw upon two means of relating and responding to place through transforming it—'alteration' and embracing it—'acceptance'. This thinking is adopted from the work of Anna Krzywoszynska who uses 'pacification' and 'making space for nature'[1](2012:10) as ways to track the shaping force of the market through the wine-making chain. In this case, however, I wish to bracket the commercial implications, looking instead at how, through the production of vegetables, these producers become skilled artisans of plot. A crafting that is a coming to know. A knowledge that allows both more attentiveness and more means to adapt a plot through a process that keeps acceptance and alteration in tension. Place is still conceived of as unfinished and becoming, but this time with a focus on the physicality of productive ground (Pred, 1984).

In comparison to the agricultural non-places that Ernesto perceives to go on and on without change, "*i fioi*—the boys—I call them flowers[2]—they work on small plots" Ernesto says (Track 3). He explains to me that the way you treat a 'plot' defines it, produces it as necessarily small. A plot simply can't be large because the combination of land and weather is heterogenous, every change and a plot transitions into another, becoming something discreet to be treated differently. One 'plot' like his is actually many. 'The soil is rich here, clay, full of minerals' Ernesto says as he digs a hole and empties in a bag of fish heads, guts and bones[3]. 'It's good to have a mix [of terrains] too, because when it's wet they do better here, but when it's dry they do better over there'. We're standing by the old stove and he's pointing back towards the lagoon. 'This bit' he says leaning on a sagging row of *Raboso* vines that run alongside a line of artichokes, 'this bit always gets the wind' (field diary).

Jan Dowe van der Ploeg uses Mendras's (1970) phrase 'art de la localité' to describe the knowledge of both plot and produce, through practice, in 'craft-agriculture' (1993:209). 'Art de la localité' is not simply about knowing how things are, van der Ploeg says, it's about having the ability to also improve that plot or that relationship (ibid).

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[1] Krzywoszynska herself draws these terms from Çalişkan and Callon (2010) and Hinchliffe (2007) respectively.

[2] This is a very typical, informal, Venetian expression although the young men don't use it in return, it being too informal in reverse for the hierarchy that exists between them. Instead they say *vecia* / *vecio* 'old one', which is familial, rather than indicative of age, but somehow more appropriate.

[3] The fish are rich in phosphorous and will add phosphates to the soil for uptake by the plants.

> "If we worked with chemicals, mistakes, *non le ze.. non c'é ne sono*—there aren't any. Because you can plant things where you want and they grow how you want. But working in 'biological' or 'natural' you make mistakes because you have to learn *i terreni*—the grounds, *i scorri*—the flows of the water, you have to know where to sow one thing, where to sow another understand? And *these* are our mistakes, learning, because working with nature, you have to know where things grow best, where the fennel can grow, the cauliflowers, the beans, eh, but no one can teach you because everyone here works with chemicals no, who could teach you?" (Ernesto, Track 3).

The aspects of physical place articulated above by Ernesto, combined with his interaction with them, are what the wine writer Andrew Jefford has referred to as 'the universal groundwork for terroir' (2019:41). Whilst in section 9, I repeated Ernesto insisting on the essential link between vine and place, artichoke and soil, terroir has not been the term used to describe these relationships during my research. It is a slippery, 'socially constructed' concept and my aim here is not to debate its 'empirical truth or fallacy' (West, 2013b:213), nor to pursue questions of how it might later be used as 'essentially a marketing ploy' (a Marks and Spencer's buyer cited in Jackson, 2013b). Rather, I am interested in re-encountering the relationship between producer, place and practice. Where meaning has perhaps trickled out from the term terroir, can we re-approach the same sets of relationships through craft? Craft assumes connotations of an active relationship that terroir is apt to hide. Whilst the outlines of terroir are moveable to include the makers and their technologies within its bounds (West, 2013b), it most frequently forefronts what is presented as already existing in place. Craft too is a malleable creature but it helps a re-focusing on what is being done: the action in response to materiality. In so doing it stresses the human approach to plot which sees the potential for transformative interaction.

*Artisan Place-Makers*

Trevor Marchand describes craft as a 'polythetic category': 'one in which any of its members possess some, but not necessarily all, the properties attributed to that category' (2016:8), making it 'open-ended [and] multi-stranded' by nature (ibid: 9). He therefore offers a vocabulary of craft instead of a definition, an inventory suggestive of the shape and meaning of craft (see below). The applicability of Marchand's craft alphabet, and Metcalf's ideology (2002), to the work of vegetable growing suggests that we might also conceive of this productive place-making as craft.

*Apprenticeship..Attitude..Bespoke..The Body..Design and Making..Economic Precarity..Expertise..Focus..Functionality..Identity..Innovation..Locality..Materials..Problem Solving..Social Politics..Risk..The Senses..Skill..Standards..Tools..Tradition (Marchand, 2016:9).*

Stefano and I are sitting under a corrugated iron roof, next to a perspex window—a basil plant growing both sides of the pane. We are seated above an industrial steel weighing scales and under an old copper one, oxidised and hanging with desiccated herb bundles. 'We are inside a little "artisan" cabin' Stefano says, gesturing around the makeshift hut, its rusty kitchenette smeared with grease. 'Artisan', in his description, not because it is perfect but because it emerged out a project that considered a larger whole

than the object produced[4]. 'Artisan' is a term Stefano applies to himself without hesitation, although not to refer to himself as a grower. Whilst he is now the sole food producer at *La Maravegia*, he joined the project, not in the capacity of a producer, but as 'the practical one', his background was in construction and this plot of land offered him the opportunity to build things, to fix things, to invent, to tinker. Only later did this widen to include the soil and the things growing in it. To become a craftsman, Stefano told me, was not about achieving a level of technical skill but a shifting in outlook. Becoming skilled, he says was about caring how things unfolded: "the transformation is more in the mind" (Track 3). Joby Williams has termed this 'the ethic of regard' and argued that this is the core value around which artisan practices cohere in their interaction with lively matter (2011). "Artisan" Stefano says, "it's a type of approach, a type of insistence more than exactly how to do something" (Track 3).

> "There's a grasping, gripping, handling of knowledge, awareness that one's body has to have in relation to everything in the job one is doing because um, because there's only eh, and this is more of a path, a journey that unfolds, translating what's coming from the hands [..] there are many ways to do jobs. I'm no longer able to just look at the tools I need to repair because I have to look at the whole job [..] it's gaining this complete understanding" (Stefano, Track 3).

By positing growers as artisans of plot, I suggest that their 'ways of knowing' in practice are also ways of knowing place (Marchand, 2016:12), an attentiveness to its every changing dynamics, and an understanding of their implications.

> 'You have to know' Stefano tells me 'that over there, where that soil gets sandier it's going to be three or four degrees warmer than here, but you also have to know that it's going to lose the heat immediately when the temperatures drop [..] but it's not just about knowing the tomato and knowing the soil because the tomatoes from last year, they remember the salty terrain they grew in and so they're ready for it, they adapt. They're not having to meet this place for the first time, they are physiologically crafted by it… *for it.* Each year they are more and more suited to the place so you have to bear that in mind too' (field diary).

What can be harnessed from environmental factors, what can be adapted all have to be held in the mind as "a complete understanding" (Stefano, Track 3). To be an artisan is to keep a sense of the particular relationship and the broader web of relationships it interacts with. And to value what the nature of place can provide. Adding fish blood and water, planting wind breaks, transforming the soil through digging, removing vegetation or unwanted bugs, these are all ways in which the plot can be physically altered, but this can only be taken so far. The plot then crafts the tomato through the relationship between them, the human becomes indirectly involved. 'Art de la localité' is about dynamic relationship: these planting and plot relationships aren't static because the plants change and adapt and the soils change through weather, work and due to the things growing in them (shifts accepted rather than altered). The tomato can't be crafted to suit the plot, it has to grow here in this relationship to become better adapted to it.

> 'That's the problem with "chemical" agriculture' Stefano says 'they take everything away from the place, then they buy seeds from nowhere, then they put something on them to then, they put something on them to help them grow and then they get sick because those plants don't have any knowledge of where they are, they can't adapt to this non-place then the farmer has to put on

[4] In this case: bringing together different groups of people, being able to 'make-do', and using waste materials gathered from the lagoon and its urban centre brought by boat to *La Maravegia*.

