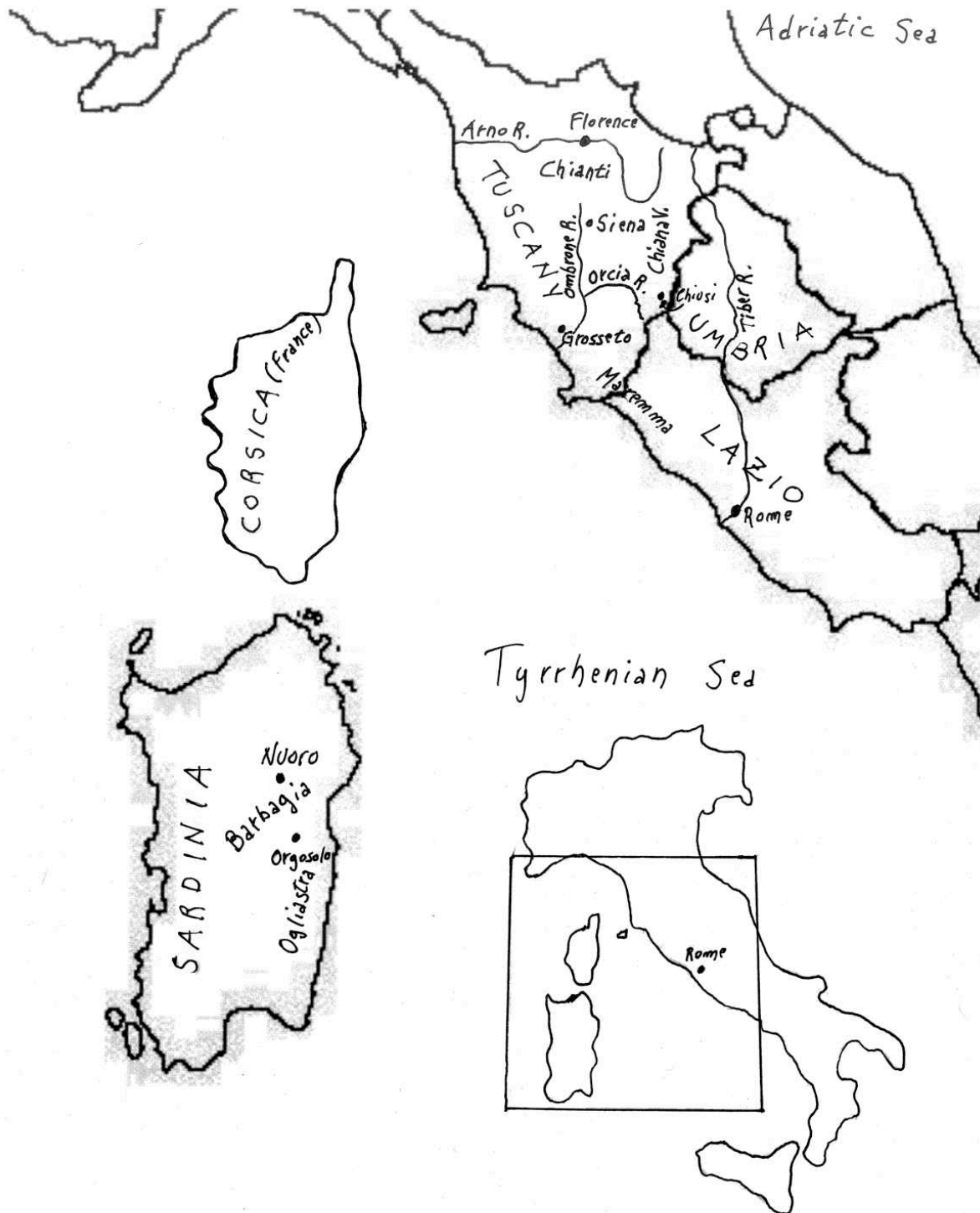


- Dario Gaggio –

CHAPTER 4

THE USES OF EMPTINESS: RURAL TUSCANY AFTER THE EXODUS

(1970-1985)



Tuscan agriculture shed two thirds of its work force between the early 1950s and the early 1970s, and an additional half in the following two decades. This “exodus” from the countryside took place in two phases. Organized by the Communist Party, Tuscan sharecroppers, who made up the majority of the rural population, rose up in the decade following the end of World War II, demanding the radical transformation of work practices and a land reform. They were faced with the landlords’ stalling strategies and with the hostile reaction of the conservative national government, led after 1947 by the Christian Democrats. The second phase started in the mid-1950s, when Tuscany experienced a process of diffused industrialization, which created jobs that could be filled by former peasants. This process led to the depopulation of vast stretches of territory, especially in the mountainous areas and in the southern half of the region. It also led to the transformation of the rural landscape, which had been shaped in the course of several centuries by the demands of the sharecropping contract (*mezzadria*).

The adventurous tourist can find an unintentional monument to this rural exodus deep in the Orcia valley, near the hamlet of San Piero in Campo, spread over the alluvial plain that stretches between the hilltop town of Contignano to the west and the ramparts of Mount Cetona to the east. Just below the remnants of an abandoned eleventh-century abbey lie an outlet tower and an imposing channel spillway jutting out from the river bed. These cement structures were meant to complement an embankment dam that was never erected. As incongruous as these rural ruins may seem in a valley that has surged to the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site on account of its landscape, they tell a complex story that is crucial to understanding the recent history of southern Tuscany. This history can be told as the tale of two animals: after the sharecroppers’ exodus, sheep multiplied, whereas cattle dwindled. But this was anything but a foreordained outcome. The unfinished San Piero in Campo dam was meant to take its place within an extensive network of irrigation infrastructures, private and cooperative farms, pregnant cows, fattening calves, selection centers, and public slaughterhouses, all of which would have “recovered” southern Tuscany’s

“animal husbandry vocation” (*vocazione zootecnica*) and stem depopulation. At the same time, thousands of Sardinian shepherds migrated to the region, moved into the farmhouses deserted by the sharecroppers, and began to raise sheep, primarily for milk, encountering both support and hostility from rural Tuscans. These shepherds reinvented the sheep milk cheese (*pecorino di Pienza*) that bore the name of the “ideal town” that Pope Pius II built in the Orcia valley in the fifteenth century,<sup>1</sup> and when some of them came to be implicated in a slew of kidnappings, tensions flared, contributing to a reappraisal of the sharecroppers’ exodus and the landscape they had left behind.

In this chapter, I will contrast the vision of a bovine-rich future that never materialized with a relatively ovine-rich present whose contours defied easy interpretation. Building on Eric Hirsch’s understanding of landscape as an ongoing dialectical process between an imagined background of contested possibilities and an experienced foreground of everyday engagements with place,<sup>2</sup> I will focus on a historical moment in which for Tuscans (especially those “left behind” in the countryside) the gap between “background” representations and “foreground” presences had never been wider. I will complement this theoretical appreciation of spatiality with sustained attention to historical actors’ senses of temporality. Tuscans understood themselves to be experiencing a momentous “transition,” in which historical time was accelerating seemingly out of control. But different actors and places seemed to be on widely divergent “trajectories:” some of them charted linear journeys to reassuring visions of modernity, in which cows took center stage, while others suggested discontinuous jumps into an uncertain future or even reversals to backwardness, and sheep figured prominently in these scenarios. Temporality also had a background and a foreground, often at odds with each other, and these senses of time were inscribed and read into a rapidly changing landscape. In the process, Tuscans told a plurality of transitional narratives, trying to make sense of the changes they were experiencing. Could Tuscans turn these changes into a usable history and a legible landscape, to be shared and valorized? For much of the 1970s this sense of coherence seemed to be eluding them, until it began to loom, however hesitantly, at the horizon.

*Visions of Green and White: Recovering Bovine Husbandry in Southern Tuscany*

According to one estimate, by the early 1970s Tuscany's departed sharecroppers had "vacated" approximately 800,000 hectares. One fourth of this land had been completely lost to agriculture, while the rest had been divided between two different kinds of tenure: approximately 60 percent had come to be cultivated directly by its owners, whereas the rest had been purchased by companies that employed wage labor.<sup>3</sup> The crisis of sharecropping raised the issue of abandoned land, which was unanimously understood to have expanded to an unprecedented extent. Hardly anyone well into the 1980s questioned that land "abandonment" was a problem, but estimates and definitions of this phenomenon varied widely. The Communist-controlled regional government, established in 1970-71, estimated that 40 percent of Tuscany's agricultural land was either abandoned or "insufficiently cultivated" in the mid 1970s.<sup>4</sup> The Georgofili Academy, the mouthpiece of the landlords, criticized this view by arguing that farms should be the units of analysis, rather than "land" as a disembedded entity. Thus, for instance, the unused land that belonged to a successful farm specializing in modern viticulture should not be regarded as "abandoned," even though vineyards might occupy a small portion of the total area. Even more localized studies, conducted by city council members who knew the history of every plot in their jurisdictions, failed to produce clear results, since their estimates were based on comparisons between past use and future possibilities that were anything but uncontroversial. How should land rented out for periodic sheep grazing be regarded, for example?

In spite of these difficulties, the newly empowered regional government pressed ahead: it produced a census of abandoned land in 1977 and instituted a complex bureaucratic machinery for the possible reassignment of land regarded as neglected, although the current owners could also apply for funds if they committed themselves to a cultivation plan. In so doing, the Communists in charge of the administration kept a promise that dated back to the peasant struggles of the 1940s and

1950s, albeit in a context that had changed beyond recognition. Special committees were set up to evaluate applications, and a fund was established to indemnify the previous landlords and provide subsidies and incentives for the prospective farmers, especially young ones and those who created cooperatives.<sup>5</sup> Some data seemed to suggest that a “return to the land” was imminent. Enrolment in the Tuscan high schools that focused on agricultural subjects (*istituti tecnici agrari*) increased by 22.5% between 1974 and 1977, and college-level courses in rural and agrarian matters also increased in popularity.<sup>6</sup> Tuscany’s administrators, however, could hardly hide their disappointment when the first round of applications for neglected land came in. Applications for less than 10,000 hectares arrived from the entire region, roughly half of them from the current landowners; many of the applications had to be rejected because of the applicants’ lack of qualifications, revealing a wide gap in Tuscan society between ideological imaginings and practical commitments.<sup>7</sup>

On one level, these attempts at rejuvenating agriculture through the settlement of young farmers organized in cooperatives show that through the 1970s most administrators and politicians looked at the Tuscan countryside with predominantly productivist eyes. They generally dismissed the idea of foresting the “abandoned” land as a measure of last resort, for example, noticing that woods already covered 40 percent of the region but only contributed 2 percent of the agricultural revenue, and that such contribution kept decreasing rapidly.<sup>8</sup> As late as 1981, leftist union leaders openly acknowledged that the top priority of rural policy was the “expansion of the productive base” (*estensione della base produttiva*): the creation of protected areas and other conservationist measures constituted “a novel and significant step forward in the culture and needs of Tuscan society, but these orientations should not detract our attention from the fact we still need to take care of basic conditions (*condizioni di base*), such as the assistance to agricultural development.”<sup>9</sup>

It would be simplistic, however, to chart the Tuscan leftists’ trajectory along a linear axis opposing productivism and conservationism, or material and post-material values. The 1970s also saw these leaders (as well as a large portion of Tuscan society) engage in subtle debates about the

meanings and implications of speculation in rural contexts: increases in production were only legitimate if they did not result into speculative ventures. In other words, productivist arguments built on a “conservationist” core that opposed, both at the discursive and practical levels, endeavors that preserved the deployed material and cultural resources and those that threatened to deplete them by accepting high risks and seeking excessive gain. Underlying these debates was the paradox of a countryside that seemed to accrue value only insofar as its population dwindled and its traditional activities were abandoned.

