

Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

Literature, Geography and The Poetics of Space

Tracing Historical Narratives Across Literary Landscapes



IL Sileno
Edizioni



Geographies
of the
Anthropocene

Preface by Charles Travis

Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

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Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

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PART II:

*Art, Politics and Literature: the
Formation of Identity Landscapes*

3. The Etruscan Landscape of the *VITE MARITATA*

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Abstract

Reconstructing the ancient landscape requires a multidisciplinary approach, and the study of the first steps of viticulture in Central Italy makes no exception. Botany and molecular biology can highlight how vine domestication took place through the selection of the most productive plants, while archaeology can provide chronological anchors and clues about the actors involved in the vine dissemination process. Last but not least, ancient artworks and literature can provide us with the living imagery connected to ancient viticulture.

The vine can climb anywhere, from the trees of a dense floodplain forest to the low artificial supports of poles and nets that constitute the rows of vineyards commonly associated with Chianti Tuscan countryside. Until the dismantling of the *mezzadria* landscape after World War II, however, it was just as common to come across viticulture on living supports, or *vite maritata* (literally, “married vine”). According to Emilio Sereni, in ancient Italy the *vite maritata* constitutes the most visible legacy of Etruscan viticulture. This chapter explores some material and literary sources on viticulture and *vite maritata*, with the aim of highlighting a fragile, historical landscape of Central Italy.

The *vite maritata* is now disappearing from the Tuscan countryside and from the collective imagination, and this represents not only an impoverishment of the agricultural landscape but also a potential loss for our understanding of ancient authors, and for the iconographic and iconological interpretation of ancient and medieval works of art.

Keywords: *Viticulture, vite maritata, Etruscans, ancient landscape*

1. *Vitis vinifera*: a social climber

Reconstructing the ancient landscape requires a multidisciplinary approach, and the study of the first steps of viticulture makes no exception (Dodd, 2022, p. 443; Motta & Beydler, 2020; Cianferoni, 2012, p. 30). Botany and molecular biology can highlight how vine domestication took place through the selection and hybridization of the most productive plants, while archaeology and archaeobotany can provide chronological anchors and clues about the actors involved in the plant's dispersal. Unfortunately, the high number of archaeological sites in Italy does not correspond to equally substantial archaeobotanical information, due to the traditional marginalization of environmental factors in classical archaeology. Consequently, information about the diffusion and characteristics of the vine in general is scarce, as is the case with other common species (chestnut, olive, walnut, domestic pine, cypress). However, in Etruscan studies, there was a fruitful exchange of ideas in the early issues of the *Studi Etruschi* journal regarding the possibility of reconstructing the landscape and environment of Etruria. This exchange took place in a climate of multidisciplinary collaboration, supported by key authorities in the field, such as Antonio Minto (Ciacci, 2010, p. 75). The manifesto of Giovanni Negri, an Etruscologist active in the 1920s, on the sources to be used for reconstructing the ancient landscape sounds surprisingly modern: in addition to historical and iconographic documents, Negri (1927, p. 368) recommends the analysis of buried plant materials (the discipline we now call archaeobotany) and residues of spontaneous vegetation preserved among our greenery, which is “deeply humanized.” Three recent Tuscan research projects have provided very interesting data on the persistence of wild vines in Etruria (*Vinum*); on native grapevines in the Albegna Valley (*ArcheoVino*; Vignani & Paolucci, 2012, p. 653-661) and on traces of native vineyard landscapes in Siena in the walled city and suburb (*Senarum Vineae*).

The genus *Vitis* includes approximately seventy species, mainly from Central North America and East Asia. Species identification may be conducted from a botanical or from an ampelographic perspective (Mazzanti, 2017). Ampelography describes the morphology of grape varieties and classifies them according to specific diagnostic criteria: features of the shoots (color, pubescence, shape), of the leaves (size, shape, pubescence, dentation, veining, etc.), and of the grape clusters (size, shape, compactness; color, size, and taste of the berries; ripening period).

The only European species is *Vitis vinifera*, which includes two subspecies: *Vitis vinifera sylvestris*, with smaller fruits and a sour taste (Grassi *et al.*, 2006; Arroyo García & Revilla, 2013), and the domesticated one, resulting from selection and hybridization processes that took place in different times and areas. Today approximately ten thousand varieties (*cultivar*) of domesticated grapevines exist, mainly derived from European *Vitis vinifera* and only to a small extent from American and Asian vines. Anyway, the much more numerous American species (best known in Italy is the Concord grape, *Vitis labrusca*) played an important role in modern European viticulture after the diseases that affected vines in Europe between the 19th and 20th centuries (Russo Ermolli, 2010, p. 59).