> another thing and so on and so on just to try to create something like nature. It's like an engine when you clean it so you can put in whatever you want, and then it doesn't go' (Stefano, field diary) (see also West, 2013).

Just as Metcalf's impassioned delivery states, this 'artisan', attentive, hands-on approach to agriculture is both 'to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett, 2008:9), and to stand against an alternative place-making which anonymises, rather than interacts with place (Metcalf, 2002:16). If the job in hand is to grow a 'good' tomato then it is not just about approaching the plot with tools but getting to know the plot—its 'constraints and affordances' (Marchand 2016:18)—and then approaching the plot itself *as* a situated tool. If 'dialogue' and 'narrative' are part of conceptualising problems (ibid: 17), then perhaps the term terroir has been useful in understanding what tools are available.

Not only is their craft 'bespoke' to a locale—to use one of Marchand's 'craft words'—it is also adaptive and attentive to how that locale is always unfolding (and the part they play in that evolution), suiting the skill to the shifting situation. Craftspeople both embrace (accept) and transform (alter) place. They directly craft plot so that plot may craft vegetable. Whether terroir is 'true' or not, they also make the idea of place mobile through flavour. As Stefano said 'this isn't just a courgette, it's a *Sant'Erasmo courgette*. It's a completely different thing, and even if you don't know that, you can taste it' (field diary).

"Our politicians don't have an idea. They work from a linear vision of time that can't understand a logic of complexity" (Marco Track 2).

At the heart of Marco's motivation to produce food is the conviction that the cultivation of place can be a means of problem solving. He applies cultivation as the tool in addressing a range of problems from place having de-graded to "non-place" or specific individuals lacking care, to more nebulous deficiencies gathered under titles such as capitalism and industrialism. As Marchand has said of problems, they are 'not exceptional events. They crop up persistently and at different scales of magnitude, with different effects and consequences [..] demand[ing] different resources and economies of effort to rectify, solve, or satisfy them' (Marchand, 2007:15). Both in the immediate and concrete, and in the abstract, Marco's project is a political one of *opening:*

> "Most people don't understand. Yes [this place is] closed within 4 walls but within those walls there are many doors and those doorways are portals of communication with other places. You have to have a complete vision of a place, not limit it [..] I don't want to just cultivate one little part I want to integrate it into the whole. [..] If you don't put energy into entering into relationships you will never have anything. [..] If you set off with the idea that you're cultivating just a bit of vegetable garden disconnected from the whole because you think you don't have sufficient resources it is certain that you will have ever fewer resources even to cultivate that piece. If instead, you enter into an open project, without limits, you enter into relationships with other people, other places, you're open to the ideas of other people then you'll be able to cultivate that whole place and also other places and you won't have enough space for all the ideas!" (Marco, Track 2).

Marco's politics echo Massey's. Both propose that 'there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction' (Massey, 2005:38). For Marco, the myriad points of encounter between soil, stone and water, as well as between different social groups make Venice richer ground for cultivation than a rural farm. Here, he says "we have this situation, so complex and stimulating for creating these principles of permaculture, that is to work with and on complexity, to put into dynamic relationship what seems like mess" (Track 2). Permaculture values the fertility of edges and overlap, "*effetto margine*—edge effect" where edges become contact zones rather than peripheral boundary lines (Marco, Track 2).

To identify 'problems' Marco starts with different types of maps, and layers them on top of each other. The first map is a cartographic one. Whilst you might be able to "see immediately whether a place has its genius loci or not" (Marco, Track 1), how do you find out about places outside of everyday attention, forgotten even?

> "There's no exchange. This city has always less nature, nature comes to be always more and more closed off, no? Barriers are being made—look—from the biggest barrier of the MOSE[5], then within the Lagoon there's ever more closure: *Arsenale*—the dock yards, for example, the valleys

[5] The MOSE are electronic gates being constructed on the Lagoon's inlets. They are variously argued to protect Venice from flooding, or to be environmentally damaging in their own right.

> of fish[6] closed instead of left open, the gardens become closed off rather than open, the alleys and courtyards closed off rather than open, the trend, globally too, is of closure, not of opening up. Still people from Africa attempt to arrive here but the political ideas are all about sending them back, not accepting them in—there's no movement, even when this force of movement is so great in volume that it's difficult to manage to close" (Marco, Track 1).

Starting with an aerial map of the city Marco finds all the points of green that appear to have no connection to each other and then he begins to find out about them, who knows them, who goes there, what takes place, how can he get in, how can he link them up. Even from those google earth images sometimes it's possible to pick out the places where magic is struggling, he says, but it also opens up questions of everyday politics to do with what is visible, what is open? For Marco, the forgetting and privatising of these green places is emblematic of a growing attitude in Venice, and more widely which turns a blind eye to an increasing culture of closure.

> "I often work with maps. Mind maps. Where you *see* the relationships, in contrast to a written project that doesn't allow you to see the connections, the relationships. In the moment in which you see the various links, connections, correlations you understand immediately how strong a connection is and whether it's too strong" (Track 2).

One of the projects I worked on with Marco was at a school for hospitality, *Instituto Barbarigo*. There were two main problems, he says. The first was the way in which these adolescents were learning to cook and to 'care' for people in hospitality without, in the process, having to take care of something or someone; and without experiencing food as something growing out of a relationship in, with and of place. The school was beautiful: marble, stone, frescos and curling staircases and then there was this patch of earth outside. Green space is a rarity in Venice. But instead of being valued because of this, it was almost unseen, neither a populated or nurtured place. The students and teachers moving through it didn't even turn their heads as they passed, nobody sat on the scratchy grass in their breaks. There is a tree that no one knows the name of in the far corner and a ring of diseased roses to one side. For Marco this was the second problem: that this special bit of ground (special by virtue of not being built upon), had become disconnected, mute despite its position on the doorstep of a school in a city otherwise dominated by stone.

The first day with the students Marco took out huge sheets of paper, blank as the place itself. We sat in a circle on the patch. Some of the students perched on top of their bags. Just as he had done with his children Marco encouraged an outpouring of ideas from the students, flowing by association, one connection running into another across the page until the the dream web was BIG. And then he took away the paper and showed those dreams in-place, how they could become together, how some might be realised and some might co-exist still as dreams that opened places further. Doorways. The possibility for both change and magic. For extension, transformation, inhabitation (by them but also by others, from bacteria to birds). He made them question, and he listened, he built a team. But he made them find pleasure in the proliferation of questions not all of which need answers. He guided what could be realised and what could not in a way that didn't shut the students down but got them grappling with

[6] The Lagoon is made up of a subaqueous terrain described in terms of 'gums', like ridges or banks, canals and valleys. Access to areas of this landscape are becoming increasingly restricted and privatised.

problems and which ones could be solved. In that first meeting we didn't transform the physical place but we began to transform the possibility of what this place could be, igniting a move beyond the visible into the realm of the imagination, and beyond knowledge into ideology.

Above: The teenagers map imagined connections. Below: Marco observes the soil.

If you walk past *Barbarigo* on the street all you see is a brick wall. There's an iron gate but through it you can't glimpse the patch of grass. On the other side of the street are buildings rising four stories that overlook the school. One day we were digging a drainage ditch, whilst some of the other students were creating a vegetable bed. On a balcony high above us a small boy, not more than six years old pressed his face against the iron bars and watched us. Eventually his mother shouted down to us, asking if he could join in. Slowly curiosity drew out more neighbours, until between them they had agreed to come and water our efforts over the school's summer holidays. Other small shifts began to occur. In an effort to resuscitate the soil the teenagers gathered the coffee grounds from all the surrounding cafes at the end of the day. Cafes they'd never been to (there was a coffee vending machine within the school), some of whose proprietors didn't know that it was a school for hospitality behind the tall brick wall[7]. What had been boundaries, iron, stone, brick were becoming social edges of interaction rather than delineation. And the soil was gradually improving, opening up.