In the course of the 1970s, the Tuscans who militated in the organizations of the Left discussed rural speculation around at least two related themes, both of which were inscribed into the landscape. First, they used this notion to bemoan the spread of “monocultures,” which they contrasted sharply with the rapidly disappearing mixed agriculture typical of traditional sharecropping. This was the case, above all, with the proliferation of specialized vineyards in the Chianti and in other wine producing areas. The restructuring of these vineyards was taking place with public funds, originating from national and supranational sources, but the beneficiaries of these funds were by and large people and organizations external to local rural societies. The profile of these outsiders varied greatly, ranging from small-scale industrialists with a passion for wine making to multinational corporations, which reached agreements with aristocratic landowners for the reinvention and marketing of their brands and production.<sup>10</sup> Specialized vineyards, thus, could appear as speculative ventures because they were often controlled by outside actors who took advantage of public support, and because the obsessive care bestowed on them contrasted with the desertion of the surrounding areas. Accusations of speculative intentions, however, were not limited to viticulture. As we will see later in this chapter, even sheep herding could be perceived as speculative because of its exclusive focus on milk production and its association with Sardinian immigration.

The other activity to be routinely linked with speculation was the construction industry, which,

ironically, employed many former sharecroppers. Tuscan leftists viewed building speculation as a constant threat. The regional government estimated that average land values in the region's most desirable areas trebled from 1970 to 1976 (which roughly corresponds to a 50 percent increase in real terms), and it accused local administrations (most of them also controlled by the Communist Party) to give out building permits all too easily. In this case, too, public funds seemed to promote practices that ran counter to widely shared commitments, such as the revitalization of agriculture. Inaugurating a long series of similar initiatives, in 1979 the national and regional governments, in cooperation with several banks, designated 1.4 billion lire of public funds as collateral for the granting of some 14 billion lire in low-interest mortgages, to be used for the restructuring of the rural housing stock or, with strict restrictions, the building of new structures for agricultural purposes.<sup>11</sup> And in this case, too, the regional government kept a promise made by the Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s, but again in a radically changed context. These funds allowed work on almost a thousand buildings, but it was an open secret that many of these restructuring initiatives served the needs of the burgeoning tourist industry, rather than agriculture. Moreover, the mixture of restrictive regulations and subsidies that was promoted by the regional government contributed to the increase in land values in a few select areas, such as the Florentine Chianti, and did little to stem devaluation in the more remote areas.

In sum, the empowerment of local authorities in the allocation of public funds, due to the creation of the regional governments in 1970-71, enabled Tuscany's leftist administrators to implement measures that had long been on the agenda of the Communist Party, such as the reassignment of under-cultivated land and the restructuring of the housing stock. But these initiatives were only aspects of a larger vision. When the national government issued a new comprehensive law for agricultural support in 1977, the so-called *Quadrifoglio* (four-leaf clover) Law, Italy's regional administrations were given the chance to set their own priorities and follow their implementation.<sup>12</sup> Almost half of the 217 billion lire reserved for Tuscany was designated to



expand irrigation and animal husbandry.<sup>13</sup> Making true on another promise dating back to the postwar years, the regional administration set out to revitalize cattle raising and forage production on irrigated land, viewed as possible paths to prosperity for the region's less advantaged areas.

By now it should be clear how deep the roots of this project of revitalization reached. Cattle raising promised to preserve the agricultural vocation of vast stretches of territory, stem the spread of land abandonment, and, most importantly, create a legible landscape made up of integrated activities linking functionally differentiated areas. Moreover, this integrated territorial system, built thanks to the vision and resources of newly empowered local administrators, effectively countered the speculative tendencies at work in other parts of Tuscany. This was an activity that did not privilege small parts of the territory and neglected the rest, as was the case with viticulture. The cattle industry promised to be economically self-sustaining, at least in the sense that it responded to the ever-increasing demand for beef among Italians, who imported most of the meat they consumed. Finally, cattle raising could preserve more people on the land than highly mechanized wheat cultivation, increasingly the most common crop grown in the drier areas of southern Tuscany.

To get a more concrete sense of what these visions entailed, let us focus on the Orcia valley, where a particularly active "reclamation consortium" (i.e., a state-supported association of landlords) had been reshaping the landscape since the 1930s. The exodus had hit this area of the province of Siena particularly hard: almost half of its population had left by the mid-1970s. The Orcia valley had also been at the forefront of the postwar conflict over the future of sharecropping. The consortium had no doubt as to what kind of infrastructural work the valley needed to stem the demographic bleeding and find a new purpose. Through the 1960s, it worked on drafting a series of plans for dam construction and the irrigation of significant portions of the valley.<sup>14</sup> The details changed over time, with the early plans calling for the construction of smaller dams on several tributaries of the Orcia River, as well as on the creation of hillside lakes. At the end of the 1960s, the consortium leadership settled on the idea of erecting a dam on the Orcia itself, at San Pietro in

Campo, receiving an enthusiastic endorsement (as well as financial support) from the province's most important bank (the Monte dei Paschi di Siena) and of the newly organized Tuscan Agency for Agrarian and Forestry Development.<sup>15</sup> All the local political forces, from the Communists to the Christian Democrats, declared their unqualified support for the initiative. The goal was equally uncontroversial: to grow enough forage crops on irrigated land to turn the valley into a "meat factory" through the spread of bovine husbandry, preferably organized in cooperatives.

The emotional impact of these visions on the local population was remarkable. As early as 1964, the consortium's newsletter told the story of an old man who had returned to the valley after having left as a boy some sixty years before.<sup>16</sup> His childhood memories were filled with penury and squalor: "We lived on that hill, in a house that was then all shattered, with bare floors. The stink of the animal waste came through the broken walls. The gaps were so wide that we could see the sheep, whose bleating rattled us." They felt isolated, especially in the winter, and the nearest school was ten kilometers away, so no one attended. Now he had come back, and where his old house stood he had found "a new house, with a bathroom, electricity, running water, a stable for the animals, and a building for the manure that is far enough from the house and does not stink." The house was now next to a paved road, and the farmer who lived there had a FIAT 600 and two mopeds, to go into town whenever he felt like it. The modernity of the dwelling resonated with that of the landscape as a whole: the old Orcia river, whose bed was in his childhood almost one kilometer wide, was now channeled between straight banks, and all around were green fields. And this was only the beginning: the Vellora, one of the tributaries of the Orcia, was to become an artificial lake with 2.9 million cubed meters of water; two other large lakes were to appear near Monticchiello, alongside many more hillside lakes. "The Val d'Orcia will no longer be the sunburnt land of our childhood, but a fertile valley, devoted to the production of meat for the national market." If all of this had been around when he was a boy, his family would surely have never left!

These dreams of regeneration were long lived in the Orcia valley. A decade later, in 1975, when

the plan for the San Piero in Campo dam was firmly in place, the consortium summoned the inhabitants of the valley to an open meeting where a plastic model of the dam would be displayed.<sup>17</sup> The project promised nothing less than dignity and self reliance for the valley's dwindling population: the new infrastructures would make the valley dwellers "actors and participants in their own future" by recovering a meat-producing past that dated back to Roman times, when the valley supposedly was one of the main suppliers of beef for the imperial city. If now sheep, rather than cows, provided the most important source of income, that was about to change. The valley would now become "self-sufficient, full of white herds of cows, and not one blade of grass would be left in the field to rot, not one sack of grains would go wasted, not one unemployed man would have to aspire to an industrial job, not one family would have to emigrate, witnessing instead the replacement of the goat with the cow, the mule with the tractor..."<sup>18</sup>

There is little doubt that this kind of powerful rhetoric was also meant to defend the record of an institution, the reclamation consortium, which had been founded by the Fascist regime and that had remained after the war under the hegemony of the large-scale landlords. No sooner was the plan for the dam agreed upon than a conflict flared between the consortium and the Communist-led administrations at the regional and local levels. In 1976 the regional government told the consortium leadership that their jurisdiction would no longer extend beyond the use of water for agricultural purposes and made fund disbursement predicated on the creation of another consortium between the four municipal governments affected by the project. By 1977, the reclamation consortium had been all but divested of any authority.<sup>19</sup> Starved for funds and subjected to ongoing criticism, the reclamation consortium was dissolved in 1980.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the leftist administrators, by propounding the notion that the future of the valley should be in the hands of elected officials rather than landowners, took the opportunity to settle scores that dated back decades. But the conflict was also about the ownership of a project that inspired widespread hope and that could be translated into further political consensus.

These visions of regeneration, which relied on ambitious irrigation plans, were especially compelling when they spoke the language of rupture. At the beginning of the 1970s, only 6.5 percent of Tuscany's agricultural land was irrigated, vis-à-vis a national average of more than 14 percent.<sup>21</sup> Most of the irrigation works that had been accomplished before the 1970s had taken the form of hillside lakes, which fit the spatial make-up of a landscape divided into distinct estates. Each landowner (or small group of landowners) received funds to carry out these small-scale projects on their property. By the mid-1970s, approximately a thousand of these lakes had been created throughout Tuscany, but according to some estimates as few as 5 percent of them were actually used.<sup>22</sup> This waste of public funds proved in a tangible way that the old policy of reclamation (*bonifica*), institutionalized by the Fascist regime in the 1920s, had run its course. The newly empowered (and Communist-led) regional administration could point to the blatant failure of irrigation as a sign of the more general failure of reclamation policy, which relied on the consensus and participation of the landlords. The collapse of sharecropping, the rural exodus, and the devolution of agricultural policy finally made a novel course possible.

For all their ambitious thrust, these plans were above all defensive: they were meant to stop depopulation, which, in the words of Peris Brogi, the agricultural councilor of the province of Siena, had led to “the destruction of many material and human resources whose recovering will require the effort and work of many generations, supported by remarkable financial resources.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, productivism and conservationism coexisted in the same vision. What were the details of this plan? First of all, Tuscany's administrators vowed to quadruple the amount of irrigated land, bringing it from 67,000 hectares to approximately 250,000. This four-fold increase would have been achieved through the construction of dams and reservoirs, viewed as the safest source of water for the region. These public works, however, were not only to be relevant to agriculture. They would also have contributed to quenching the growing thirst of the expanding towns and even created a supply of water for industrial use. Their proponents justified them also as flood-management

measures. The memory of the devastating floods of November 1966, when Florence and many other Tuscan cities had gone under water, was very much alive. Thus, these multifunctional dams would also have contributed to the integration of town and country, which had never been as far apart in Tuscany's long history.