Vitis vinifera is a woody vine plant now widespread not only throughout southern Europe but also in Asia as far as the Hindu Kush. The earliest fossil evidence of vines with a similar morphology to the modern one dates back to the end of the Tertiary period (about two million years ago; (Russo Ermolli, 2010, p. 59) and has been found in the southern regions of the Black Sea, between Georgia and Armenia (Robinson, 1999, p. 505). In Europe, *Vitis vinifera* is a natural element in swamplands (Braconi, 2011, p. 56) and in deciduous mixed forests (associated with alder, hazel, hornbeam, elm) rich in moisture, namely those of the large alluvial plains from which today the trees have almost completely disappeared due to human activities.

As a consequence, wild vines population is constantly declining throughout Europe. Italy makes no exception, and today wild vines can be found almost exclusively in gorges and ravines from central Italy to Sicily.

In contrast, cultivated vines often “escape” from cultivation, and they tend to gradually return to the morphology of wild vines (Russo Ermolli, 2010, p. 60). This happens because the vine is predominantly dioecious: individuals bearing male flowers produce only pollen while those bearing female flowers have ovaries and produce fruits (only a small percentage are hermaphroditic). Therefore, vine offspring born from seeds exhibits a strong variability and it tends to lose the characteristics selected by viticulturists through vegetative reproduction (whereas in this second procedure, “daughter” plants are identical to “mother” plants).

Vitis vinifera also behaves as a weed and spreads very rapidly (Ciacci *et al.*, 2012, p. 96). It climbs anywhere, from the trees of a dense alluvial forest to the low artificial supports of poles and nets that make up the rows of modern

vineyards from Italy to California. These features facilitated its domestication by humans, which began for the first time in the same regions where the plant originated, Georgia and Armenia, during the 4th millennium BCE, and later spread throughout the Mediterranean Sea (Robinson, 1999, p. 505). Grapevines and wine quickly gained a major role into the lives of ancient Mediterranean populations. Social consumption of wine became one of the most effective status symbols and a proof of one's social standing and prestige within the community.

2. Prehistoric grapes

Pollen in ancient soils and seeds found in archaeological deposits in central Italy indicate the presence of grapevines already at the end of the 4th millennium BCE (Mariotti *et al.*, 2012). In Italy, there are several Neolithic sites where, in addition to legumes and wild cereals, seeds of wild grapevine have been found, thus indicating that the fruit has been harvested even before domestication (Ciacci, 2010, p. 75). In the coastal caves of Cilento, the analysis of charred wood shed light on the simultaneous presence of grapevine and olive about 5500 years ago: it is reasonable to hypothesize that these were the first attempts to domesticate these two species. Another area that yielded interesting pollen data is Lake Massaciuccoli (4000-2500 years ago): here, high percentages of grapevine are associated with a limited presence of forest species. This could be interpreted as the beginning of deforestation and agricultural practices.

Domesticated grape seeds begin to be recognized positively in Bronze Age sites (2300-800 BCE), anyway before Etruscan era, wild grape seeds are still prevalent (Aranguren *et al.*, 2007; Marvelli *et al.*, 2013).

3. *More juicy, more fleshy: Etruscan skills in viticulture*

Large-scale Greek colonization started in the 8th century BCE and expanded the varietal circulation of Greek grapevines, along with olive cuttings and cereal seeds. The Euboeans and Phocaeans trade between the 7th and 6th centuries BCE played a primary role in the spread of grapevines through cuttings rather than seeds, resulting in the preservation of the genetic heritage of some grape varieties still cultivated today in Marseille, Spain, Corsica, Sardinia, and Oltrepò Pavese (Ciacci, 2010, p. 76). It is interesting to note how the activities of the Phocaeans in the northern Adriatic regions are also suggested by the cycles of the Homeric heroes Diomedes (grandson of Oeneus, to whom Dionysus gave the vine and the knowledge of viticulture) and Antenor: the myth outlines some possible sea routes of the grapevines.

Fewer data are available on the contribution of the Phoenicians to grapevines circulation. However, they occupied an equally significant spot in the wine marketplace, as evidenced by the trade of wine amphorae and *symposium* equipment such as tripod cups for grinding aromatic herbs according to Assyrian fashion. These Assyrian cups appear in the burial goods of Etruscan and Latial aristocratic tombs at the end of the 8th century BCE.