Edges, however, did not always seem so easily productive. Cultivating overlap also provokes conflict. Crafting place through cultivation re-crafts social relationships, but not always mapped onto the political ideals of openness. The most obvious example lies in Marco's relationship with *Laguna nel bicchiere* at Zitelle—Marco's main site on the island of the Giudecca. At Zitelle, Marco and *Laguna nel bicchiere*'s custodianship overlaps. They tend the vines and he the vegetable beds that he has planted at their base. Marco felt that the vines dominated, and so he planted trees in-between them. *Laguna nel bicchiere* disagreed and cut down the trees. Marco expanded the beds at the base of the vines and *Laguna nel bicchiere* trod on his produce in order to tend to them. Back and forth the conflict of the edge went, breeding division and hostility rather than dialogue and interconnectedness. *Barabarigo* shows the ability of small acts to re-shape the world, however modestly. But to 'work with and on complexity' as Marco put it, is not always so straightforward. As much as the cultivated plot, Marco's process of crafting focuses on what the physical transformations might afford socially or intellectually, but he can't control how material place, or social encounter will be interacted with, how those relations will develop. The challenges raised in those relationships with *Laguna nel bicchiere* might offer new ways to think about how the complexity of crafting place is navigated. As Marchand suggests, problems are not one-offs. As stories of plots unfold, so new problems to be grappled with arise.

[7] Another example of opening dialogue: One day a Californian permaculturist came to visit to see Marco's project. And later he would turn out to be almost a neighbour of mine in Catalunya and would come to my own patch of land to advise me on water.

Exploring the crafting of place further also becomes a means to respond to the questions: ‘who cares for whom and for what[?]’ (Tronto, 1993:175), and ‘how is this done?’ (Meah and Jackson, 2017:2068). Food is an obvious ‘thing’ to explore in conjunction with care, both pertaining towards nourishment. Much literature, however, positioning itself at the rough ‘intersection of food and care’ (Abbots et al., 2015:1) conceptually narrows food to eating. I want to suggest that caring through food happens a step back from this, it happens through production, but even before this it happens in the crafting of place for cultivation.

*“The job that was carried out was carried out: of care and auto-care” (Marco, Track 2).*

A hotchpotch of people stand smoking, gardening tools propped around them. There’s an incongruousness to the group, who seem to range from forty-ish to seventy-ish. Two men share a joint, one sun-bed orange with greased back hair, the other balding in a shirt. A slight lady pulls a pink cardy tightly around her, smiling a broad, gappy smile. Next to her another man, head phones still in one ear throws out an occasional dance move, pirouetting around a shovel wearing a shiny metallic string vest. ‘Let me introduce you to the *brigata verde*—the green brigade’ Marco says. Reconfigured as *the green brigade*, these individuals were previously related by their status as unemployed. They are working on a series of dry, grey beds outside a grand villa.

> “They began to unravel, and they could begin to work on things with the earth where they, in order to cure themselves, to care for themselves they passed over into becoming the carers of these spaces. We worked on the earth, planting, sowing, so these people, used to being on the receiving end of social services, instead it became *them* that were in charge of helping nature to grow and paying attention to the modifications of the natural environment. And this is really important, no?, for people. *C’é*—that is, the curative power of the earth is fundamental” (Marco, Track 2).

By reversing the orientation of care, re-positioning the green brigade as care-givers rather than care-receivers, these individuals gain an authority to shape the world, to bring about and nurture the health of a plot that is otherwise untended, barely seen.

The practice of crafting place creates ‘individual self-determination’, negates ‘disembodiment’ and ‘relocate[s] personal meaning’ (Metcalfe, 2002:17). Although the ways we eat are often said to be key to the ways in which belonging is forged, when Marco expressed that eating, for him is a secondary result of cultivation he was gesturing towards the many different strategies that are employed to feel belonging.

As Fisher and Tronto have laid out in their well known feminist theory of care, forms of enacting care are complicatedly entangled (1990). However, their work offers a way in to conceptualising care by breaking it down into four consecutive stages: caring about, taking care of, care giving and care receiving. Caring about, they define as deeply linked to knowing, that is being orientated *towards* someone or something, being attentive (ibid: 41). Taking care of, is about judgement, working out how someone/thing might be taken care of and what that might involve (ibid: 42). Care giving, is the hands-

on work: committed over time and needing a more intimate knowing of the object of care, it is adaptive and skilled (ibid: 43). Care receiving is the response to care (ibid: 45). 'When people needing care become their own caregivers they must also acquire or teach themselves caregiving skills' (ibid).

Marco begins with permaculture principles and then spirals out. Three important starting points, he says, are the ethical dimension (care), observation (paying attention), and interaction (relationship). The cultivation practices begin, not with seeds, but with theatre, crafting trust:

> "We were all in a circle, on our feet and one by one each person had to go into the middle of the circle, and rotate very slowly and look into the eyes of all of the others, and all of the others looked back at you with a gaze of support, to help you be in the centre of the circle and so you felt that you were being helped by these other people to be there and that was very affecting, really very emotional, because, well [..] in this case we were doing it with people with a history behind them, crazy pasts, and so from these eyes phah [sharp bowing out of breath] everything came out, understand? And through these exercises, which are very strong, also in which we touched, we held hands, we held each other, hugged each other [..] theatre works on the body, on warming up the body, some of these exercises are almost gymnastic, where you really loosen up and some people were completely blocked, bad backs, bad knees, necks, etc. people full of physical problems, people that perhaps haven't ever used their bodies physically, you could see they were totally rigid like a rod but in this way they began to unwind" (Marco, Track 2).

I conceive of Marco's role as fulfilling Fisher and Tronto's first two categories of care whilst facilitating the learning of caregiving skills (1990:41-45). Marco combines his caring about opening up place, making it able to accommodate people, with his care about the health of the plot. Whilst orientated towards the green brigade and the land, instead of administering care, he judges the means by which individuals might 'acquire or teach themselves caregiving skills' (ibid: 45), which act both upon the ground and upon themselves. The physical crafting of place then, crafts caring spaces where through administering care, through beginning to care about, through an increasing knowing and relating to plot, care is received. Marco tries to reconfigure what this grouping might mean for these individuals. Whilst previously they have been related through a shared disempowerment, he re-forges their relationship to each other as enacting the same orientation of care.

The group of people fiddle with trowels, shifting from one foot to another. There is an anxiety in their waiting. The plot that they are tending abuts an exhibition set to open soon for Venice's biennale—the city's international art fair—and they've been told that they will have to cease their project. And now an argument between Marco and the organisers is unfolding. The green brigade are deemed by the city's council to be 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996), a strong reminder that the meaning of place is 'created by some people with more power than others [and who] define what is and is not appropriate' (Cresswell, 2004:27). Closure is profitable. '[T]he same processes that bring forth that which is deemed normative or ideal, involve forms of censorship, denial stigma and sequestration that determine what is abnormal or abominable' as Jackson has said (2005:19). Just as Marco attempts to craft relationships, openings, dialogue, the dominant narrative of Venice silences these small stories, defines the visible. Whilst place continues to be a simultaneity of stories-so-far (Massey, 2005:9), what remains audible is often singular. Restricting access to place in this instance closes down access to care for both plot and person. It denies

that place can hold multiple, unfurling stories simultaneously. Indicative of what Massey argues is an outdated politics of place (ibid), closure destabilises place, rather than nurturing the genius loci through multiple connections; it returns to what can be extracted from place.

Marco loses the argument, and the green brigade are forced out of sight.

> Neil: 'You've got to stroke them y'know, so they know you're there'
> Emily: 'caress them'
> *BB: Why is that?*
> Neil: Well it's nice isn't it, it's just a nice thing to do
> Emily: 'It makes them more robust as they grow up'
> Neil: 'Yeah, so when they go outside they're a little bit hardier, a little bit of love makes them stronger, you've gotta touch your plants, they like it. There's a word for it *thigmomorphogenesis*' (field diary).

As the different 'phases' of care set out by Fisher and Tronto are enacted in everyday life they relate and intertwine in complicated ways (1990:41). For, as Tronto posits, it is not just for *whom* we care but also for *what* (1993:175). That plants are living entities allows them to be more easily anthropomorphised. Their functions can easily be mapped imaginatively on to our own: 'breathing', 'growing', 'suffering', 'in need of encouragement' (field diary). When Ernesto prunes the vines, the vines cry: 'you can see their tears', he says, 'and you must cut at the right time. If you do it too early it's too painful: you'll weaken them. You will see in the heaviness of their weeping that you've hurt them' (field diary). The personification of their plants allows Emily and Neil to take on on almost parental roles, caring for the plants in a daily routine of checking, providing water, nutrients, touch. Neil and Emily's description of thigmomorphogenesis echoes the emotional power of touch between humans expressed by Marco talking about the green brigade.