A major dam in the high Tiber valley would have created a reservoir of more than 100 million square meters and irrigated approximately 60,000 hectares. Another dam of similar size was to be built in the Ombrone basin, at the confluence of the tributaries Farma and Merse, near the border between the provinces of Siena and Grosseto. Smaller dams would be built downstream in the Ombrone valley; another would have been erected north of Siena, on the river Arbia near Petignano, with a reservoir of 12 million square meters and an irrigated area of 1,500 hectares; and a similarly sized dam would also have been built on the Orcia River, at San Piero in Campo, with a reservoir of 11 million square meters and an irrigated area of 3,400 hectares. The creation of several dozen hillside lakes would have complemented the project.<sup>24</sup>

As far as cattle raising was concerned, the plan called for an integrated system with three major components. First, cows of reproductive age would be raised in farms that used both stables and open pastures. These farms would be located at higher elevations (over 500 meters above the sea level)—in the areas most affected by depopulation and land neglect. Second, the weaned calves would be purchased by farms at lower elevations, where they would be fattened in stables and fed fodder crops locally grown on irrigated land. Third, when ready to be slaughtered, the calves would be taken to a state-of-the-art public slaughterhouse located at Chiusi, a major transportation hub near the border with Lazio and Umbria, from which beef could easily reach its destination markets.<sup>25</sup> The recommended breed was the traditional draft cattle of central Tuscany, the “Chianina” (named after the Chiana Valley), one of the largest bovine breeds in the world (adult males can easily weigh more than 1.5 tons), and thus one of the most costly to raise. The quality of its meat, used for the famous Florentine steak, and rural Tuscans' widespread familiarity with its

needs, would have made up for its relatively high costs. Tuscany would thus take pride of place in a larger project meant to make Italy more “meat sufficient,” in overt opposition to the European Community’s alleged designs to limit Italian agriculture to low-value-added staples or a few specialty items.

The cornerstone of this comprehensive vision was the Chiusi slaughterhouse, whose construction had been in the works since the mid-1960s. This massive structure, with 75,000 cubic meters of built volume stretched over an area of 10 hectares, was erected entirely with the state funds.<sup>26</sup> It opened in 1978 as a public utility institution, capable of processing 160 heads of cattle and 200 pigs a day, equivalent to a yearly production of 10,000 tons of beef and 20,000 tons of pork. Its operational life, however, was as short as it was controversial. Soon to be regarded as a shamefully oversized monster, it remained active for less than a decade, before being handed over to the regional government and then to the city of Chiusi as a dismissed area, another rural ruin, itself in need of “reclamation.” Plans are currently afoot to turn it into an industrial park for light manufacturing.

The slaughterhouse’s demise should be set in the context of the plan’s overall failure. Of the planned dams, for example, only the one on the Tiber, at Montedoglio, was ever completed.<sup>27</sup> Paradoxically, the plan fell victim to its systemic coherence, touted by its proponents. If decisions were to be made at the level of the river basin as a whole, with very high upfront investments, the plan would stand or fall on the basis of the compatibility between its diverse goals (flood control, irrigation, potable water supply, etc.), as well as their feasibility and perceived urgency. The debate over these issues put in direct confrontation visions and actors that had until then looked at each other from a distance. At opposite extremes were the proponents of agriculture in the regional administration and in society at large, many of whom were of peasant extraction, and the activists in the burgeoning environmentalist movement, most of whom were urban professionals. In Tuscany the debate took place squarely within the left, and in many cases between different constituencies

within the Communist Party itself.

Crucial to the outcome of the controversy was Marco Marcucci, who became the first environmental councilor in the regional government in 1983, and its President in 1990. It was under his influence that a team of experts was charged with drafting a “basin plan” (*piano di bacino*) for the Ombrone River, which covers almost the entirety of southern Tuscany, to assess the feasibility and impact of the dams. The committee was called on to express an opinion on both the larger project on the Farma and Merse Rivers as well as the smaller one on the Orcia, viewed as parts of the same plan, thereby considerably raising the stakes of the decision. The committee was made up of environmentally minded experts, including Giuliano Cannata, one of the founders of Lega Ambiente, Italy’s oldest and best organized environmental NGOs, and Professor of Hydrology at the University of Siena. Professor Cannata told me in an interview that this was not only the first river basin plan to be drafted in Italy, but also the first time that formal cost-benefit analysis was applied to an extensive hydrological project.

Given the cultural and political background of the drafters, the panel’s final recommendation was hardly surprising.<sup>28</sup> They began by noticing that the Ombrone basin had one of the lowest population densities in Italy, and that its “resources” lay far more in the diversity of its flora and fauna and in the beauty of its landscape (that is, in the existence of extensive “abandoned” areas) than in its agricultural potential. But even without quantifying the economic value of these “intangibles” and the costs incurred in their depletion, the projects failed in their own terms, in the sense that viable and far less expensive alternatives could be easily envisaged to irrigate the relatively small portion of the basin that had agricultural potential, to manage the risk of floods, and to mitigate the summer droughts. The report mercilessly denounced the myth of multi-use dams in the Mediterranean context, because the demands for irrigation and potable water both peak in the summer, and warned against the high risk of silting at the dam sites, given the clay soil prevalent in the area, and of the erosion of the coastal beaches, a phenomenon already taking place on a large

scale because of ongoing digging in the river beds for construction purposes.

This debate opposed two different aspirational representations of the Tuscan countryside, but they both relied on the search for novel kinds of systemic coherence, whether based on integrated animal husbandry or on ecological visions. In both cases, the perceived emptiness of the countryside allowed the imagination of coherent “landscapes.” In the end, the agricultural vision fell victim to the wave of scandals that shook the country in 1992-93, the so-called Clean Hands (*mani pulite*) investigations, which uncovered systematic corruption in the adjudication of public contracts to private companies, especially in the construction industry. This was the case with the dam of San Pietro in Campo, whose works were interrupted when the national wave of scandals hit the management of the company in charge of construction at the site.<sup>29</sup> Even Marcucci spent time in jail, accused of receiving bribes for a large project meant to mitigate the floods of the Arno (he was later acquitted). It was in this kind of climate that the report by Professor Cannata and his colleagues was officially released. Actual work on the Farma-Merse project, whose prospected costs had increased exponentially through the 1980s, would never get started. In a bitterly ironic twist, the antispeculative thrust that had informed the launching of these projects in the 1970s had given way to the worst kind of speculation, casting a shadow on the honesty of an entire generation of leftist administrators of peasant extraction.

There is no doubt that some actors took advantage of the opportunities offered by these projects, nor were all these unscrupulous actors outsiders with respect to local society. The landowners to be expropriated, for example, were offered extremely “generous” rates for what was by any standard marginal land. Public authorities also allowed a plethora of small-time construction companies to dig in the river beds and accumulate materials that would later be sold at high profit. These actors’ speculative behavior, however, should not lead us to doubt the sincerity of the people who had hatched the infrastructural plans in the wake of the rural exodus. The sources clearly show how deeply they felt about the necessity of ambitious projects, which they viewed as the last chance to



turn around the destiny of a increasingly illegible and deserted territory. In many cases, the older rural Tuscans, born and raised in peasant families, were no more “materialistic” than their environmentally minded rivals. They perceived their territory in different ways and made the rural landscape tell different stories from those that would soon become hegemonic. To them, the dams and irrigation projects were endowed with powerful symbolic values; these projects represented an opportunity to redress injustices and keep promises that still resonated in the land, even though they belonged to a temporality no longer shared by many others.

The countryside of southern Tuscany, however, was not quite as empty as these contending sensibilities suggested. The livelihoods of thousands of farmers hung in the balance. In many parts of southern Tuscany, farmers faced an extremely uncertain and complex situation in the late 1970s and through the 1980s. International wheat prices fluctuated wildly: they were high in the early 1980s, then they dropped in 1987, rose again for a few years, and collapsed in the early 1990s. The regional government, as we have seen, offered incentives to create animal husbandry cooperatives, which demanded far more labor and capital than wheat cultivation, but the long-term viability of these ventures relied on infrastructural projects that in most cases would never see the light of day. The European Community was trying hard to change the Common Agricultural Policy and curb its outrageous costs. Within these supranational reform plans, Tuscany and other “poor” agricultural regions did not seem to hold much of a future in either wheat or meat production. To negotiate this contradictory set of signals and expectations was no easy matter.

In the face of these uncertainties, the number of bovines raised in Tuscany kept declining. There were almost half a million heads of cattle in the early 1960s; paralleling very closely the rate of population decline, the number of cattle had been cut in half by the mid-1970s, and by 2000 there were little more than 100,000 bovines in the entire region. Viewed from the perspective of the would-be animal farmers, this decline had dramatic consequences. Anthropologist Jeff Pratt spent years researching the changing meanings of work among the inhabitants of the lower Orcia valley,

straddling the provinces of Siena and Grosseto.<sup>30</sup> He found a social and natural landscape in flux, where families adopted a variety of strategies to cope with rapid change. Already in 1987, only a third of the farms in this area kept cattle. The farmers who had responded to regional incentives by creating cooperatives for cattle raising faced increasingly dire prospects. Pratt tells of the Montenero cooperative, established with a regional loan in 1973 by 30 farmers to fatten 650 calves a year by producing animal feed (mostly green barley and hay) on approximately 300 hectares. But the calves of the Chianina breed, which they had initially adopted, did not fatten fast enough, so they had to import calves from as far away as Poland and France, while they were often forced to purchase slurry in the market because of the low productivity of their arable land. The venture collapsed entirely in 1989, when the regional government withdrew its subsidies.<sup>31</sup> But the farms that placed their prospects with wheat cultivation did not fare much better in the long run, and not only because of the erratic prices: the use of massive amounts of fertilizers and insufficient rotations depleted the soil, producing wheat that tended to fall over. As Pratt shows, many of these farmers felt nostalgic about a traditional agrarian past they had barely glimpsed at in their childhood. The old sharecroppers were poorer, and yet they were better off, in the sense that they were imagined to have been in better control of their destinies.

The destiny of wheat production in Tuscany was indeed decided very far from the region's hills and valleys. In 1988, the European Community issued a series of provisions meant to reduce the enormous surpluses of agricultural products that could not be placed in the market and were thus stored and ultimately destroyed. Even though the Community had been lowering the target prices for wheat and other products for years in order to reduce the gap with international prices, the average price of European wheat in the early 1990s was still two thirds higher than that set at the Chicago Board of Trade. The prospected solution was to provide European farmers with incentives to stop producing wheat, thereby reducing the supply of an unsaleable product. Farmers received different levels of incentives depending on whether they kept their land fallow for five years,

reforested it, put it under rotation of fallow and pasture, and so on. In the Tuscan context, these incentives to “set aside” land clashed with the still very recent policies meant to curb land abandonment and neglect. In the course of barely a decade, land abandonment seemed to have been transformed from a problem into a virtue to be encouraged.

The Tuscan regional government did try to resist European regulations by limiting the permissible form of set-aside to a rotation of fallow and pasture, but this measure was struck down in court. Turning the regional administrators’ worst fears into reality, Tuscan farmers responded to European incentives enthusiastically.<sup>32</sup> Among the twenty Italian regions, only Sicily surpassed Tuscany in the amount of land that was taken off production. By 1991, a full quarter of Tuscany’s arable land had been set aside, and approximately half of this land resided in the provinces of Siena and Grosseto. Moreover, the vast majority of Tuscan farmers chose to keep their land fallow for at least five years, thereby taking advantage of the highest level of incentive provided by the Community. The contrast with the disappointing campaigns to repopulate the countryside of a decade earlier could not have been starker. Observers, without much fear to be contradicted, could label those campaigns as “pure demagoguery.”<sup>33</sup> And Corrado Barberis, one of Italy’s foremost experts on agricultural matters, commented wryly that Tuscan farmers had gone full circle, from exploited sharecroppers to idle rentiers.<sup>34</sup>

The destiny of Tuscan cattle was at least as paradoxical. At the beginning of the 1980s, when the hope for the revitalization of animal husbandry was still widespread, commentators observed with relish that the Chianina breed was experiencing something of a renaissance. Bulls and their semen were being exported to all corners of the world, from the US to Australia, to be crossbred with a wide range of bovine breeds, including zebus, to increase their size and reduce the fat content of their meat.<sup>35</sup> This led to a new emphasis on the genetic purity of the breed, which even in Tuscany itself had been crossbred for decades with northern livestock. By the end of the 1980s, only 34,000 heads of Chianina nationwide were regarded as pure enough to be registered in the

breed's herd book, established back in the 1930s. But by then this relative rarity had already become an asset. Urban dwellers' willingness to pay a premium for an authentic Florentine steak (or the "pure" genetic material capable of producing it), radically reorganized the breeding of Chianina cattle.<sup>36</sup> A select network of small-scale breeders took their cattle to the mountains, where for eight months of the year the animals could graze free (and almost for free, too). In 1982 they coordinated with the breeders of four other specialty cattle varieties from central Italy (the Romagnola, the Maremmana, the Marchigiana, and the Podolica) to create the 5R consortium, in charge of certifying the authenticity of premium beef. Thus, the bovines that only a few years before had inspired dreams of revitalization for thousands of hectares of irrigated land looked down from their mountaintops onto a landscape their plow-drafting ancestors would hardly have recognized.