Meanwhile, in the second half of the 8th century and in the 7th century BCE, viticultural techniques of wild grapevines were refined in Etruria through the selection of female populations (plants with fleshy berries and sweeter taste) and the grafting of Greek grapevines onto local specimens resistant to parasite infections and to salt in the proximity to the sea. The Etruscans set an example of successful viticulture for the Padanian Gauls, the Raeti, and the Veneti, and perhaps also for the populations of the central Adriatic region (Russo Ermolli, 2010, p. 64). To explore the reasons for the rapid establishment of this primacy, a multidisciplinary approach is once again recommended (Motta & Beydler, 2020).

Both the imports of allochthonous grapevines and in-situ selection are attested by grape genetics, linguistics, and historical, archaeological, and literary sources. Grape genetics studies seem to confirm both the importation of allochthonous grapevines into Etruria and in-situ selection (De Lorenzis *et al.*, 2020, p. 23). The following Tuscan grape varieties are considered allochthonous (imports):

- Ansonica/Inzolia, typical of the islands of the Tuscan archipelago. It shows strong genetic affinities with continental Ansonica from the Tyrrhenian area, with Sicilian Inzolia, and with the Greek grape varieties Roditis and Sideritis, therefore it is likely the result of grapevines exchange lead by Euboean traders.

- Sangiovese, the most famous and widespread grape variety in Tuscany today (Vouillamoz *et al.*, 2007).

Genetics also highlight a grape variety resulting from in-situ selection: the Bonamico, nowadays cultivated on the hills of Pisa and in Chianti. It has relevant genetic similarities with wild vines sampled at ancient harbors on former Lake Prile nearby Grosseto in the Maremma Toscana (Ciacci, 2010, p. 78). The disappear of Lake Prile and the subsequent birth of Maremma is one of the most impressive case studies on changing landscapes in Central Italy, and Etruscan-Roman viticulture is a piece of that fascinating mosaic.

Last but not least, historical linguistics also provide interesting insights on grapevines circulation and exchange of viticulture knowledge.

In Latin language, the transition from the common usage of the ancient term *temetum* to name the wine to a new word, *vinum*, probably dates back to the 7th century BCE, after the linguistic contacts with Greek settlers. In the following centuries *temetum* still rarely appears in the Latin sources, but with the specific meaning of “indigenous wine”.

Another Latin term of interest is *labrusca*, used to indicate wild vines, spontaneously grown, harvested in central Italy by non-Etruscan populations of the Po Valley. The Italian word *lambrusco* (also known as *abròstine*) clearly derives from Latin *labrusca*; today it refers to a group of grape varieties mainly spread in Emilia, which produce a black grape with a slightly acidic taste and late ripening, used to make the popular homonymous table wine. *Labrusca* is also in use today in the scientific terminology to designate the *Vitis labrusca* or strawberry grape, which is (quite surprisingly considering the etymology of the term!) an American species of the genus *Vitis*.

It is sad but not unexpected to acknowledge that our data on wine terminology in the Etruscan language is much more fragmentary (Agostiniani, 2000, p. 103). The *Tabula Cortonensis* is a unique “archival” document in Etruscan language: it records a property transfer, and it dates back to the 2nd

century BCE. There appears the term *vina(c)*, translated by most scholars as “vineyard”. *Vina(c)* is clearly much closer to Greek-fashion word *vinum* than to *temetum*, as we would expect given the chronological and geographical context of the *Tabula*. We can imagine those land plots as located in the wetlands between Valdichiana and Trasimeno (Braconi, 2010, p. 156).

An onomastic trace of the Roman appreciation for Etruscan viticulture is the habit of designating some vine varieties with Etruscan names, for example the *Vitis Sopina*: it derived from the name of a famous Etruscan aristocratic lineage, the *Supna* of Volterra (Ciacci, 2010, p. 78).

4. *Vite maritata: an Etruscan landscape*

As anticipated, *Vitis vinifera* can climb anywhere, from the trees of a dense alluvial forest to the artificial rows of low poles and nets that make up the vineyards today commonly associated with Chianti and other areas of the Tuscan countryside (**Fig. 1**). However, until the depopulation of central Italy countryside after World War II and subsequent dismantling of the *mezzadria*, it was just as common to come across a completely different agricultural landscape: the *vite maritata*, that is high viticulture on a living support (**Fig. 2**). According to that technique, vines are allowed to spontaneously grow up the trunk and the branches of a living tree.