As he cares for these small plants, Neil says he imagines how he will care, through them, for a community. Sustaining them physically, but also taking care to sustain the interactions that connect and produce community. 'I think about this a lot, the amount of people that we've touched, even when we don't know, when we can't see, that we nourish every day. From things we've grown from seed, that we've been part of that whole cycle. I mean, when we sell to Birch or Wilk's (restaurants) we don't know who we end up feeding but they're part of it. It's amazing isn't it that we're part of giving life, that we're connected to all these people [..] part of this network and it's really important. How many people can say that?' (Neil, field diary).

At The Walled Garden caring about, taking care of, care giving and care receiving, shift around in their orientation, in who enacts what and how. Taking care of consumers involved not only the hands on care-giving labour of the garden itself so that it would produce vegetables, but a taking care of the individuals who worked there so that care-giving could be performed. Beyond these immediate forms of care was also a care about the future, a global environment and its population which entangled past and future, consumers now and producers and consumers to come. Some forms of care were complimentary: caring for an individual tomato could also contribute to caring for the soil. But sometimes forms of caring clashed. As described in section 7, caring for heritage varieties in order to save seed, nurture a story and protect physical biodiversity for the future and its consumers, took care away from more vigorously growing vegetables that did more to immediately nourish consumers and make the business viable.

The origins of the word ‘care’ carry a sense of burden that is hidden in our modern usage of the word. Its roots are in fact sorrowful ones of crying out and of anxiety. Care only developed positive permutations much later, offering both faces of the coin: grief one side and fondness the other. From that flicker of fondness the word evolved further, concern growing in positivity, swelling with compassion and attentiveness (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1888).

‘I couldn’t give someone a sub-standard vegetable, I just couldn’t do that ‘cos that’s what’s going to nourish them, y’know, that’s going to become their bodies’ (Neil, field diary). Through the various responsibilities inherent in care there were also different pressures. Whilst these food producers were ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ various other human and non-human bodies, who was caring for them?

The Walled Garden is felt as a form of family. ‘A raggle-taggle crew of mis-fits’ (Neil, field diary). Neil attracts people that feel otherwise ‘out of place’ (Cresswell, 1996). “I’m a lune-magnet” he says with great enthusiasm (Track 10). His newest ‘recruit’ is seventeen year old Alex. “He’s started to really come out of his shell now. He’s a real quiet lad and he’s, his parents asked if I could, if he could come up ‘cos he’s got no friends and stuff, and now he’s starting to really kind of, talk back, and interact and you know, and get involved and stuff. He’s on the right tracks. I haven’t got him down the pub yet but it’s only a matter of time” (Neil, Track 10).

Nominally a place where people come together to work, The Walled Garden isn’t a straightforwardly professional place but blurs professional with domestic. Both growing food and consuming food together contributes to the multiplicity of this place as productive and dwelled within, driven by both commerce and care. The poly-tunnel kitchen is the heart of this alternative homestead. When she first started working at the garden, Emily was living nearby with her parents. And yet this conventional sphere of domesticity—the family home—was not a place of stability and comfort to her. Whilst at times it offered continuity, it was also associated with rhythms of stress and remembered anxiety. Some nights, rather than return to her parents’ house she would sleep at the garden, between the compost bags and seedlings. Through her experience of anorexia, home, had become indelibly marked by harm. The garden, and Neil, however fulfilled those needs for privacy and shelter when her perceived home could not. In the absence of receiving care directly, individuals seek and create places of auto-care in different ways.

‘I’ve really cut back on the old drinking. I really have to look after myself more so I can look after the garden better’ (Neil, field diary).

Neil’s relationship with the garden, however, is not straightforward. In one role she (always ‘she’) is his carer. The garden looks after his well being—body and mind (giving him both a reason to be and a reason to be outside)—and gives him a space within which he can share this care with those directly around him: those needing care and receiving it through their work at The Walled Garden. But, though anthropomorphised, the garden avoids blame. If the work damages Neil—if his back or his knees hurt—he blames himself for not being in good enough shape to tend to her, he doesn’t see that as a lapse in care from the garden. Similarly, by crafting this professional space as domestic, by crafting home through cultivation and dwelling there who gets left behind? As Neil said of his customers “I see some of these people more than I see my family” (Neil, Track 7).

‘Home’ is a tricky place. It is often associated with ideas of what is real, caring, or safe (for instance: Tuan, 1991; Seamon, 1979). This reading of home, however, has been complicated by the work of feminist geographers (such as Rose, 1993) who show up home as harbouring the potential for oppression, care-*less*-ness, conflict and neglect. Whilst the word care may conjure positive associations of nurture and love (DeVault, 1991 for instance, uses love and care almost interchangeably), care still reverberates with its put-upon past, the two faces of concern. Dario, from *La Maravegia* says to me one day ‘the dream job is when it’s no longer a job, it’s just your life’ (field diary). However, working alongside Emily and Stefano respectively showed up the difficulties of blurring these realms. For Emily her difficulties arose in approaching Neil about fairer pay. Their knowledge of each others’ ‘personal’ lives, their giving and receiving of care complicated any conventional professional practice, eliminating the sphere for having these discussions with ease. The Walled Garden becoming home, undid the boundaries and practices that made it a place of work.

The summer at *La Maravegia* was fraught, Stefano and his fair-headed girlfriend—Anna, fought a lot. Anna helps him harvest for the market, she helps him load the boat and plan the workshops. She helps him sow out the beans and tether the peas. She helps make lunches, wash up with clay dust and lemon juice, she buys cold beer. Her daughter plays on the land, brings her class mates there: Stefano tells her off for tormenting the frogs and tries to teach her how to treat the stick insects gently. He needs the help. Since Dario withdrew, Stefano’s here all of the time. The sink is piled high with dishes, the compost bin is full of coffee grounds and the ash trays with cigarette butts. Bicycles and cushions sprawl outside the makeshift house. Dug-up little medicine bottles serve as vases on the flaking, claw-footed tables. Hammocks are strung slack between the black locust trees and the shelves are two-deep with jars of dandelion honey. *Matto*—Mad-one the dog pootles around in the shade.

Like Emily in the poly-tunnel, Stefano and Anna often bunk down, light the wood burner, cook and eat their evening meal at *La Maravegia*. Despite its lack of electricity, plumbing or the legal permission to ‘dwell’ the shack afforded them the opportunity to put off going ‘home’. To create a substitute, avoiding return to the uncaring and uncared for space of the house that had been the home of Dario and Stefano (and originally all four of *La Maravegia*’s founders). I stayed there during my pilot trip, before Dario had pulled away but it was already becoming neglected, seeded with damp, no longer a sanctuary but thick with the increasing tensions between the two men. Slowly, Stefano and Anna were re-crafting *La Maravegia* as theirs, as work, as home. Dissolving that imagined and practiced line dividing personal from professional, however, allows complexities both positive and negative to reign more explicitly.

I remember one particular day, their jagged shouting echoing around the plot—inescapable, harrowing. Afterwards Stefano came over, put his head in his hands and said ‘there’s just no getting away’ (field diary).

| Dave the Robin

As I was leaving The Walled Garden in Bristol, Neil and Emily were changing their production methods from ‘dig’ to ‘no-dig’. This meant, rather than digging over the existing soil and planting into it, tonnes of cow manure were hefted into humps on top of the soil and dragged smooth to create big, raised ridges a metre wide running over the beds. Over the manure was laid the same thickness again of mushroom compost that would be planted into. It was a hugely labour-intensive transition. Not only did it re-shape the garden physically but it was also a change in orientation. Whilst it was a shift that we’d talked about intellectually, now Neil and Emily were going to live it physically, “learning to love the soil as well as, or rather, more than the plants themselves that come and go, the soil is paramount for growth” (Emily, written communication[8]).

“No-dig completely honours the natural intelligence of the soil—as an organism in itself—for me, at least it’s that. The soil is a living being, along with all the smaller forms that enliven it. [..] This way we can care for the microbes, as part of the whole organism of the soil. We are obviously just as much a part of nature and therefore our involvement and cultivation of the soil is all part of natural processes, but for me, when living and working from a place of connection (and not from a sense of separation—that we are separate from the web of the whole) comes a great level of care in the way that one works in relationship with the soil [..] Naturally one stands on things and we still disrupt things as we work, but we’re trying to cut as many crops down at the soil level and leaving the roots in which is a large part of not disturbing the microbiome” (Emily, written communication).