*A Landscape of Dread and Civility: Debating the Sardinian Shepherds' Migration to Rural Tuscany*

Whereas bovines inspired dreams of regeneration, ovines elicited a more complex set of reactions in 1970s Tuscany. In the last pages of her memoir, published in 1970, noted writer Iris Origo reflected on the many changes her estate and the Orcia valley had experienced after the end of the war, and on how futile it would have been to stand remonstrating against the tide of time. But it was a spatial gesture that proved her point. As if guiding the reader's gaze over the valley from the vantage point of her villa, she waxed elegiac: "It is possible that, within a generation, the woods will again spread down toward the Orcia, as they did ten centuries ago—and already, just across the valley, a large colony of Sardinian shepherds are grazing their sheep on what used to be cultivated fields."<sup>37</sup> Origo could not hide her dismay at seeing her valley, so painstakingly reclaimed under her husband's leadership during the Fascist period, go to "waste" again. And to underscore the ineluctability of change, welcome or otherwise, she quoted, in Italian, a famous passage from Dante's *Paradiso*, whose translation reads: "All your things find their death, as do you."<sup>38</sup>

Origo was far from alone in seeing the Sardinian shepherds that were settling in remote corners of the Tuscan countryside as intruders, or at least as incongruous presences, nor was she unique in linking, however implicitly, the spread of sheep grazing to decadence, decay, and even death. But this was a phenomenon of great complexity, which was interpreted in a wide variety of ways both by local actors and external observers.<sup>39</sup> For each statement associating sheep grazing with agricultural and social decay, it is possible to find one making the opposite case, praising the Sardinian shepherds' presence as the vulnerable bulwark that had prevented a large portion of Tuscany's rural land from collapsing into utter desertion. Just a few years after the publication of Origo's memoir, for example, geographer Flora Furati assessed the Sardinian shepherds' presence as an unqualified boon for the province of Siena: "Their ability to work, their entrepreneurship, and their sober and constructive labor have been primary factors in the restructuring of land ownership and in the replacement of cultivations with animal husbandry."<sup>40</sup>

This stark diversity of assessments became a chasm when some Sardinian immigrants, many of them shepherds, were implicated in a series of kidnappings that began in 1975 and terrorized the population for the following two decades. The emptiness that the sharecroppers' exodus had left behind seemed to be filling not only with incomprehensible or seemingly primitive practices but also with the dread of violent crime. Moreover, the rurality of these events was as evident as it was disconcerting. The first Tuscan kidnapping took place in July 1975 in a villa located deep in the Florentine Chianti, which had recently been purchased by a wealthy American-Argentinian aristocrat, Alfonso de Sayon.<sup>41</sup> Shortly after moving in, he had hired Sardinian shepherd Mario Sale as a laborer and, as it turned out later on in the court proceedings, occasional lover. Sale organized de Sayon's kidnapping, and when the prisoner taunted his masked captors by saying that he knew that Sale was behind the whole thing, they grew scared and killed him. His body was never found. Twenty-five more kidnappings took place in Tuscany between 1975 and 1990. Sardinians, most of them shepherds, turned out to be implicated in twenty of them.<sup>42</sup> Seven of the victims never came

back. The bodies of at least three of them were cut into pieces and fed to the pigs, a detail so horrific that it was later referenced by Thomas Harris in his Hannibal Lecter saga.<sup>43</sup> One quarter of the victims were children as young as 7 years old. Many of them were taken from their country homes, which they (or their parents) had recently purchased thanks to small fortunes made as small-scale entrepreneurs or professionals during Italy's economic miracle. They were held in abandoned farmhouses or in tents; in a few cases, they were simply chained to a tree for weeks on end.

Mario Sale was arrested in March 1977, as he was herding his sheep on the Calvana mountain, between Florence and Prato, and taken to the Siena prison. He escaped with two accomplices a few days later, never to be caught again. Sale was also implicated in the most famous of the Tuscan kidnappings, that of West German teenagers Suzanne and Sabine Kronzucker and their little cousin Martin Wächler in July 1980. The three kids were taken in front of their relatives from a villa in the Florentine Chianti, where they were spending their summer vacations. The father of the teenage girls, Dieter, was a very well-known journalist who worked for the West German public television network. The fact that foreign tourists, and famous ones at that, had been targeted by the kidnapers triggered a very strong reaction. The police organized massive manhunts in the Tuscan countryside, focusing their attention on the Sardinian pastoral community: they searched hundreds of farmhouses and took people in custody for interrogations, convinced that the kidnapers relied on the complicity of their fellow Sardinians. The special legislation against the Mafia, which had never been applied in Tuscany, was activated so that specific suspects could be expelled from the region and even taken into custody and held without charge for months. The police produced thousands of posters with the faces of suspects, all of Sardinian origin, and made it known that a list of approximately one hundred people would be targeted for preventative expulsion. Most of these suspects were shepherds who risked losing everything they owned.<sup>44</sup> These measures, however, proved fruitless. After being held captive in two separate tents for 68 days, the German kids were released near Sociville, in the Sienese countryside, upon payment of a ransom of 2.3 billion lire.

Rumor circulated that, in order to hide the money from the authorities, it had been delivered stuffed in the carcass of a pig.<sup>45</sup>

By the time of these kidnappings, Sardinians had been quietly moving to Tuscany with their sheep for decades. They came from a land, central Sardinia, that occupied a special place in the political imagination of Italians, as Tracey Heatherington has recently argued.<sup>46</sup> Sardinian society was primitive, as unintelligible as its languages, and stubbornly attached to its traditions. The political valence of these tropes, however, was contradictory. Sardinia was at times perceived as utterly different and remote, and at others as intimately familiar and as the possible stage for dreams of regeneration. For the Italian radical Left, for example, it was a land of romantic rebelliousness, vividly portrayed by anthropologist Franco Cagnetta in the early 1950s and then enshrined in a critically acclaimed 1961 neorealist movie directed by Vittorio De Seta, *Banditi a Orgosolo*. Cagnetta famously and controversially argued (and De Seta dramatized) that “every bandit knows that he is nothing but an unlucky shepherd,” persecuted by a semi-colonial state.<sup>47</sup> Images of Barbagia women successfully protesting prospected NATO exercises in 1969 became part of the iconography a whole generation. By contrast, the memoir of shepherd-turned-linguist Gavino Ledda, *Padre Padrone*, published in 1975 and turned into a movie by the Taviani brothers two years later, portrayed the pastoral society of central Sardinia as brutally oppressive and hopelessly out of step with the ferments that were brewing in the rest of Italy.

These widely known images and cultural artifacts affected both the Tuscans’ reactions to the kidnappings and the Sardinians’ defensive strategies. A plethora of Sardinian experts, for example, relied on the work of Cagnetta, among others, to warn Tuscans against adopting the kind of militaristic measures against the Sardinian community that the Italian state had been deploying for generations on the island, with utterly counterproductive results.<sup>48</sup> Mario Sale himself, after his escape from prison, tapped into this rich imagery, too, by fashioning himself a hero of Sardinian separatism and penning several political “manifesti” with the pseudonym of Chaka II, after the

famous Zulu king of the early nineteenth century. Tuscan journalists repeated ad nauseam that in traditional Sardinian culture shepherds kidnapped their rivals in the context of elaborate vendettas, often in retaliation for animal theft, and that “over there” it was sometimes easier to seize people than sheep, because “people do not bleat.”<sup>49</sup> In Tuscany, however, these nationally shared tropes interacted with a deeper and more localized set of concerns, which had to do with the contentious meanings of rurality in the region’s future. Debates about the role of the Sardinian migrants, even before the kidnappings began, were also about the implications of the rural exodus and about the ways in which Tuscans could come to terms with the emptiness the sharecroppers had left behind. The kidnappings drew the attention of the whole region to the rapid changes that had been taking place in the countryside. What had happened on the hills of Tuscany after the sharecroppers’ flight?

When the migration of Sardinian shepherds to continental central Italy (primarily Tuscany, Lazio, Umbria, and Romagna) reached the peak of its visibility in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several informed observers interpreted it as the product of two social crises that also signaled two historic defeats for the Italian political Left in its attempt to shape rural change. First was the crisis of traditional sheep husbandry in Sardinia, which became the victim of its expansion in the face of entrenched social and economic structures. Central Sardinia had been witnessing remarkable social and ecological changes since the end of the war.<sup>50</sup> Over the previous century, a vulnerable balance between herding, agriculture, and population pressure had developed, based on the limited spread of small-scale landownership, integrated by the widespread reliance on communal lands for both pasture and wheat cultivation. Very few shepherds owned enough land to be self-reliant, although the majority of families owned enclosed plots around the villages for subsistence agriculture. Therefore, most shepherds used the communal open lands in the summer and led their herds to lower elevations in the winter, spending months away from their families. Most families engaged in both agriculture and sheep herding, but in different proportions. A small but important portion of the population concentrated on agriculture, leading a sedentary life in the villages. A larger



percentage of the population lived primarily on the revenue of transhumant herding, understanding agriculture as women's primary activity, to be complemented by the men's work for a few summer weeks.

This precarious balance was upset by a complex interaction of internal and external pressures after the end of the war. The international integration of Italian agriculture made wheat cultivation in the Sardinian mountains increasingly unprofitable, leading to its gradual abandonment and the subsequent migration of Sardinian peasant farmers to cities in Italy and other European countries. Increasing demand for cheese, coupled with the availability of new land, led to a remarkable expansion of sheep (and to a lesser extent goat) husbandry. In the early 1960s there were already 2.4 million sheep on an island whose total area is 2.4 million hectares. By the mid-1980s, the number of sheep had increased to just short of 4 million. This expansion put pressure on communal land use precisely at the moment when the opportunities for transhumance began to dwindle. The outcome of these processes was a severe shortage of land for pastures. The Christian Democrats, the dominating force in the province of Nuoro, set out to manage local tensions by deploying a mix of patronage and military control, in addition to encouraging emigration. The Left called for sweeping land reforms that would encourage sedentary animal husbandry, but sedentarization spread as agriculture declined, rather than as the consequence of reform and political struggle. The Left understood this process as an expansion of the pastoral economy without its modernization.

The second crisis was that of sharecropping agriculture in central Italy, which the Left failed to manage or even fully comprehend. The rural exodus created huge areas where sheep could graze. In retrospect, the combined force of these "push and pull" factors made the migration of Sardinian shepherds seem inevitable, generating the myth that they had simply filled in a void, an empty social and ecological niche that could be profitably occupied.<sup>51</sup> In reality, migrants actively participated in this process, contributing both to the collapse of sharecropping and to its contentious aftermath. The relatively gradual and protracted nature of the Sardinians' migration is an indication

of the fact that the availability of land for pasture was actively generated or at least negotiated over many years: this was no sudden invasion.