Fig. 1. Chianti vineyards (Castellina in Chianti, SI).

Source: author



Fig. 2. *Vite maritata*. Antonio Tempesta, September: Grape Harvest (1599). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (US)

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:September-_Grape_Harvest_LACMA_65.37.280.jpg

Low poles viticulture is typically associated with intensive grapes monoculture, as it maximizes the profits in the available land plot, and it is difficult to combine it with other crops. Conversely, under the vine shoots suspended from the branches of a tree, meadows for grazing livestock or vegetable gardens can be planted, and the trees themselves are productive assets even if they are not fruit-bearing (for example, elms and maples) because they provide forage and wood. Other great advantages of *vite maritata* are that the plants better withstand frosts and do not require expensive fencing systems to protect them from the appetites of wild animals. That is why since the early Middle Age high viticulture has been a perfect fit to *mezzadria* economy, where each family of *mezzadri* needed to be self-sufficient and produce everything they needed. Carlo Goldoni's opening verses in the intermezzo *Il quartiere fortunato* (1744) may be incomprehensible to those unfamiliar with the specific agricultural landscape referenced:

*Vedovella ch'è senza marito,
è una vite senz'olmo in campagna.¹*

The expression *vite maritata* refers to an ancient beautiful metaphor that pictures the vine as a bride and the tree supporting it as her groom (literally, “married vine”). The reference to wedding in the technical term for this cultivation technique is already in Cato’s *De Agricultura*, but later it will gain a huge popularity in texts of quite different nature thanks to the famous Christian allegory of the vine and the elm firstly spread by the Shepherd of Hermas (with a striking visual counterpart in the central panel of the later Harbaville Triptych; Braconi, 2010, p. 153):

“As I was walking in the country, I observed an elm and a vine and compared them and their fruits. The shepherd appeared and said to me: ‘What are you thinking of by yourself?’ ‘I am thinking about the elm and the vine,’ I said. ‘They are very well adapted to one another.’ 2 ‘These two trees,’ he said, ‘are as a symbol for the servants of God.’ ‘If only I could know the type which these trees you mention represent,’ I said. ‘You have the elm and the vine before your eyes?’ he said. ‘Yes, sir,’ I answered. 3 ‘This vine,’ he said, ‘bears fruit, but the elm is sterile. However, this vine cannot bear fruit, unless it climbs up the elm. Otherwise, it spreads all over the ground. And, if it does bear, the fruit is rotten, because it has not been hanging from the elm. So, when the vine has been attached to the elm, it bears fruit both from itself and from the elm. 4 So, you see that the elm yields fruit, also, not a bit less than the vine; more, in fact.’” (The Shepherd of Hermas, second parable, translated by Glimm, F. X., Marique, J. M. F., Walsh, G. G.)

In ancient Greece, the *anadendràs àmpelos* (literally, vine that climbs the tree) was a familiar sight, as the fable of the fox and the grape by Aesop teaches us:

¹ “Poor little widow without a husband, she is like a vine without the elm in the countryside” (my translation).

*Fame coacta vulpes alta in vinea
Uvam appetebat summis saliens viribus;
Quam tangere ut non potuit, discedens ait:
Nondum matura est; nolo acerbam sumere.
Qui facere quae non possunt verbis elevant,
Ascribere hoc debebunt exemplum sibi.²
(Fabulae Aesopiae 4.3)*

However, the viticulture model that prevailed in Greece and *Magna Graecia* was low viticulture on wooden poles. Low viticulture was dominant in drier areas of eastern Mediterranean since older times, and we can assume that it prevailed in Greece as well if the vineyard depicted on Achilles' shield flaunts precious silver stakes as supports:

“There upon it he set a great vineyard laden with clusters,
Beautiful, fashioned of gold, while black its bunches of grapes were,
Fashioned of silver the poles upon which throughout were the vines held.”
(Homer, *Iliad* XVIII, 561-565, translated by Rodney Merrill; Merrill, 2007, p. 338).

As previously stated, at the dawn of the I millennium BCE the wine produced by the Greeks was superior in quality to the basic wild grapes pressing practiced in the Italian peninsula. Meanwhile, as Aegean vine varieties became prevalent in Central Italy, Etruscan farmers did not adopt low viticulture; instead, they embraced the *vite maritata* technique.