This change, as Emily describes it, is a shift from understanding soil as a medium to understanding soil as a lively community with some sort of unity. This echoes her understanding of her body: ‘we already live in community’ she said of her body ‘if we acknowledge that, and begin to feel that, then we can being to work on being in community with the world around us’ (field diary). Emily’s comments seem to affirm Krzywoszynska’s assertion that what soil is does not precede ‘the mundane practices in which humans interact with it, but [is] rather [..] shaped within these very practices’ (2019:663). Previously soil was a substrate, shaped as such through being constantly split open through practices of burying and retrieval. Latterly soil has become a living body singular and plural enacted as a functioning organism both stable and lively that shouldn’t be ‘disturbed’. This is to return to Mol’s ideas of simultaneous multiplicity and specificity (2002).

Collectively the sections of this thesis show not only how attention is orientated towards different people, stories or temporalities as well as towards the food being cultivated, but it demonstrates the effects of the practices and narratives that come about as a consequence.

Krzywoszynska’s ‘care network’ provides a means of ‘conceptualising and investigating’ these directional relationships forged through attentiveness or a change in attentiveness, drawing attention to how place as network of relationship alters (2019:661).

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[8] This is from written communication between Emily and I several months after the close of my fieldwork with The Walled Garden when I asked her her thoughts about no-dig and how it was going. I had participated very little in this change. I was already working alongside Ben and Bella in the orchards but would occasionally help out Neil and Emily for a few hours.

Becoming entangled in both labour and story has been a means of aligning attentiveness, hearing the focus of others, and participating in the practices that give those orientations meaning. If much of this thesis has been about showing up those flows of attention in order to better understand the nuanced ways in which food production matters to the individuals pursuing it, a future direction would be to turn around. Orientation towards suggests an attendance to, a knowing about, potentially laying the ground work for 'caring about' (Krzywoszynska, 2019; Fisher and Tronto, 1990). Attention, in its focus, is finite, making attention towards, a decision between (Fisher and Tronto, 1990). An acknowledgment of turning our actions towards something or someone should include a similar recognition that that same attentiveness leads us to always be orientated away from something or someone else, with similarly real effects.

> "I do think orchards add to our environments" Bella says "they're man, human-made phenomenon but I think they really fit and add to our natural landscape rather than just y'know some kind of, especially sort of the smaller orchards we're working in they're not like horrible industrial agriculture, monocultures, or whatever, they're, or big concrete things, they're trees, and homes to birds and y'know all these exciting things that add to landscapes so I think that's quite nice too from an ecological perspective. [..] Well we try to get rid of the rats.. [laughing] fight the rats, er, no but there are other, oh yeah and we fight the slugs, and the wasps [laughing] that um, yeah, there's loads of birds, we've seen quite a nice, y'know variety of birds, there's a couple of bee hives in the top orchards, we'd like to get some bees in the bottom orchards too and obviously that really helps with pollination, there's a really good symbiotic relationship there.. loads of birds [..] Ah that bloody robin, [laughing] um, we got a robin who hangs around the cider barn, that's our friend, that we've called Dave, um. Dave is, is very curious about us all the time, and pokes his head around and comes in, and hangs about and then once in a while shits on something, which is really not very, it sort of destroys the romanticism of that!" (Track 5).

Emily highlights an orientation towards soil and how an attentiveness to soil being an ecology enacts it differently, includes it differently within the garden's network of care. Bella's extract, on the other hand shows how caring about apples (and cider) and the web of practice that takes in, (among other things, hygiene standards, etc.) means necessarily excluding things outside of that. How care is performed has a knock on effect to the flows and relationships of the unfolding of place. Not only does it affect the narrative of place, but the materials within its assemblage and the relationships between them.

As Krzywoszynska says, when the care-network is reconfigured (for example, because of a change in relationship to soil) a change in relations in one area throws up challenges or conflicts in another (2019:10), calling for a 'redistributi[on] [of] attentiveness' (ibid: 11). Community and care 'operate via exclusion and division' (Wylie, 2018:188). Practicing care for something, whether soil, or cider, includes it in a 'care network' to the suppression of beings that threaten that object of care (Krzywoszynska, 2019). This was repeated in myriad forms through food production and echoes the relationship with place described earlier where plot was crafted through a process of responsive acceptance and alteration. By attending to these networks, we hear into different versions, possibilities of place.

This section, and more broadly, this research has begun to show the acts of turning towards and turning away from in food production, to make audible small stories unfolding beneath dominant narratives. It has suggested that there are alternative and multiple histories to place, and and layers to how we sense,

experience and craft place but it has only begun to hint at what is turned away from in food production. How crafting place in one form, negates it in another.

## | Conclusion

This section encounters place through both practice and narrative. It joins the geographical project of grappling with its complexities and writing it anew (Wylie, 2018; Coles, 2014). It adds specific stories to Massey's understanding of place as collections of simultaneous stories-so-far (2005:130).

Specifically it engages with the myriad places of food production heard through the unfolding stories of different plots: those expected and those less, the material, remembered, recounted, imagined, those felt and those crafted, non-places and exclusionary places, shared places and loved plots. Through place, production has been understood as careful and caring, an artisan's craft, a form of nurturing magic, a mirror, a map, a cure and a curse. What holds these accounts together is a sense that place is not fixed, but always becoming: particular and multiple.

Despite the variety of textures, meanings and relationships that come together to make up place, they nonetheless hang together in practice to borrow a phrase from Mol (2002). As Marco says of his constellation of projects:

> "I called it *macchia verde*—green stain, something liquid that falls here and has a form but there are lots of other little stains, splishes and splashes [..] I like to think of them as spreading marks, stains [..] not in terms of points because there is more variation in form of each mark and yet also more relating between the splodges [..] they have their own form but they still carry this understanding that they are made out of the same substance" (Marco, Track 2).

This accumulation and juxtaposition of stories of place, gestures both at connections and disconnections between layers of place; between places; between depictions, narratives and experiences of place. It has not only described, shown and interfered in place, it has crafted 'ethnographic places' to add to the medley. It acknowledges my presence because ultimately as Linkogle said 'you are there… because I am there' (2000:114). This story is audible because first, I was the the listener; for any other listener the stories would be otherwise heard and otherwise recreated. It is both the highly particular individual experience of individual producers, and my interpretation.

Like 'place' itself, ethnographic places are a 'unique configuration of trajectories' (Pink, 2009:42). Like place, these 'ethnographic places' are not finished, closed or singular, but by opening a doorway onto place, they hope to make something audible that will continue to resonate. These producers see doorways everywhere, in tattoos, politics, dreams, language, in people. When doorways are shut, it is their project to open them. Production as possibility.

18

# C O N C L U S I O N

Everyday | Individual

_____

Food | Production,
Place | Plot

_____

Memory | Story,
Narrative | Practice

_____

Archive

_____

Limits | Doorways

_____

Unfinished | Not Belonging

> ‘Models of thinking that slide over the live surface of difference at work in the ordinary to bottom-line arguments about “bigger” structures and underlying causes obscure the ways in which a reeling present is composed out of heterogeneous and non-coherent singularities. They miss how someone’s ordinary can endure or can sag defeated; how it can shift in the face of [mundane] events [..] How it can be carefully maintained as a prized possession, or left to rot. How it can morph into a cold, dark edge, or give way to something unexpectedly hopeful (Stewart, 2007:4).

One of the main aims of this thesis has been to make the realm of food production audible in a manner that attended to individual experience beyond the commercial and explicitly political implications of production. To do this, the research situated itself in the everyday, showing it to be a domain of extraordinary meaning-making in food production. It told some of the stories unfolding, shifting and always becoming that constitute daily life: stories as ways to experience and make place; stories from which self emerges and hangs together; stories that engage dynamically with the body to inform the senses, contributing to the meaningfulness of practice. Massey proposed places as a gathering of stories, a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (2005:9), and this thesis has shown this multiplicity, fluidity and interconnection as it was underway in these cultivated plots.