Sardinian shepherds began to cross the sea with their animals soon after the end of the war. In Tuscany, the Sardinians settled at first in a wide variety of areas, including the Chianti, often directly recruited by large-scale landlords eager to find alternative uses for their abandoned farms. When the recapitalization of Tuscan vineyards and olive groves gained steam in the late 1960s, they began to cluster in the mountains and in the clay hills of southern Tuscany, establishing veritable colonies in the provinces of Siena and Grosseto. For many Tuscan landowners, sheep husbandry represented an ideal solution to the exodus, at least in the short run: it required little or no investments on their part and promised a reliable flow of cash rent. Moreover, Sardinian shepherds represented the kind of motivated (if not necessarily pliant) labor force that they perceived to have forever lost when their former sharecroppers had turned into rebellious Communists. The contract that most of them engaged in, called *soccida*, required that the shepherd and the landlord contribute half of the herd each and share the revenue in half.<sup>52</sup> The sale of milk and, to a lesser extent, lamb meat, allowed many migrants to save considerable amounts of money, which they invested in the purchase of relatively cheap land. Over time, some of them became large-scale landlords in their own turn.

It is not easy to assess how many Sardinian shepherds settled in Tuscany between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s. The team led by anthropologist Pier Giorgio Solinas (himself a Sardinian) estimated the number of Sardinian shepherds' families in the province of Siena in the late 1980s at 340, with almost 2,200 members. All of them owned numerous sheep (approximately 300 per breeding business on average), and almost two thirds of them owned land as well (an average of 73 hectares per family).<sup>53</sup> For Tuscany as a whole, an estimate of 10,000 Sardinian shepherds and their families is probably not too far off the mark. We have firmer estimates for Tuscany's sheep population, which followed a remarkable trajectory, increasing by 40 percent between the early

1960s and the late 1970s, when it approached 700,000 heads, while cattle decreased by almost exactly the same ratio. In the province of Siena, the number of sheep decreased from little more than 100,000 at the end of the 1940s to a low of 53,000 at the end of the 1950s, to then go back up to 140,000 twenty years later, signaling first the flight of the sharecroppers, many of whom had small flocks for family consumption and small-scale cheese making, and then the arrival of the Sardinians and the general restructuring and expansion of the sector. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Sardinians never controlled more than 25 or 30 percent of sheep husbandry in Tuscany as a whole.

The migration of Sardinian shepherds to Tuscany and central Italy more generally was a geographically and demographically limited phenomenon. Its symbolic and analytical relevance, however, was great: the ways in which the locals and the migrants made sense of each other are crucial to understanding the historic development of Tuscany's rural landscape, both as a material entity and as a set of contradictory perceptions. The relevance and resonance of the Sardinian shepherds' migration can be fully appreciated if we place it at the intersection of several narrative practices that linked notions of transition to experiences of place.<sup>54</sup> The multiplicity and contradictory character of these emplaced trajectories goes a long way towards explaining the sense of incongruity perceived by many observers, who tried to come up with one coherent story capable of "explaining" how this migration fit (or failed to fit) into the history and landscape of rural Tuscany, thereby beginning to define what Tuscany itself should stand for. Whether framing the Sardinians' migration to domesticate and integrate their presence, or othering their activities as barbaric, Tuscans and Sardinians alike constructed at the same time the dreaded or desired features of a newly emerging Tuscan rurality.

The first transition story deployed by Tuscans focused on the peculiar character of a migration that moved from remote mountainous locales to other, arguably almost as isolated, rural spaces. If the Tuscan rural exodus had been about the joining of urban civilization by peasants who had long

been excluded from it, how to make sense of migrants who sought not only to remain in the countryside, but also to privilege sheep husbandry over agriculture? This move flew in the face of deeply entrenched understandings of the direction that the “rational” flow of change ought to take. To be sure, this was not the first example of rural migration encountered by Tuscans. Southern peasants had been taking over abandoned Tuscan farms since the early 1950s, sometimes with the active involvement of the anti-Marxist forces, eager to sap the strength of the Communist-led peasant movement. Some evidence suggests that, at least at first, Tuscan peasants did understand the migration of Sardinian shepherds as another form of politically motivated settlement piloted from above. A Sardinian shepherd interviewed by anthropologist Linda de Angelis in the late 1980s recalled that many Tuscan peasants believed that he had been paid by the Christian Democrats to replace them, while another shepherd seemed to be subscribing to this interpretation himself: “Sardinians have been used to counter the emancipation enjoyed by Tuscan sharecroppers. What did the landlords do? They divided [the movement] and put up the bogeyman of the Sardinian. They would say [to the Tuscan sharecroppers]: if you do not work, I bring the Sardinians over and you can go fuck yourselves.”<sup>55</sup> As important as these perceptions proved in making sense of social change, however, there is little evidence that the majority of Sardinian migrants were actually involved in these schemes.

Whereas, at a general level, the incongruity of pastoral migration was obvious to most ordinary Tuscans, a select group of experts set out to normalize their presence by spinning another transition story, one that described Sardinian shepherds as fleeing semi-nomadic husbandry in their homeland in favor of sedentary life in Tuscany. This narrative was reinforced by the perception that the migrants were leaving extensive herding in Sardinia to embrace a more modern form of agro-pastoralism in Tuscany. In other words, these narratives placed the migrants in a journey towards a peculiar, but still intelligible, type of modernity. It would be hard to overstate most experts’ hostility towards transhumance and any form of nomadism, viewed as incompatible with modern and

civilized life. Even the observers who were most sympathetic to the migrants spared no words in condemning transhumant herding. Luigi Berlinguer, a Sardinian-born law professor at the University of Siena and Communist regional councilor,<sup>56</sup> emphasized how the availability of land in Tuscany had allowed Sardinian shepherds to emancipate themselves from the backwardness of traditional herding practices: “Transhumance ... is the negation of the modern agro-pastoral farm and constitutes a decisive cause of all the phenomena of ‘asocial behavior’ ascribed by so much literature to the Sardinian shepherd.”<sup>57</sup> This was a judgment that went well beyond issues of productivity, linking nomadism to potentially criminal behaviors, including of course kidnappings.

Most experts took it for granted that access to land ownership and self-reliance were these migrants’ ultimate goals, and that sedentary life was the natural consequence of those aspirations.<sup>58</sup> Anthropologists were also unanimous in arguing that Sardinian shepherds were “nomadic out of necessity rather than vocation,”<sup>59</sup> and that clear-cut property rights were crucial to overcoming the kind of competition over resources that was the main reason for banditry and anti-social behaviors in central Sardinia.<sup>60</sup> Yet, many of the same experts also commented on the reluctance of Sardinian shepherds to embrace agriculture in any form, also because of its gendered qualities. As Berlinguer put it, “everyone knows that by tradition the Sardinian shepherd has never wanted to become a farmer.”<sup>61</sup> In sum, the Sardinian shepherd who migrated to Tuscany was viewed as a settler and landowner by choice, but as a farmer by force; the new circumstances prompted him to engage in agriculture, thereby opening him to agriculture’s civilizing influences. As a Sardinian union leader put it in front of an audience of scholars and farmers in Florence, “the shepherd who used to despise the farmer has become farmer himself, and he manages to grow fodder in very arid soil... this is a merit that must be ascribed to the shepherds, who here in Tuscany have regenerated an activity that would otherwise have been lost.”<sup>62</sup> The crucial point in these arguments was that the new civilizing circumstances were rooted in the spatial and social features of the Tuscan rural landscape, broadly conceived.

There was indeed a seemingly simple “environmental” reason for the newly settled shepherds to engage in agriculture more systematically than they did in Sardinia. Tuscany did not have communal lands, and the migrants came to occupy plots that had been at one point sharecroppers’ farms (*poderi*), often combining more than one of them to create a continuous space for pasture and cultivation. These plots were far larger than the enclosed fields that surrounded the Sardinian mountain villages, but they were hardly big enough for the extensive grazing needs of the typical flocks shepherds understood as ideal for a nuclear family with a couple of adult males—i.e., anywhere between 250 and 500 sheep. Thus, they had to switch to “intensive” husbandry and grow much of the animal feed they needed in the form of barley, rye, and hay, often processed into silage. They also grew wheat, which they could easily sell for cash and for which they received several kinds of subsidies. By putting the land under rotations of cereal cultivations, pasture, and fodder, they also avoided its depletion and, even more importantly, the spread of invasive Mediterranean maquis plants, such as thistles, which sheep grazing could not control. The spread of these invasive plants was indeed taking place on a massive scale in central Sardinia as a consequence of the peasant farmers’ abandonment of the communal lands.<sup>63</sup> In sum, a virtuous circle seemed to be emerging from the carefully monitored balance between husbandry and agriculture in the newly resettled Tuscan farms.

This picture of ecological and social virtuosity was not so much inaccurate as it was selective. More than one third of shepherd families did not own any land at all well into the 1980s, and many others did not own enough of it, thereby moving their herds to rented plots, sometimes located quite far from their homes. In other words, this was a perception that domesticated the shepherds’ migration while stigmatizing the practices that did not match with it. The fact that some migrant shepherds now lived in the old farmhouses, recently deserted by the sharecroppers, seemed to strengthen this optimistic and ecologically inspiring model, at least for some observers. Berlinguer noted how these houses, “one of the most precious examples of cultural heritage and vernacular

architecture in our country,” were falling apart when the Sardinian shepherds moved in. The new dwellers restored and adapted them to their needs, breathing new life into them.<sup>64</sup> A journalistic report from the same period makes the same point with uncannily similar language: “[the Sardinian shepherds] have restored life to whole areas that were otherwise deserted. They have rebuilt villages, brought electricity and water to farmhouses, but above all they have been an example, demonstrating that some land had been abandoned too precipitously, sometimes chasing absurd dreams.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, far from being an atavistic splinter of barbarism in Tuscany’s side, these shepherds were simultaneously being civilized by their new dwelling practices, and civilizing the landscape in return.

As we have seen, the Tuscan farmhouses had become powerful symbols of a whole civilization that, some believed, had died prematurely. They were also symbols of a centuries-old tradition, of a kind of permanence that lay at the opposite end from the nomadism that tainted the new dwellers. Yet, these imaginings, too, emerged from selective perceptions. In Sardinia shepherds, even those who left their families for months on their transhumance journeys, had houses in densely built towns and villages. Their language had very subtle words that starkly distinguished the “civilized” spaces where social life could be enjoyed from the wilderness and isolation of the remote pastures.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the Tuscan sharecroppers, Sardinian shepherds were both creatures of the town and of the countryside. The scattered settlement of the Tuscan countryside was utterly foreign to them. Michelino Marongiu, a Sardinian shepherd who came to Radicofani, in the Orcia valley, at the age of 40, told a journalist in 1980 that “here [in Tuscany] it’s all different. In Sardinia we walked; here we must stay put.” What Marongiu meant here was not to contrast semi-nomadism with sedentary life as types of civilization, but oppose the temporary isolation of transhumance to the permanent isolation of scattered settlement in Tuscany’s most remote locations. Sardinian shepherds sent for their immediate family as soon as they could, but these families seemed stranded in a potentially hostile land. The journalist himself understood that, noticing that in Tuscany these shepherds “are

always alone—the man, the dog, and the sheep. It is difficult to see them in the towns. They usually gather in the formerly abandoned farmhouses, which they have restored.”<sup>67</sup> In these emplacé narratives, which tell quite different transition stories from those of the “sympathetic” experts, the Tuscan farmhouses become symbols of loneliness and longing, rather than signposts connecting ways of life and generations.