² “A famished fox was frantically jumping
To get some grapes that grew thickly,
Heavy and ripe on a high vine.
In the end he grew weary and gave up, thwarted,
And muttered morosely as he moved away:
“They are not worth reaching - still raw and unripe.
I simply can’t stomach sour grapes.”
Those who belittle what’s beyond their ability
Should see if this tory applies to themselves.”
(*Fabulae Aesopiae* 4.3, translated by P. F. Widdows. Widdows, 1992, p. 87).

Emilio Sereni in the 60es observed how the *vite maritata* survived not only in Etruria proper (i.e., between the Arno and the Tiber), but also in Northern Italy (Marcadella & Stenico, 2012, p. 119; Sereno, 1992, p. 19) and Campania (Buono & Vallariello, 2002, p. 53; Manzi, 1974), in areas significantly populated by the Etruscans: that is why he considered the *vite maritata* as the biggest Etruscan heritage to Italian countryside landscape (Sereni, 1964, p. 40-43).

The Romans as well initially favored high viticulture, maybe due to the abundance of wetlands in *Latium Vetus* (Braconi, 2011, p. 57; Aversano, R. *et al.*, 2017). In Latin language, high viticulture on living support is commonly named *per arbusta*. Pliny the Elder mentions how the wine of the early Romans was produced from unpruned vines, and that only after king Numa Pompilius' ritual prescription the viticulturists were forced to overcome the *pericula arbusti*, that is, the dangerous climbing trees to prune the highest grapevines:

*Eadem lege ex inputata vite libari vina dis nefas statuit, ratione
excogitata ut putare cogarentur alias aratores et pigri circa pericula
arbusti³*

(*Naturalis Historiae*, 14, 88)

We could add as evidence the vineyard where Cicero stages the episode of Attius Navius, as the young swineherd brought the pigs to graze freely there (*De Divinatione*, I, 3 cited in Braconi, 2010, p. 154).

The viticultural landscape of central Italy changed radically in the last quarter of the 2nd century BC, when the model of the slave-driven *villa* with its intensive, low vineyards took expanded in an increasingly Romanized Etruria. However, this does not mean that the *vite maritata* disappeared altogether: large estates could be divided into productive units and assigned to tenants, as shown by the case of Pliny the Younger's property in the upper Tiber Valley. Similarly to Middle Age *mezzadria*, in those smaller plots, there was a need for various products, and thus high vines and cereals were cultivated in the same

³ "By the same law he made it illegal to offer libations to the gods with wine produced from a vine that had not been pruned, this being a plan devised for the purpose of compelling people who were mainly engaged in agriculture, and were slack about the dangers besetting a plantation, not to neglect pruning." Translated by H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library 330. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938.

fields. Pliny the Younger uses crop diversification as a metaphor for rhetorical styles that must have been clearly readable for his peers:

*Utque in cultura agri non vineas tantum, verum etiam arbusta, nec arbusta tantum verum etiam campos curo et exerceo, utque in ipsis campis non far aut siliginem solam, sed hordeum fabam ceteraque legumina sero, sic in actione plura quasi semina latius spargo, ut quae provenerint colligam.*⁴
(Pliny, *Epistulae*, I, 20, 16)

The Romans used the expression *arbustum gallicum* to refer to high viticulture, but *gallicum* here is not an ethnic reference; rather, it is geographical, referring to the persistence of this type of cultivation in the Po Valley (Cisalpine Gaul), formerly populated by Etruscan settlers as remarked by Sereni (1964).

⁴ “On my farms I cultivate my fruit trees and fields as carefully as my vineyards, and in the fields, I sow barley, beans and other legumes as well as corn and wheat; so when I am making a speech I scatter various arguments around like seeds in order to reap whatever crop comes up.” (translated by Betty Radice; Radice 1969, p. 50)

5. From viticulture to (weird) winemaking

Winemaking is a natural process that was not invented by humans, but rather discovered and refined, as mature berries from wild vines ferment spontaneously. This phenomenon was certainly observed and appreciated in prehistoric times even by nomadic populations: therefore, it is important to stress that viticulture is not a precondition for winemaking (Robinson, 1999, p. 505).