As I noted in my Introduction, an inquiry into food calls for ways that engage with both symbol and substance. As well as foodstuffs being complicated objects of changing materiality and meaning, people too, are both bodies and stories. Valuing what we can learn from story, alongside knowledge grasped at through the body, greater opportunities emerge for examining the contribution of—and dynamics between—different forms of narrative and practice within (or made possible by) food production.

Rather than interviewing established, prominent food producers, or those at the very end of their career, this thesis tells tales from mid-points, pivot-points, breaking-points. It was the experience of individual producers that was explicitly sought out, but these points were encountered as a consequence of being in the thick of it. Participating in everyday life was to be a part of ‘someone’s ordinary’ (in the particular) as it ‘endure[d]’, ‘morph[ed]’, struggled or thrived, always in motion, always in transformation (Stewart, 2007:4). Both long, ethnographic involvement, and the undertaking of life story interviews specifically prioritise individuals. They are sensitive, intimate means of coming to know. Whilst both methods are necessarily partial and subjective, they access the complexities of lived and narrated experience, mapping between the momentary and the ongoing. This study demonstrated ways in which food production and its meanings were highly personal, produced through both physical and narrative enactment.

The title of this thesis shows the evolution that unfolded through doing and listening. Three expansive realms—food, place and memory— become narrated in the particular via the the storied experience of each productive plot. The research did not show up a universal relationship between practice and narrative but many specific ones. It did not define place but suggested it. It did not pin down tradition but opened it up to a different form of scrutiny. It showed how food production is wielded by individuals

as a problem-solving tool as well as a means to cultivate food stuffs. As much as it is experiential, this thesis is propositional. It offers up stories, already and still, unfolding. It cannot tell of beginnings and endings. It gives new voice, however, to the stories of *these* producers and *these* plots-so-far. It provides contemplations and suggestions about the workings of memory and its relationship with story and the imagination.

These lives are valuable in many ways. Because the individuals in them are special (to me particularly) but also because individuality—that is difference—is a condition shared by humanity. They are valuable for the way in which their accounts preserve tiny, everyday details that are ephemeral and easily forgotten. And those details are important because they contribute to how we orientate ourselves within the world. As this thesis has demonstrated, the way in which food producers are orientated has effects far beyond each person. It is the detail that reveals food production as highly complex in what it makes possible. It is only through personal stories that we can begin to grasp the extent to which practicing food production is also to craft place, to care, to relate and, in complicated ways to dwell. Production is shown to be an everyday realm of identity formation, of agency and resistance, of small acts that contribute to making the world.

This thesis has shown the individual experience of food production to be significant to these producers in ways that greatly exceed its commercial and (capital P) political implications. The everyday remains a realm rich for further exploration. A further direction for this work, however, could also be to unbracket the commercial and the consumer, which would further complicate the relationships at work within this complex domain of the plot. A contribution of this thesis is to underscore that the everyday being and becoming of individuals is also at stake and deserves greater consideration alongside questions of commerce and politics. Production has shown to be a site thick with (cultural) questions of heritage, identity and story that complicate the doing of agriculture. Whilst among other, Freidburg (2003) and Russell (2003) begin to show the impact of the personal within the commercial, this thesis adds to those accounts by delving into life around and beyond the commercial. Not only as areas that effect the commercial but that are as foundational to why food is produced as the financial outcome.

Collectively, these sections do not add up to food production. They are a partial record, and a possible interpretation. In its messy, incomplete and subjective project this thesis approaches the messy, subjective, incompleteness of the world.

Food | Production, Place | Plot

For almost eighteen months I worked alongside ten individuals producing food on various plots. This involved digging—and *not* digging—sewing seeds and harvesting crops, and all of the tending in between. ‘Food’ encompassed fruit, vegetables, edible flowers, medicinal herbs, cider, juice and wine. Whilst there were also times when I was involved in the selling of these foodstuffs, this was a minor role; the thrust of the work undertaken was in the producing. Whilst not seeking to portray production

and consumption as separate spheres, the work of this thesis was to elaborate the domain of production so that, in future studies that attend to the co-creation of these realms, more attention can be given to the way that production as well as consumption plays an important role in the making of self and place. This study did not focus on the 'alternative-ness' of these means of production but on their 'human-ness'. Part of this was coming to understand that food production did not only encompass the actions cited above. It also involved social, caring, domestic, stressful and boring activities, some of which, at first glance, appeared to have nothing to do with producing food. Learning to do research and learning to do food production was a process of opening or obliterating the frame.

In food geographies and the anthropology of food, it has been common for studies of food to go beyond the foodstuff itself to how food creates individual and social meaning. And yet these literatures have overwhelmingly been focused on the experiences of procuring, preparing and consuming food. The present study, however has illuminated the way in which the production of food has the capacity to forge and change identities, to connect individuals in various ways both storied, imagined and narrated as well as emotionally and physically. Production is a practice of many sensory relationships. It is an assemblage that draws together many materialities and interactions with the changing body of foodstuffs, with soil and weather, with tools and with other people. This research has shown how food is 'grown' *and* 'known' through production and what knowing food might mean (Goodman et al., 2012:34). Growing and knowing have not only entailed processes involving the foodstuffs themselves but the inner workings of the body and the dynamics between place and plot, storied practice and active story. What is produced goes far beyond 'units of production' (Yarwood and Evans, 1998:159). Cultivation led to the crafting of place in ways both expected and unexpected, material and social, tangible and fantastical. It was intentionally mobilised as a political and caring act, and understood as able to reconfigure physical and intangible place. This firmly demonstrates that an economic focus on production and a cultural one on consumption cannot do justice to the intricacies at play within production alone. Whilst past work by cultural geographers (such as Crang, 1994; Russell, 2003), has begun to move geographical studies of 'culture' in the food industry beyond a focus on consumers, the present study addresses the human experience specifically at the intersection between producer and plot.

One of the main aims of my thesis was to approach food production in the particular, making individual experiences of food producing more audible. This has been achieved in several ways. Firstly, involvement in the practical labour of these plots gave me a way to experience and understand first hand some of what constituted daily practices and how they were made sense of. In this way I was able to craft 'ethnographic places' in writing that gestured towards the movement, narratives, materialities and emotions played out in the working of those plots (Pink, 2009:38). Shared labour and gaze also built trusting relationships that forged greater intimacy and more ways in to story. Secondly, by combining the narratives of life story interviews with stories emerging from practice, I was able to share a web of meaning through this research that demonstrates how everyday narratives, and those of the self, are interwoven to make meaning. Stories do different things: some make sense of immediate perception, others make sense of an ongoing lifetime. Life stories are a single recounting that encompass myriad tales. Importantly in the combination of participatory and narrative methods employed for this study, life

stories give us a way in to imagining how *doing* is contextualised and located by story. Thirdly, by focusing on individual food producers who are not prominent in the food industry but nevertheless undertake the producing of food everyday, they make audible an ordinary position of precariousness. They pay attention to both the extraordinary and the mundane within those daily practices. Furthermore, by situating this research at the point where producer and soil overlap, it listens to an area of food production that appears underrepresented from a 'cultural'—that is *human*—perspective.

This research heard place in many forms. Over time, it was sensitised to more and more of the complexities of place as they were invoked, mobilised, experienced and crafted by producers to varying effect. Place, however, has always been made audible through specific plots, at a particular moment in time—connected as they are through time, story, geography and affect. Re-making place in the form of a thesis has been another way of engaging with place. This thesis has been a site of experimentation, as perhaps all scholarly writing is, in the way that it re-crafts experience, interweaving the voices of interviewees, researcher and theory into a cohesive polyvocality. It shows the value of the unfinished, the idiosyncratic and the under-heard in animating general or abstract concepts made sense of in theory. This research's focus on place (and to a lesser extent non-place) emerged out of fieldwork where the divisions between space and place felt less linked to experience, less 'real' than presented in literature. These explorations of place and plot, of self and memory and narrative, were entangled, echoing Massey's depiction of place: as story, multiple, inter-related and ongoing.

Memory | Story, Narrative | Practice

'[S]torytelling [is] a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances' (Jackson, 2002:34).