The experts’ emphasis on the integration of husbandry and agriculture served the purpose of underscoring the actual or potential integration of the newcomers into Tuscany’s social fabric and landscape. Many of these experts, across decades, noticed how little the shepherds were changing the visual outlook of the Tuscan landscape, despite the radical changes in land use and work patterns they had brought about.<sup>68</sup> In these narratives, the shift towards pastoralism assumed the traits of a bricolage, in which the shepherds made do with the spatial layout inherited from a recent past and a different civilization.<sup>69</sup> Of course these changes could be perceived as more or less radical depending on the disposition of the viewer. Moreover, in many cases new buildings had to be erected, nested between the vestiges of sharecropping agriculture. The same commentators also noticed that shepherds reclaimed vast stretches of abandoned land to pasture while razing vineyards and olive groves to the ground.

Despite these experts’ efforts, it was indeed difficult to make the image of the vine-destroying shepherd familiar and unthreatening to rural Tuscans, who viewed vines and olive trees as “civilizing” presences in more than a purely agronomic sense. The seemingly all-encompassing interest the shepherds took in their animals stood in stark contrast with the multiplicity of the Tuscan sharecroppers’ skills and concerns. As a Sardinian shepherd living in the Mugello valley put it, Tuscan peasants saw sheep husbandry as a minor side activity at best, whereas for people like him it was “a way of life.” Moreover, Tuscan peasants had many disparate skills, which they had applied to a wide variety of tasks, turning their hills into orchards; to them, the Sardinian shepherd appeared to only know one thing, herding and milking, and the landscape could not but reflect



that.<sup>70</sup> These perceptions of cognitive and spatial impoverishment suggested yet another transition narrative founded on a sense of declension, and it was an uphill battle for the proponents of pastoralism to counter these notions. Bachisio Bandinu, one of Sardinia's best known writers on rural subjects, tried hard to convey the complexity of the shepherds' way of life, contrasting it with that of the extant Tuscan farmers, now hopelessly contaminated by modernity's illusions: "The Barbagia shepherd who moves to the continent is a man, a family, a flock, a world of objects, a way of working, producing, and having fun; a whole culture with its phantoms and its values."<sup>71</sup> In sum, Sardinian sheep pastoralism was far more than a job; just like traditional hillside farming, it was way of being in the world that developed over a lifetime and across generations.

Many Tuscans strongly believed that the destructive nature of herding extended from vines and olive trees to any wooded area that stood in the shepherds' way. Suspicions of arson were commonplace, and forest fires were routinely attributed to Sardinian shepherds bent on expanding the areas where they could take their flocks to graze.<sup>72</sup> A national law, passed in 1975, barred construction on recently burned land in order to discourage building speculation, but it said nothing about herding, an oversight that was often negatively commented on in the press. Tuscan woods, however, had not only been expanding; they had also drastically changed their functions, in that they were no longer embedded in the sharecropping economy and used as sources of fuel, construction material, and animal feed. By the 1970s many wooded areas had been neglected for years, which increased the risk of summer fires. Perceived as vulnerable spaces devoid of economic value, Tuscan woods were also increasingly thought of as worthy of preservation for ecological reasons. This mix of practical neglect and discursive valorization could not but contribute to the image of shepherds as unscrupulous speculators, incapable of appreciating the beauty and non-instrumental value of their surroundings.

Few issues were more muddled and controversial than the Sardinian shepherds' relationship with the instrumental rationality of monetary gain, a trait that could be viewed as simultaneously

atavistic and utterly modern. Shepherds dealt with the market directly, selling milk (and, to a lesser extent, meat and cheese) to buyers without any intermediation. The fact that in Tuscany they faced a relatively restricted (and collusive) group of private cheese-making companies capable of imposing milk prices did not detract from the general impression that Sardinian shepherds, when successful, could accumulate a kind of wealth that would have been unimaginable to traditional Tuscan peasants. Some of them even lived in the former landlords' villas, rather than in the sharecroppers' farmhouses. The prospect of prosperity bred a complex mix of admiration and resentment. As a Sardinian shepherd living in the Maremma put it, "the fact is that many Sardinians have demonstrated that handsome profits could be gained on the very land the locals had given up on."<sup>73</sup> But this financial success bore the stigma of speculation: traditional Tuscan farmers cared about the land and had been its stewards for centuries; the shepherds who had replaced them, by contrast, worked hard but took from the land what they needed in their pursuit of gain, without any concern for the landscape's integrity.

Detailed studies of the strategies pursued by successful shepherd proprietors seemed to confirm their single-minded concern with their flocks.<sup>74</sup> They would typically devote less than a third of their land to cultivations, and only one third of that to wheat, the only crop not employed in the animal husbandry cycle. The rest of the cultivated land would yield feed crops, so that well over 80 percent of the revenue would be derived from the sale of milk and, to a far lesser extent, lamb meat.<sup>75</sup> The extensive use of machines and fertilizers dramatically increased these farms' productivity, so that the ratio of sheep per hectare of pasture was in Tuscany more than double that prevalent in Sardinia. Through selective breeding and carefully monitored feeding, they had also managed to dramatically increase the milk productivity of each sheep, which could be as high as 150 liters per year.

These data could easily suggest yet another transition story, according to which these shepherds had left subsistence husbandry behind in Sardinia to adopt a modern, market-oriented, capitalist

outlook in Tuscany. Some experts worked hard at qualifying the nature of the shepherds' modernity. Solinas, for example, drew on Tim Ingold's distinction between hunters, pastoralists, and ranchers to reject the notion that the Sardinian shepherds had become capitalists after moving to Tuscany.<sup>76</sup> From this perspective, shepherds pushed the limits of land fertility and accumulated as many animals as they could, thereby assuming considerable risk. These speculative tendencies, inherent in pastoralism as a way of life, were heightened by the closed character of the productive systems they adopted in Tuscany, where they grew much of the feed they needed for their sheep. The profit they accrued, however, could not be regarded as capitalist because it lacked, in Marxist terms, the abstract quality that derived from the complete commoditization of the factors of production. The sheep were not pure commodities, but rather goods that accrued to the family and enhanced its status. Solinas' framing exercise is relevant in itself, signaling an attempt at rejecting widely disseminated contrasts between the former Tuscan sharecroppers and the Sardinian shepherds based on notions of instrumentality and commoditization. In his account, the migrants were modern subjects, but their modernity did not bear the stigma of unbridled capitalist exploitation of land and labor.

The issue of whether these shepherds were actual, or at least potential, capitalists and the degree to which they should be supported were of obvious relevance to Tuscany's Leftist administrators as well. Like the academic experts and the general public, these local politicians responded to the challenge by deploying perceptual schemes and narratives that had developed historically. Some members of the Communist Party interpreted the Sardinian shepherds' activities in "orthodox" terms, vowing to protect the tenants who were engaged in *soccida* contracts from exploitation by the landlords and to strengthen the cooperative cheese factories that had been established in the more heavily pastoral areas.<sup>77</sup>

The majority of Tuscany's Communist politicians, however, reckoned that most Sardinian shepherds were (or aspired to become) relatively independent proprietors not likely to be mobilized

by collectivist arguments. Indeed, local Leftist leaders saw the challenges posed by the shepherds' migration as a second chance at avoiding the mistakes they thought they had made in dealing with the departed sharecroppers' struggles in the postwar years. If ideological orthodoxy had sentenced the Communists to irrelevance in the face of the rural exodus, when they had preached that the land was to be conquered and not bought, the limited repopulation of the Tuscan countryside in the 1970s and 1980s offered the possibility to change gear and truly matter. Evidence of the Communists' relevance would be provided not only by increasing electoral support from a new constituency, but also by the degree to which policy would be able to shape the rural landscape in predictable and legible ways. For these complex reasons, and in stark contrast to their positions in the 1950s, the Communist regional leaders showed little ambiguity in supporting the shepherds' access to land ownership. Berlinguer went as far as to argue that "a rationalizing form of capitalism" was necessary to "the radical modernization of the pastoral condition."<sup>78</sup> Emo Bonifazi, the regional councilor in charge of agriculture, also touted the regional government's record of active support of ownership in his keynote speech at a major 1981 conference on Tuscany's animal husbandry sector.<sup>79</sup> Between 1965 and 1980, he argued with pride, 3,340 animal husbandry companies had been subsidized by the national and regional governments. Here Bonifazi revealingly conflated sheep- and cattle-raising businesses, glossing over the fact that the latter were by and large foundering.

The pride that transpired from Bonifazi's words stemmed from his sense that public authorities this time had made a difference, facilitating the integration and modernization of a major component of Tuscany's rural society. Thus, he could point to the very landscape that Iris Origo contemplated with melancholic puzzlement and call it his own. In light of these considerations, the wave of kidnappings of the late 1970s and early 1980s, came as an especially traumatic event for Tuscany's Communist leadership and for the academic experts who had been trying to make sense of the migrants' seemingly incongruous presence. After all, kidnappings could be viewed as the

outcome of a traditional culture made barbaric and ruthless by its encounter with the logic of capitalist accumulation. Kidnapping could assume the features of the ultimate form of pastoral speculation. Moreover, the shepherds' isolation hindered the social and political control of the territory. The kidnapping victims disappeared, sometimes forever, into a landscape that revealed its ultimate alterity and seemed to belie the domesticating efforts of experts and politicians alike.

In the face of this cacophony of perspectives and perceptions, local leaders doubled their efforts at putting together coherent narratives that could be politically usable and socially reassuring. To their credit, Tuscan leftist politicians refrained from any kind of populist temptations, made possible by signs of racist reactions on the part of ordinary Tuscans. Graffiti that called for the Sardinians to "go home" surfaced in several areas where immigrants concentrated, and the word "Sardistan" was coined to convey the sense that parts of rural Tuscany were now as foreign and incomprehensible as Sardinia itself.<sup>80</sup> A reader's letter to a local magazine, which had run an article arguing that the Sardinian shepherds had rescued the countryside from complete abandonment, is worth quoting at length: "Our region does not need the Sardinians to solve the problem of the abandonment of the countryside... How will we be able to return and redevelop our peasant civilization if our countryside will be populated by Sardinians, with their introverted, hostile, and violent character, with their ancestral sense of isolation and reluctance to collaborate with the authorities (*omertà*)?"<sup>81</sup> These reactions responded to a sense of dispossession of places that until very recently had been utterly ignored. The countryside was no longer something to flee from or at best exploit for resources; it had become the site of identitarian claims, something to preserve or even go back to.

In the face of these sentiments, Tuscany's progressive elites, some of whom were themselves of very recent rural origin, greatly contributed to imagining a gentle, civilized, and harmonious countryside that could accommodate the many trajectories that seemed to be in the process of clashing. The fact that the peak of mobilization was reached in the wake of the three German children's kidnapping is highly revealing of the stakes in this process of projection and reinvention.

The bandits were discrediting Tuscany before the world, as tourism loomed as a plausible source of prosperity and renewed dignity for rural areas. The West German magazine *Der Spiegel* ventured that one of the kidnapers might have acted out of hatred for “high-class tourism (*Nobel-Tourismus*),” since he used to graze his sheep on the very land that had been transformed into the resort where the victims were vacationing.<sup>82</sup> Even Berlinguer commented on the utter incongruity of violent crime in Tuscany’s history and landscape: Tuscany had never been the site of atrocities, and, as a legal historian, he reminded his readers that the Grand Duchy of Tuscany had been the first western political entity to abolish the death penalty in the eighteenth century.<sup>83</sup> It was this tradition of civility and harmony, still visible in Tuscany’s stones and fields, that attracted tourists from around the world. The vulnerability of this harmony, just like that of the crumbling farmhouses of the departed sharecroppers, made its imagining all the more precious and urgent.