The landscape of central Italy preserves faint traces of Etruscan winemaking, extremely fascinating because of their rarity. The oldest wine infrastructures are primitive wine presses carved off the bedrock (*palmenti*; Masi, 2012, p. 583), found all along western Mediterranean at least since the 1st millennium BCE. In Etruria and ancient *Latium* a *palmento* consists of a swallow pool for crushing the grapes, roughly squared in shape, connected to a square or oval vat placed at a lower level (Olcese *et al.*, 2020, Figg. 1-2). In Tuscany, examples are found in Sansepolcro (AR), Abbadia S. Salvatore (Monte Amiata), Castello di Vitozza (GR), and Giglio, Elba, Capraia Islands (Ciacci *et al.*, 2012, p. 72). Archaeologists often struggle to date them because *palmenti* were used in different time periods. Also, they are similar to other types of rural infrastructures, such as vats for tannin production from chestnut wood.

Traces left by wine presses (Brun, 2012; Dodd, 2017; Lewit & Burton, 2019) are even rarer than *palmenti*: in Etruria, as in Egypt and Greece, most widespread systems were the sack press (consisting of a sack and two wooden beams), and the lever press used since the 6th century BCE (Ciacci *et al.*, 2012, p. 75), both made of perishable materials. Only stone elements may survive, such as recesses carved into the bedrock to set the lever, or press platforms where the grape pomace accumulated, none of which recorded in Tuscany so far.

Nearby Monterchi (AR) there is a fascinating site, which was the protagonist of numerous legends that flourished in the medieval period (Bruni, 1995; Nocentini, 2014). It is a shallow basin measuring 5X4 meters carved from a sandstone boulder, equipped with a drainage hole connecting the bottom of the basin to a rectangular recess located lower down. Whether it was used as a *palmento* for grapes or as tannin vat, locally the basin is known as the “tub of the wild man” (*homo salvatico*) because Middle Age farmers reportedly

believed it was used by a fierce creature (half man and half beast) to slit the throats of its victims and drink their blood, as if it was wine. According to the legend, the wild man was eventually killed by a brave young man using a bullet made from a blessed coin: just one of the numerous occurrences in central Italy ethnographic record of Christian religion fighting and overcoming residual pagan beliefs.

Wandering again between archaeology and ethnography, it is possible to find unexpected traces, or rather, “leftover”, of Etruscan winemaking. American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903) collected legends and tales of the inhabitants of Apennine in search of relics of the ancient religion of the Etruscans and ancient Romans (Leland, 1892). Ancient Etruscan divine beings, with just a minimal name alteration, appear as elves or patrons helping with daily life issues. Peasants interviewed by Leland reported the following song:

*Faflon, Faflon, Faflon,
a voi mi raccomando!
Che l'uva nella mia vigna
è multa scarsa,
a voi mi raccomando,
che mi fate avere buona vendemmia!*

*Faflon, Faflon, Faflon,
a voi mi raccomando!
Che il vino della mia cantina
me lo fate venire fondante,
e molto buono.
Faflon, Faflon, Faflon!⁵*

Fuflun is one of the major Etruscan male gods, found on numerous iconographic and epigraphic sources (Cerchiai, 2012, p. 289). Wherever

⁵ “Faflon, Faflon, Faflon, I entrust myself to you! The grapes in my vineyard are scarce. I entrust myself to you, may you give me a good harvest! Faflon, Faflon, Faflon, I entrust myself to you! May the wine in my cellar become full-bodied and tasty. Faflon, Faflon, Faflon!” (my translation).

Inizio modulo

Fine modulo

the word is associated with an illustration (mainly, painted ceramics and bronze foil artworks, such as Hellenistic engraved mirrors and *cistae*), the Etruscan god shows evident iconographic similarities with Bacchus/Dionysus, but differently than his notorious Greek-Roman counterparts the memory of his name did not survive the collapse of the Classical World... except for Leland's song (Camporeale, 2011, p. 209).

Once winemaking was completed, the wine was enriched with numerous weird additives. Etruscan recipes lack ingredients in comparison to Greek and Roman ones due to the shortage of written sources, but graters and strainers among the banquet tools suggests that many additives were popular among the Tyrrhenian aristocracies starting from the 7th century BCE. In Etruria the grater was likely used to prepare the Greek-fashion *kykeiōn*, a beverage made of wine, white flour, and goat cheese mentioned by Homer in the Iliad (Celuzza & Camporeale, 2009, p. 83).