The wealth of experience gained through fieldwork, the volume of narrative gleaned through life story interviews, and the interconnections and overlaps between the two, were at times a tricky to navigate: a messy tangle of stuff and words and people and feelings. By combining life story interviews with participant observation, however, this research was able to show the thickness of the body—both corporeal and narrative—as an important means to encounter and make sense of the world. The body is shown to be thick with the relationship between nerves, and memories and stories. This thesis demonstrates that not only is storytelling a vital means of locating self within precarity but that, as a human faculty, it is *always essential.* Stories bridge vocalised narrative and corporeal meaning making. Story is the way in which we experience memory.

Initially, I was frustrated at the lack of access I was able to get to the workings of everyday forms of memory. But as the research unfolded I was able to reflect more on the role of memory. As my body and practice became increasingly aligned with those of the producers, I could also feel where something *other than* memory was at work in these plots, getting beyond supposed or imposed ideas of remembering. In sections 7 and 9, the role of story took prominence over recall, whereas section 11 speculates more about how the storying of memory contributes to skill and ways of knowing more widely. I suggest that the 'secret' of artisan knowledge is individual biography and the way in which

past experience is reanimated through the mnemonic imagination to inform sensory perception. My own interest in memory—kindled in a large part by the remembering of an accident—was key to arriving at this research. It guided its initial formation and has continued to inform its attention. I understand memory as key to being, becoming, acting and feeling. And yet I have only accessed it obliquely, through personal experience and speculation, or encountered it suggestively through story and affect. This is largely because it became more important to understand memory working in relation to—or as a tool in chorus with—other faculties than to pursue it in isolation.

When life story interviews open into streams of recollection, for instance, we often hear the ways in which happenings are gathered, suddenly and temporarily linked through story. Narratives issue forth via association pulled in a flow—akin to water cohesion—tellings become 'linked to each other, but not indelibly' (Desilvey, 2007:408-409). This storying is the work of memory but in collaboration with the imagination (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). This was a strength of using life stories alongside the stories of practice. Whilst the movement of the body in the world cannot help but trigger our own remembering in the present (Casey, 1987), this remembering is only infrequently shared out loud in everyday conversation. This constant unfolding and linking through memory is rarely explicit. But life stories serve to make it so. Practice, on the other hand, gives us an opportunity to share in the value of words, allowing us to hear more in life stories than if we were solely listening to—rather than also participating in—these narratives. Just as memory was found to work implicitly within the world, so too has it become implicit—or shown via association—in this thesis. As memory remains only partially understood, (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012) a future direction of geographical studies of memory could be to combine narrative, practice and with understandings emerging from neuroscience. The anthropologist Trevor Marchand (2010), for instance, has shown this to be a fertile intersection in his explorations of learning.

Whilst memory is a narrative that we continue to craft, where the sense of self can be seen to emerge from, it can also be a disconcerting realm that we cannot dis-attach ourselves from. Whilst tradition might conventionally suggest a strong link to memory, my research explored the ways in which tradition was done in everyday practice, and the ways that different enactments led to the doer being connected within different forms of story. Whilst for Ernesto, practical tasks were times of remembering and storytelling, it was equally about *being* remembered, and being valued. This is a thread that runs throughout this thesis, that different acts of food production *produced* individuals in a variety of valuable roles. Often, setting out to look at memory, is actually about exploring *experience* both as the precursor for memory and as the context that shapes remembering.

In Holtzman's (2012) review of work sitting at the intersection of food and memory, production is barely present. This research addresses that gap. Although at times exploring memory has felt like one step forward two steps back, this study contributes to literature of food and memory by undoing some of the assumptions surrounding the role of memory in production by looking harder at individual encounters with tradition, or heirloom crops or inherited plots. It goes beyond key authors such as Counihan (2004) and Sutton (2001) in its identification of production as well as consumption as a realm

of meaning and self-making that memory contributes to. Seremetakis' (1994) work has been most explicitly engaged with here (and her study of memory prefigures much of Sutton's subsequent writing). Despite her focus on consumption, I have built on her ideas of sensory numbing whilst suggesting that through food production this numbing is both encountered and responded to.

My thesis is not straightforwardly arranged so that a single section directly responds to a single research question. This is because the aims of this research, the questions that animated it, and the methods and methodologies through which it was undertaken, were tightly intertwined in practice. I hope to have navigated or shared some of this entanglement through the way in which each section focuses on a particular aspect of food production: disconnection, heirloom or place, for instance but in a manner that maintains the way in which story and practice, researcher and producer, theory and materiality were necessarily enmeshed. By interleaving methodological discussions within more thematic sections, I hope to have illuminated the relationship between means of encounter, and material emerging from it.

Archive

It has been a privilege born of happenstance to come across, work with, and be inspired by National Life Stories—both the individuals recorded and those doing the recording. Through both using existing interviews and undertaking life story interviewing myself, I have become an enthusiastic advocate of this method and methodology: one that values time spent, bonds formed, stories unfolding that are rich with so much detail. Life stories also have their limitations—their length makes them difficult and time consuming to work with—but I believe it's worth the investment and challenge for their ability to deepen meaning, raise more questions, and show up the complex nature of human storying. This thesis has demonstrated the merits of using life stories in conjunction with participating in interviewees' everyday life: a realm with its own different forms of narration and practice.

Material produced during the undertaking of this research will have a life beyond this thesis. The English interviews already have an archival home at The British Library and I will continue to pursue a dwelling place for the Italian ones. This will allow the interviews to be engaged with and interpreted by future researchers and audiences. These interviews compliment those already existing in National Life Stories by being recorded in the thick of it: individuals, not prominent in the food industry but going about the food producing every day—for now; a condition that is worth hearing more about.

The contributions of future researchers will doubtless enrich and complicate the thoughts I have set out here. It also opens up the possibility for these narratives to be used in relation to other archived stories, perhaps those of other food producers, or perhaps beyond food production. These voices might not stay together but be put into enlivening juxtaposition with others. The archive also opens up the probability for the interviews to be engaged with by different audiences, and across disciplinary boundaries.

Forthcoming photographic exhibitions will give a different form of visibility to lay, practitioner and academic audiences. Beyond the thesis I aim to work further with issues of audibility that don't seek to replace voice with text but provide greater access to the orality / aurality of the life story interviews.

Limits | Doorways

'Learning about learning and coming to know about knowing are colossal tasks beyond the scope of any one enterprise' (Marchand, 2010:s7).

The lengthy ethnographic encounters and huge volume of narrative generated by life stories provide both a richness and a limitation to this research. This thesis is necessarily limited in four obvious ways: firstly, because of the nature of the methods employed, only a small number of voices are made audible through this research. Secondly, with that first limitation in mind, the diversity of voices heard also remains narrow.

In an effort not to conceal the dynamics of place at work within production, this thesis looked at producers in the peripheries of Bristol and the Venetian Lagoon. The stories explored, however, of legacy, purpose and connection are not ideas limited to the plots or time explored here (although how they were enacted is necessarily specific). This research has begun to demonstrate the scope of production to be employed in the solving of different forms of problem, in the making of different forms of place, with differing effects for a variety of people. Ultimately, I hope that this research encourages other researchers from a variety of disciplines to pursue a curiosity in the experience of individual producers in other plots with different specificities, whether that is cultural, material, linguistic or political difference.

Precarity was not something imposed on to this research but emerged as a condition articulated, encountered and materialised in a variety of ways throughout the fieldwork and interviewing process. Right at the beginning of this thesis I shared Neil's tale of the tattoo, a strange and wonderful, humorous and gory means of coming to terms with a lack of stability, a creative strategy for inventing an alternative effort of belonging and bestowing. Instead of focusing on a context of pronounced political friction, the problems and politics explored here were the forms that arise in everyday life. It has shown what precarity might sound like in areas that appear relatively settled. A future research direction then, would be to purposefully seek out different forms of precarity as context.

Thirdly, the interpretations I have put forward represent only one possible set of sense-making paths through this dense web of happenings. It is messy work to interfere in these overlapping, multiple flows of movement and narrative and it can be challenging to navigate the sheer quantity of material produced by these methods. However, by showing *how* unique each producer's experience of production is, in its capacity to craft personal meaning, this study advocates for more research of this nature— limited in breath but significant in depth—to grow the polyvocality of this project.