Tuscany was only the ninth Italian region (out of 20) for the number of kidnappings perpetrated between 1969 and 1997. Lombardy, with 158 incidents (i.e., six times as many as in Tuscany), came first.<sup>84</sup> Yet, probably nowhere in northern and central Italy was this phenomenon as hotly debated as in Tuscany, and the reason for this disproportionate attention was precisely that in Tuscany the issue was framed in civilizational terms, as a problem directly bearing on the heritage and future of the region’s countryside.<sup>85</sup> Tuscans reacted to the immigration of Sardinian shepherds and to the wave of kidnappings in a variety of contradictory ways. For some Tuscans, the shepherds were intruders and ruthless speculators who had contributed to the dispossession of traditional Tuscan peasants and were ruining the region’s rural society and landscape. For these observers, the kidnappings were only the most extreme manifestation of the newcomers’ irreducible barbarity. For many other observers, the migrants had rescued thousands of hectares of marginal land from complete desertion. By becoming sedentary and getting in touch with the social and political traditions of the hosting society, embedded in the very makeup of the landscape, the migrants were transitioning to a benevolent form of modernity. For these observers, kidnappings were an

aberration perpetrated by a tiny minority of unscrupulous newcomers who had been corrupted by extraneous elements. What these two seemingly incompatible positions shared was the increasing idealization of the rural landscape and of the society that had built it. The point here is not that this idealization was directly caused by the Sardinians' presence and activities: similar processes took place all over Mediterranean Europe. My goal has been to show that in the case of Tuscany a variety of actors came to delineate the contours of a newly meaningful rurality also by dealing with this peculiar form of immigration, with its complex mix of hopefulness and dread.

### *Conclusion*

At least at first sight, it may seem preposterous to tell the history of the Tuscan rural landscape in the 1970s and early 1980s by looking at two processes, the irrigation plans and the debates on the Sardinian shepherds' migration, which in other conceivable narratives could have been relegated to a few footnotes. After all, the former is the story of a failure, while the latter concerns a small minority who engaged in practices that have left relatively few visible traces. But to borrow microhistorian Edoardo Grendi's famous expression, it is by attending to the "exceptional normal" that the contours of historical processes can come into fuller relief. The main historical process at stake in this case is the "death of the Tuscan peasantry," which came to be understood by many Tuscans as the death of tradition tout court. The irrigation plans' failure and the Sardinians' settlement made Tuscans fully aware of the irreversibility of this process, eliciting a variety of intellectual and emotional responses. For the generation of rural Tuscans who had come of age in the immediate postwar decades, this death was timely and perhaps even desirable, as long as it promised to usher in a type of modernity that would have bridged the gap between urban and rural life by increasing the productivity of the countryside and increasing the comfort of its inhabitants. This is what it meant to dream of hills of green and herds of (mooring) white. As these dreams confronted local and global constraints, many urban Tuscans, including many of the recently

urbanized peasants, forgot about the countryside altogether, now viewed as irrelevant or at best marginal with respect to the main stages of history. The dread elicited by the kidnappings clashed with the hopes raised by burgeoning tourism. This clash was one of the emotional experiences through which both rural and urban Tuscans rediscovered the region's rurality, which they set out to valorize in novel ways.

In the course of the 1980s, both the rural dwellers' aspirations for modernity and the urban dwellers' indifference gave way to a complex form of nostalgia (or perhaps melancholia) that reunited city and countryside after decades of separation. This encounter took place under the aegis of a novel appreciation of the rural landscape, now viewed in civilizational terms, as the legible, vulnerable, and therefore beautiful product of a coherent "culture." This landscape was to be protected from the assaults of a monster that had populated the nightmares of Tuscans for decades: the speculative tendencies of capitalist modernity, whose specter haunts the stories I have told in this chapter. The construction of this mythical world, at times inhabited with utter earnestness and at times confronted with subtle irony, greatly reduced the gap between the background of representational aspirations and the foreground of everyday dwelling practices. The features of this bridging process provide the focus of the next chapter, but it should be evident by now how contingent, even unlikely, this outcome was. At the turn of the 1980s rural Tuscany was the site of a cacophony of perspectives and trajectories. Their harmonization required creativity and determination, but also the power to silence and make invisible the experiences and memories that did not fit the new sensibility. The goal of this chapter has been to recapture a historical moment in which different senses of place and time vied for hegemony, resisting the condescension of hindsight.

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<sup>1</sup> Pius II had himself dreamt of stopping the painfully slow flow of the Orcia River and create a lake down in the valley, to be admired and exploited by the people of Pienza. The lake was never created, although some locals believed for a long time that the body of water had once existed, in an age of plenty ushered in by Pius II (who had been born in the area) and ended shortly after his demise. See Fabio Pellegrini, *L'Utopia Idraulica di Pio II nell'Immaginario Antico e Moderno della Val d'Orcia* (San Quirico d'Orcia, 2006).



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<sup>2</sup> E. Hirsch, "Landscape: Between place and space," in E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon, *The Anthropology of Landscape: Persepectives on Place and Space* (Oxford, 1995): 1-30.

<sup>3</sup> Archivio Storico del Movimento Operaio Senese (ASMOS), Fondo Peris Brogi, Box XIII 1, folder 3, subfolder 1971, report by Duccio Tabet, titled "Prime Considerazioni sui tipi d'impresa Agricola in Toscana."

<sup>4</sup> Archivio della Camera del Lavoro di Siena (ACdLSi), Confederale, Box IX a. 9, folder IIa Conferenza Regionale sull'Agricoltura, report titled "Individuazione delle terre incolte e insufficientemente coltivate."

<sup>5</sup> "Sono in tanti a chiedere terra da coltivare," *Agricoltura Toscana* 2 (February 1978): 8-10.

<sup>6</sup> "Conferenza regionale per l'occupazione giovanile," *Agricoltura Toscana* 4/5 (Giugno 1977): 6.

<sup>7</sup> "Con il primo decreto di assegnazione operante la legge sulle terre incolte," *Agricoltura Toscana* 9 (September 1980): 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> "La seconda conferenza regionale dell'agricoltura," *Agricoltura Toscana* 9 (September 1978): 3-16.

<sup>9</sup> ACdLSi, Confederale, Box IX a. 5, Folder Agricoltura CGIL. Document dated 7/11/81 on the general objectives of the regional government for the period 1982-84.

<sup>10</sup> A. Fiorentino and M. Massa, *La Collina Fiorentina tra Speculazione Edilizia e Investimento Multinazionale* (Florence, 1979): 148-50.

<sup>11</sup> "Edilizia rurale: recupero del patrimonio e nuove costruzioni," *Agricoltura Toscana* 3 (June 1980): 25.

<sup>12</sup> This law (Law 784/1977) was willed by long-time Minister of Agriculture, and Christian Democrat heavyweight, Giovanni Marcora. It committed some 7,000 billion lire and led to the construction of 32 dams nationwide, among countless other infrastructural works. Marcora's own background was in the construction industry.

<sup>13</sup> "217 miliardi da spendere presto e bene per la nostra agricoltura," *Agricoltura Toscana* 4-5-6 (June 1980): 3-12.

<sup>14</sup> Archivio del Consorzio di Bonifica della Val d'Orcia, Box 1871, "Rilevazione generale dei fabbisogni di opere pubbliche per lo sviluppo della bonifica del comprensorio e formulazione di proposte di programma quadriennale," dated 17/1/1964.

<sup>15</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Faldone X II Comitato di Coordinamento della Valdorcia, Fasc. 1979. Little pamphlet called *Notizie Sanquirichesi* (Year VI, n. 11, 15 December 1979). Front title is "La diga si farà."

<sup>16</sup> "Il ritorno di Bista. Quasi una novella," *La Val d'Orcia* 3 (June 1964): 1-3. I found this publication in the Archivio Storico del Consorzio di Bonifica della Val d'Orcia, Campiglia d'Orcia.

<sup>17</sup> "Questo 'nostro' consorzio," *La Val d'Orcia*, 1 May 1975: 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> "Un programma... bianco, dai rosei aspetti," *La Val d'Orcia*, 30 December 1975: 3.

<sup>19</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Faldone X II Comitato di Coordinamento della Valdorcia, Fasc. 1979. Document by the Consorzio di Bonifica dated 24 May 1979 and addressed to many public institutions and political parties.

<sup>20</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Faldone X II Comitato di Coordinamento della Valdorcia, Fasc. 1981. Minutes of meeting of 13 April 1981.

<sup>21</sup> "Regione Toscana e agricoltura. Gli interventi sul territorio," *Agricoltura Toscana* 3 (March 1980): 13-21.

<sup>22</sup> Regione Toscana, *Una Politica per l'Irrigazione, Atti del Convegno Regionale*, Siena, 26 March 1975 (held by IRPET library): 103-5.

<sup>23</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Peris Brogi, Box XIII 1, folder 4. Report titled "Problemi dell'irrigazione."

<sup>24</sup> Regione Toscana, *Una Politica per l'Irrigazione*, cit.

<sup>25</sup> ACdLSi, Confederale, Box IX a. 5, folder Agricoltura CGIL. Leaflet by CGIL-CISL-UIL dated July 1975 and titled "Per l'ammodernamento e lo sviluppo dell'agricoltura."

<sup>26</sup> ACdLSi, Confederale, Box IX a. 5, folder Agricoltura CGIL. Correspondence between Emo Bonifazi and the Ministry of Agriculture in January 1970.

<sup>27</sup> This dam, built between 1977 and 1993, captured the attention of all of Italy on December 29, 2010, when it suffered a major breach, leading to the evacuation of almost five hundred people. The ensuing polemic focused on the quality of the cement used, but also on the dam's disproportionate size now that its agricultural uses are far from clear. See Laura Montanari, "Cede la diga sul Tevere. Notte di paura," *La Repubblica (Cronaca di Firenze)*, 31 December 2010.

<sup>28</sup> *Piano di Bacino del Fiume Ombrone. Studi Preliminari*, Rome, 7 March 1991. Professor Cannata kindly shared this document with me when I visited him in Rome in December 2011.

<sup>29</sup> See the series of articles published in *Donchisciotte*, a periodical based in San Quirico and reflecting positions very critical of the old "productivist" paradigm: Antonio di Paolo, "Da Bilancino a S. Piero in Campo," *Donchisciotte* 7, 36 (November 1992): 6; Antonio di Paolo, "Diga: Atto secondo," *Donchisciotte*, 8, 37 (January 1993): 7; Antonio Di Paolo, "La diga crollata," *Donchisciotte*, 8, 38 (May 1993): 7. The estimated costs of the project had risen from 10 to 115 billion lire in 15 years. Work on the dam had begun in the mid-1980s.

<sup>30</sup> J. Pratt, *The Rationality of Rural Life: Economic and Cultural Change in Tuscany*, Chur: Harwood Academic, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.: 74-5.

<sup>32</sup> Stefano Tesi, "Piu' terre a riposo che campi di grano," *Toscana Qui*, 12, 2 (February 1992): 3-15.

<sup>33</sup> Leonardo Torrini, "Chianti: mercato d'oro, pero'...", *Toscana Qui*, 9, 11 (November 1989): 72-5.

<sup>34</sup> Stefano Tesi, "Piu' terre a riposo che campi di grano," cit.: 10.

<sup>35</sup> Raffaele Giberti, "Ma il chianino si sposa all'estero," *Toscana Qui*, 1, 5 (May 1981): 126-9.