From Latin sources, we know that ordinary wine was consumed as soon as it was clear, drawn directly from *dolia* (*vinum doliare*), while quality wine was transferred into amphorae (*vinum amphorarium*), where it underwent a series of treatments in order to ensure its correct preservation. It was common to expose the amphorae to heat and smoke in specific rooms, or to add seawater to the wine, following a practice already widespread in Greece, where seawater was believed to make the wine sweeter. Depending on the seasons, the wine could be cooled with snow or heated; it was also very common to sweeten it with honey and add flavors such as rose, violet, cedar leaves, cinnamon, and saffron. Many depictions show servants straining wine with special tools: ancient wine makers never managed to produce perfectly clear wine due to technical limitations. Actually, the verb *liquare* (to strain) is sometimes used by poets as a synonym for serving (Cianferoni, 2012).

Due to all these additives and treatments ancient wine was extremely different from the one we are used to. Today in Chianti, there is a trend of recovering ancient grape varieties and winemaking techniques (mainly for promotional purposes), but a glass of true Etruscan or Roman *vinum* would never be appreciated during a contemporary dinner party.

6. *Vite maritata* today: *a not recommended divorce*

In Central Italy, the *vite maritata* (high viticulture) was firstly implemented by the Etruscans and flourished as a landmark of both ancient wine production, and medieval *mezzadria*. After the World War II, the agricultural landscape changed enormously, and viticulture makes no exception: the intensification of monoculture almost led to the disappearance of *vite maritata* (Bigliardi, Fabris, 2022, p. 6): it is interesting to note that in E. Manzi's overview on Italian *paesaggi colturali tradizionali* for the *Istituto Geografico Militare*, the *vite maritata* is recorded as surviving in Campania and in Emilia Romagna (residual *piantata padana*), and not in Tuscany (Manzi, 2004, p. 658).

Two recent Italian laws aim at redeveloping viticulture with a special attention to historical vineyards (*l. 238/28 dicembre 2016, Disciplina organica della coltivazione della vite e della produzione e del commercio del vino; d.m. 6899/20 giugno 2020*. Gabellieri, Gallia, Guadagno, 2022, p. 23).

There are many good reasons to protect and reintroduce the *vite maritata*. The disappearing of *vite maritata* from the collective imagination represents not only an impoverishment of the agricultural landscape but also a potential loss for the iconographic and iconological interpretation of ancient and medieval works of art (Aceto, 2016). Our understanding of Classical texts may be impoverished as well: Braconi warns that the word *arbustum* is sometimes translated into “fruit tree”, concealing any reference to ancient high viticulture (Braconi, 2011, p. 55). Finally, recent studies have also highlighted how the restoration of the endangered ecosystem of *vite maritata* may be beneficial not only to wild species of animals and plants, but also for human beings, as a linear green infrastructure contrasting territorial fragmentation (Bigliardi & Fabris, 2022, p. 6).

Useful, historical, beautiful: *vite maritata* has what it takes to be considered an essential element in Italian landscape, and definitely worth protection and appreciation in the public discourse.

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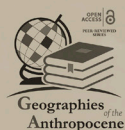
This volume examines the interdisciplinary nexus of literature and geography through a multifaceted lens, blending theories from cultural studies, narratology, and spatial analysis. Beginning with a systemic understanding of literary geography, the chapters explore imaginative, political, and ecological landscapes, emphasizing their relational and dynamic nature. Contributions analyze the production of place and space, highlighting their role in shaping cultural, historical, and environmental narratives.

Key topics include the interplay between memory, identity, and travel in literary geographies, the cultural significance of territorial disputes, and the transformative potential of ecological narratives in the Anthropocene. Methodological frameworks range from geocriticism and literary cartography to ecocritical and geopolitical analyses. Case studies span diverse contexts, such as French 18th-century travel narratives, Etruscan agricultural practices, and Hayao Miyazaki's ethical landscapes. Themes of power, positionality, and environmental responsibility are examined through postcolonial, feminist, and ecological perspectives, illustrating the creative and critical capacities of literature to reshape spatial imaginaries. The volume introduces innovative concepts, including the cultural critique of geopolitics in avant-garde aesthetics, mnemonic geographies in Jewish narratives, and urban-nature dynamics in Romantic fairy tales.

The contributions underscore the ethical and performative dimensions of literary geographies, revealing how storytelling fosters new spatial understandings and responses to global challenges. By reimagining real and fictional spaces this work demonstrates the transformative interplay of literature and geography in shaping our understanding of history, culture, and the environment.

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