Fourthly, in order to address an area of apparent weakness in the study of agriculture (that is the stripping out of 'culture') this study, almost artificially, limited its scope to the producer. Whilst I have acknowledged my understanding that the producer and consumer co-create the worlds they move in, a re-focus on the producer was essential. This both limits the current study but opens a doorway onto enriching future studies. Firstly, by examining producers in their own right, as individuals rather than purely performing professional roles, this study has highlighted everyday life in production as a domain worthy of investigation. It is in everyday life that the relationship between person and plot, or story and practice, or care giving and care receiving unfold and take on meaning. Secondly, in underscoring the importance of more-than commercial aspects of food production, it conveys that there is more to the stories currently being told of production. Future studies that dwell on the consumer-producer relationship, the economic or the alternativeness of food production might engage with producer experience beyond what appear to be its commercial motivations, or at least be able to acknowledge what is being bracketed for future consideration.

This research has laid fertile ground for further questioning. In this study, I purposefully avoided the politically 'hot' so that those quieter narratives could take prominence; and I intentionally situated this research in different places so that location neither dominated, nor become assumed in these stories. One way forward for this research would be to situate future questions in contexts where both professional and 'cultural' or community identity were shared. This would undoubtedly have implications for the strategies of belonging forged through production. A second, of many possible avenues would be to continue to follow the projects examined in this thesis as they continue to unfold. After all none of these stories are finished: Neil and Emily have moved to no-dig; Emily left but then returned to The Walled Garden; Dario left *La Maravegia* but still pursues projects in cultivation; Stefano was forced to cease *La Maravegia* and returned to the urban conurbation of Mestre. How do those changing situations add to and complicate what has been set out here?

## Unfinished | Not Belonging

This research has suggested that there are alternative and multiple histories and layers to sensation, experience and reality. It has begun to make audible small stories unfolding beneath dominant narratives and to show up acts of turning towards and turning away from, which occur through food production. It has followed how this complexity is navigated by individuals.

In concluding, I want to propose one more future direction which, through the reflective process of writing this thesis, has emerged as a feeling, a curiosity, a suspicion even. Rather than belonging, through an emphasis on story, this thesis has shown *efforts* at belonging, recounting *strategies* to belong —in narrative—if not always in place. In showing how flows and networks shift, how different (re)configurations of inclusions and exclusions emerge, it has implicitly positioned a sense of belonging as a process of renegotiation. There is a feeling that this is never fully achieved. What I have hinted at, but left undeveloped in this thesis is the question of whether belonging is a flawed and impossible

project: ‘landscape [as] not-belonging’ as John Wylie puts it (2018:191). Wylie builds his argument around landscape, which has not been a central concept in this research. As Williams says: ‘the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation’ (1973:120). Landscape and place have different histories of exploration. Nevertheless they meet in geography.

Wylie notes that, scholarly landscape—defined as ‘the inhabited and storied earth’; ‘vital-phenomenological account[s] of landscape as life-world’; and contemporary writing in which ‘narratives of self and landscape [are] entwined’; all affirm and reaffirm an ‘essential *belongingness* of humans to the earth’ (2018:188, original emphasis). Echoing Berlant’s (2006) ideas of ‘cruel optimism’, Wylie suggests that optimism obfuscates not-relating. Kelsey (2008:209), (who’s work Wylie’s builds on), identifies two strands of this disconnection: that we yearn to belong but our longing remains unfulfilled; or that we believe that the past is a realm of belonging that we try to return to. Neither of these have been the story of this thesis. However, a pervasive sense of precarity and possibility—within this ever-moving network—looms behind the stories recounted here. Whilst this thesis makes audible what *trying to belong* might sound like, how it is done, future research might start from Wylie’s proposition of the world as inhospitable.

If our fate is to be always emplaced as Cresswell (2004) argues, then what does emplacement but not belonging look like? What does an orientation away from sound like? This is not to un-do the work of this thesis. It doesn’t make the strategies and practices any less real. But it changes the view of the context in which they might be happening. This would be a different way of conceptualising precarity. For if we cannot belong then there is a permanence, a certainty, to displacement.

Or, perhaps, in times of precarity we need a new language of belonging altogether.

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## | Bristol

| Site | Name (Pseudonym) | Role | Age | Brief background details: geographical, educational, professional. |
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| **The Walled Garden**: produces organic vegetables on the outskirts of Bristol. | Neil | Gardener | Mid 40s | Grew up in Bristol. Left school at fifteen. Worked in factories, for the council and as a salesman before becoming a gardener. Boss of Emily. |
| **The Walled Garden** | Emily | Gardener | Early 20s | Grew up in the rural outskirts of Bristol. Semi-professional runner. Due to issues stemming from anorexia, started but didn't complete two bachelor degrees. Worked in a restaurant before becoming a gardener. Is also a yoga practitioner. |
| **Barley Wood Orchards**: Adjacent to The Walled Garden. Main orchards and cider-making barn located at Barley Wood. Other orchards in peripheries of Bristol and Northern Somerset. | Ben | Cider and Juice Maker | Early 40s | Grew up in Norfolk. Teaches physics and holds a physics PhD. Has worked in mass catering and community /social work. Partner to Bella. |
| **Barley Wood Orchards** | Bella | Cider and Juice Maker | Early 40s | Grew up mainly in Korea and Germany. Has a degree in nutrition, and is variously a cook book writer, community worker and mass caterer. |

| Site | Name | Role | Age | Background |
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| ***La Maravegia*** —'Wonderland': small holding growing organic vegetables. Has a few animals. Collaborates with honey-makers, co-op market, basket weaver etc. Located on Sant'Erasmo: an island in the Venetian Lagoon. | Stefano | Founding member. Vegetable grower. | Early 30s | Grew up in Mestre. Finished school whilst undertaking building apprenticeships. Builder, with specialism in plaster board. |
| ***La Maravegia*** | Maria-sole | Grows herbs and medicinal plants and foods. Helps Stefano, leads edible/wild food workshops. | Late 50s | Grew up in the Veneto. Dancer, followed modern language course at university but didn't graduate. Herbalist. |
| ***La Maravegia*** | Dario | Founding member. Vegetable grower. Was Stefano's business partner but left soon after I arrived in Venice. Also works with *Laguna nel bicchiere.* | Early 30s | Grew up in Mestre. Graduated from a degree in communications. |
| **Ernesto's Orto—'**Plot': vineyard and vegetable allotment. Located on Sant'Erasmo: an island in the Venetian Lagoon. | Ernesto | Grows vegetables for domestic consumption, grows violet and rose artichokes—commercial but small scale, grows grapes and makes natural wine. Was the mentor for Stefano and Dario when they set up *La Maravegia.* | Mid 70s | Grew up on the Venetian Islands. Left school at eleven, worked in the family business selling fruit and vegetables before getting a job cleaning the trains. Husband to Donatella. |
| **Ernesto's Orto** | Donatella | Supporting role at the plot. Manages all of the cooking, hosting, taking telephone calls as well as afternoon work in the vegetable patch. | Mid 70s | Grew up on the Venetian Islands. Left school in early teens, worked in garment factories before marriage. Wife of Ernesto. |

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| **FUD: Fattoria Urbana Diffusa**—'Scattered Urban Farm': social permaculture project: Main site located at Zitelle on the Giudecca: an island in the Venetian Lagoon. Multiple other growing projects within urban Venice and Lagoon. | Marco | Whilst all the sites are productive Marco's main role is setting up projects and collaborations, finding funding etc. | Late 40s | Grew up in Trentino. Attended university learning oriental languages but didn't graduate. Works alongside his wife Serena to deliver Perma-teatro: a mix of permaculture and theatre. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere***— 'Lagoon in a glass': a cultural, wine-making Association. Main site located on the cemetery island San Michele in the Venetian Lagoon. The Association tend vineyards both within Venice's urban centre and on other Lagoon islands. | Pep | Member: Manages the San Michele vineyard | Late 50s | Grew up in the Veneto. Wine Merchant. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Carly | Member | Early 60s | Grew up in Australia. Physiotherapist. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Roberto | President | Late 60s | Grew up in Trentino. Administrator. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Valeria | Member | Early 70s | Grew up in Venice. Teacher. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Carolina | Member | | From the Veneto. Museum Curator. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Sandro | Member: Manages the Winery on San Michele | Late 50s | From the Veneto. Restaurateur. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Flavio | Was the president / founder/ creator | Deceased | From Trentino. Teacher. |
| ***Laguna nel bicchiere*** | Camillo | Member | Late 60s | From the Veneto. Handy-man/ Anarchist. |