<sup>36</sup> Enrico Nistri, "Hanno scelto la liberta'," *Toscana Qui*, 12, 1 (January 1992): 68-73.

<sup>37</sup> I. Origo, *Images and Shadows* (New York, 1970): 249. Iris Origo (née Cutting, 1902-1988) was an Irish-American aristocrat who spent much of her childhood in Italy with her mother and married Italian Marquis Antonio Origo in the early 1920s. The couple bought La Foce, a vast and dilapidated estate in the Orcia valley, with the intention of turning it into a model farm. In the course of the 1930s, they employed both their own fortunes and public funds to "reclaim" the land where they had chosen to live. Iris proceeded to write several well-received books, including biographies of poet Giacomo Leopardi (*Leopardi*) and of Medieval banker Francesco di Marco Datini (*The Merchant of Prato*), as well as a journal of her dramatic experiences at La Foce during World War II (*War in the Valdorcia*).

<sup>38</sup> "Le vostre cose tutte hanno lor morte / Si come voi" (Paradiso, XVI, 79-80).

<sup>39</sup> Tuscany had a long tradition of transhumant pastoralism, which linked the coastal areas to the mountains of the interior. The sharecroppers of central Tuscany were used to seeing large herds of sheep pass through twice a year, in November and May, in alternate directions. Both conflicts and commercial transactions were common between the transhumant shepherds, whose residence was in the mountains, and the sharecroppers. Countless toponyms and a whole network of paths still testify to this ancient practice. By the 1960s, however, transhumance had all but disappeared in Tuscany, because of the depopulation of the mountainous areas and the transformation of coastal animal husbandry into a sedentary activity, allowed by the defeat of malaria. Maybe even more importantly for the purpose of this chapter, the very memory of these activities was largely lost to ordinary Tuscans, both urban and rural. See Paolo Marcaccini and Linda Calzolari, *I Percorsi della Transumanza in Toscana* (Florence, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> F. Furati, *Aspetti della Migrazione Pastorale Sarda in Provincia di Siena* (Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Geografia, Universita' di Siena, Facolta' di Magistero, Arezzo, 1973): 32.

<sup>41</sup> The following account is largely based on Riccardo Catola, "Quel pomeriggio del 3 luglio 1975," *Toscana Qui* 3 (1981): 26-35.

<sup>42</sup> The rural setting and character of these acts were so apparent that when two people, a boy of 12 and a woman, were taken from the center of Florence, everyone noted the anomaly. The culprits, a couple of Florentine hoodlums, were arrested before any ransom was paid, but the woman had already been killed and buried in a wood. The press labeled these incidents as copycat cases.

<sup>43</sup> T. Harris, *Hannibal* (New York, 1999). A good portion of the book (and the movie based on it) is set in Tuscany.

<sup>44</sup> Giacomo Mameli, "In Toscana siamo 15 mila sardi: Paghiamo per le colpe di pochi," *L'Unione Sarda*, 24/8/1980.

<sup>45</sup> I do not know what to make of the almost obsessive references to pigs, both alive and dead, in these stories, except to say that they defined a kind of "rural Gothic" that truly terrified me when I was a kid growing up in the late 1970s in suburban Florence.

<sup>46</sup> T. Heatherington, *Wild Sardinia: Indigeneity and the Global Dreamtimes of Environmentalism* (Seattle, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> F. Cagnetta, *Banditi a Orgosolo* (Florence, 1975): 289. The original research had been published in *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1954 and immediately banned and requisitioned throughout Italy for its subversive character.

<sup>48</sup> Widely cited was also Antonio Pigliaru, *Il Codice della Vendetta Barbaricina* (Milan, 1975).

<sup>49</sup> R. Catola, cit.: (33)

<sup>50</sup> Benedetto Meloni, *Famiglie di Pastori. Continuità e Mutamento in una Comunità della Sardegna Centrale 1950-1970* (Turin, 1984).

<sup>51</sup> Typical of this interpretation is the following statement: "Sardinians arrived at the threshold of the 1970s, when the most ferocious (*feroce*) urbanization had dissolved a whole social fabric, a culture that had taken shape over centuries with great dignity." Maurizio Naldini, "Se non ci fossero bisognerebbe inventarli," *Toscana Qui* 1 (March 1981): 36-9, quotation at page 37.

<sup>52</sup> Linda De Angelis, "Pastori senza terra. La mezzadria e la soccida" in P. G. Solinas (ed.), *Pastori Sardi in Provincia di Siena. Vol. III. Economia e Strutture Sociali* (Siena, 1990): 159-183.

<sup>53</sup> P. G. Solinas, "Il flusso migratorio nel tempo. Profilo quantitativo," in P. G. Solinas (ed.), *Pastori Sardi in Provincia di Siena. Vol. I, Demografia e Economia* (Siena, 1988): 7-32.

<sup>54</sup> I borrow this perspective from Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, 2005), where she urges scholars to take space seriously as a heterogeneous and open-ended collection of trajectories, as "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (9).

<sup>55</sup> Linda De Angelis, "Pastori senza terra," cit.: 166-67.

<sup>56</sup> He was also the cousin of Enrico Berlinguer, the national secretary of the Communist Party.

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<sup>57</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Luigi Berlinguer, Box VIII 8, Folder Sardi in Toscana, typescript titled “Pastori sardi in Toscana,” p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> F. Furati, *Aspetti della Migrazione*, cit.: 11.

<sup>59</sup> Giulio Angioni, *I Pascoli Erranti. Antropologia del Pastore in Sardegna* (Naples, 1989): 132.

<sup>60</sup> Benedetto Meloni, “Codice della vendetta come codice di regolazione comunitario. Comparazione tra passato e presente,” introduction to A. Pigliaru, *Il Codice della Vendetta Barbaricina* (Nuoro, 2006): 7-44.

<sup>61</sup> Luigi Berlinguer, “‘Tornate nel Sardistan’,” *L’Unità*, 5/9/1980

<sup>62</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Faldone V A10 Pastorizia, Folder 1980, “Il contributo dei coltivatori e pastori sardi nella economia agricola toscana,” conference organized by the Federazioni Regionali Coltivatori Diretti della Toscana e della Sardegna in Florence on 27/9/1980, pp. 39-40.

<sup>63</sup> B. Meloni, *Famiglie di Pastori*, cit.: 120-144.

<sup>64</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Luigi Berlinguer, Box VIII 8, Folder Sardi in Toscana, typescript titled “Pastori sardi in Toscana,” p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Riccardo Catola (?), “Se non ci fossero bisognerebbe inventarli,” *Toscana Qui*, 3, 1981...

<sup>66</sup> Central Sardinians distinguished between *bidda* (built space), which comes from the Latin *villa*, and *sartu* (from the Latin *saltus*) or *kampu*. This is a distinction based on the density of social relations. On the basis of their agrarian functions, the communal lands (*cummonale*) were subdivided between the *vidazzone*, the arable portion that was cultivated at any given time, the *paberile*, the arable portion that happened to be lying fallow for pasture, and *sartu*, the permanently non-arable portion. The difference between this understanding of the landscape and the Tuscan one, founded on the distinction between *città* (town) and *contado* (countryside), populated by different kinds of people and permanently devoted to different activities, was thus great.

<sup>67</sup> Carlo Cambi, “Al sardo in Toscana non date pane amaro,” *Il Tirreno*, 19/10/1980

<sup>68</sup> This is how Furati put it: “The transformations of the landscape do not appear striking and the external appearance of the buildings remains more or less unchanged, but in reality all ties to the past have been severed and every activity on the farm take place as a function of ovine husbandry.” F. Furati, *Aspetti della Migrazione*, cit.: 32.

<sup>69</sup> P. G. Solinas, “Aziende, patrimoni e famiglie. Linee di antropologia economica,” in Pier Giorgio Solinas (ed.), *Pastori Sardi in Provincia di Siena. Vol. III. Economia e Strutture Sociali*, Siena, 1990: 14-15.

<sup>70</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Box V A10 Pastorizia, Folder 1980, “Il contributo dei coltivatori e pastori sardi nella economia agricola toscana,” conference organized by the Federazioni Regionali Coltivatori Diretti della Toscana e della Sardegna in Florence on 27/9/1980, pp. 28-30.

<sup>71</sup> Bachisio Bandinu, “Restano ‘diversi’,” *L’Unione Sarda*, 24/8/1980

<sup>72</sup> Carlo Cambi, “Al sardo in Toscana non date pane amaro,” *Il Tirreno*, 19/10/1980. See also G. Angioni, *I Pascoli Erranti*, cit.: 231-38. Not everyone in Tuscany agreed with this perception, of course. In 1979 a reader sent a letter to a specialized journal lamenting the pitiful state of Tuscan woods. But he also wrote of a Sardinian shepherd that he knew, who had managed against all odds to protect a big oak tree that provided his herd with shade in the summer and acorns in the fall. “Il taglio del bosco,” *Agricoltura Toscana* 8-9 (September 1979): 26-7.

<sup>73</sup> Alberto Pinna, “C’è un pastore sardo in Appennino: E’ un bandito?,” *Corriere della Sera*, 18/8/1980

<sup>74</sup> By “successful,” Solinas meant those with more than 100 hectares of land and more than 300 sheep.

<sup>75</sup> Maurizio Gigli, “Cinque Aziende Pastorali. Dati d’inchiesta,” in P. G. Solinas (ed.), *Pastori Sardi in Provincia di Siena. Vol. I. Demografia ed Economia. Profilo Statistico*, Siena, 1988: 87-119.

<sup>76</sup> Tim Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists and Ranchers. Reindeer Economies and Their Transformations*, (Cambridge, 1980).

<sup>77</sup> ASMOS, Fondo PCI, Box V A10 Pastorizia, Folder 1980, press release of the Sieneese Communist Party, dated 22/9/1980.

<sup>78</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Luigi Berlinguer, Box VIII 8, Folder Sardi in Toscana, typescript titled “Pastori sardi in Toscana,” p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> “La conferenza regionale sulla pastorizia,” *Agricoltura Toscana* 5-6-7 (July 1981): 18-30.

<sup>80</sup> Maurizio Boldrini, “Nel vocabolario toscano non c’è posto per la parola Sardistan,” *L’Unità*, 12/10/1980.

<sup>81</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Luigi Berlinguer, Box VIII 8, Folder Sardi in Toscana, handwritten letter dated 10/10/1981.

<sup>82</sup> “Entführungen. Geschenk von Chaka II,” *Der Spiegel*, 6/10/1980, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-14317596.html>

<sup>83</sup> ASMOS, Fondo Luigi Berlinguer, Box VIII 8, Folder Sardi in Toscana, typescript titled “Pastori sardi in Toscana,” p. 22.

<sup>84</sup> Commissione Parlamentare d’Inchiesta sul Fenomeno della Mafia, *Relazione sui Sequestri di Persona a Scopo di Estorsione* (Rome, 1998). Nationally, there were 672 kidnappings between 1969 and 1997, targeting 694 people. Of these, 81 never came back. These data do not include the politically motivated kidnappings. In 1991, a law mandated

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that the belongings of the victims' families be frozen, with harsh penalties for those who tried to negotiate with the kidnapers. This has contributed to a precipitous decline of these criminal acts, although a variety of more complex and localized processes seem to have been at work as well.

<sup>85</sup> Calabria and Sardinia follow Lombardy in this grim ranking. In these southern regions, however, kidnappings were not a new phenomenon in the 1970s. Rather, they had been one of the local manifestations of "banditry" and organized crime for generations.