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2021

## V. Agrarian Opera: Wines of Beauty at the kitchen table

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Giorgio Morandi *Bottiglie e fruttiera* <sup>1</sup>

# Agrarian Opera:

Wines of Beauty  
at the kitchen table

“

WER, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich ...  
WHO, if I cried out, would hear me ...  
Rainer Maria Rilke  
*Duino Elegy 1*

Did you hear me? (Rilke) when I cried out ...  
tasting that 1985 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Enrico VI?

Rilke's *Overture* then wonders if an Angel might hear his cry. Beauty, he insists, is nothing other than the beginning of Terror. This Terror can be endured, though barely, and yet is revered — because it serenely disdains from destroying us. Rilke's first line connected, so unexpectedly, to my taste of that 34-year-old Barolo. I uttered an unspoken gentle, "Oh my!" — and remember both that taste and the murmur. My question echoes the question Rilke asked himself. Terror was not part of my complete immersion in that Taste. Pulled into the poem, I wondered why each of us cried out as a primal response to Beauty.

The first two *Duino Elegies* were written in 1912 during a moment of intense inspiration. *Elegy 3* was written in Paris in 1913 and *Elegy 4* and a draft of *Elegy 5* in Munich in 1915. *Elegy 5* was revised and the remaining 5 elegies completed during a second "storm of the Spirit" seven years later in 1922 at Duino Castle in Italy. The opening of *Elegy 1* with its two sets of four beats, one imbedded the other: **1-** (1-2-**3**-4) 2-3-4 prompted my paraphrase. These patterns could recall Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 with its opening four notes (**1**-2-3-4) often described as knocking at a door. For both Rilke and me, however, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9's opening — an orchestra tuning in preparation for performing? — is far closer. Unknowns permeate the experience I shared with Rilke and yet it also has enigmatic clarity. The opening sounds of the 9th Symphony (that Beethoven (never *heard*) give no idea where the music that follows may take us.

These uncanny words of Rilke and sounds of Beethoven allow no quick nor simple gathering of meaning. Rilke does not, as I did, tell of the occasion of his cry. His opening expresses a wish: to know if his cry would be heard and by whom. He wants to be *heard*. And yet, if any Angel actually approached him, he tells us, he would vanish in the presence of the Angel's overwhelming existence. Reading and re-reading the initial two elegies as a complete *overture* one gradually recognizes them to be an account of his own immediate experience. His wish to know who might hear his cry is not a conclusion reached at a later time after reflection; it describes an inescapable question of that moment. My cry was of the same kind. Connecting the *Duino Elegies'* non-linear threads allows us to see them as the multifaceted interrogation Rilke presents to himself about being a poet. He describes and intensely examines his own difficult experiences as poet in a sharing through first and second person questions and instructions to himself.

Compelled to take a careful look into these elegies, I did not know where the exploration would lead. My point of departure was an enigmatic shared, immediate experience of Beauty. Rilke does not talk about wine in any of the elegies and I did not expect that connection. I wanted to listen to his examination of learning about Beauty. His silence about what made him cry out was part of my curiosity. My question is not whether I would cry out in relation to what he did. We are considering here things that move humans at the deepest levels, experiences arising from within oneself. Rilke's question of who would hear his cry is the question of someone *alone* with such deep feelings. His second question was, "Who can we turn to for help?" He answers (himself), "Not Angels. Not humans." That experience of being alone can be Terrifying. The "we" who look for help are those whomay like Rilke need to sing. He turns, in other words, to himself. What I shared with Rilke at the start was not the need to sing. Our connection was rather Beauty and what Beauty reveals to each of us about Being.

## Learning

At the end of the first stanza of *Elegy 1* Rilke turns:

Don't you know yet? Flung the emptiness out of your arms  
into the spaces we breathe; perhaps then, birds  
will feel opened air for internal flight.



To this rhetorical question he gives himself instructions. He knows what to do. Terrifying emptiness can be flung poetically into spaces we breathe, into spaces for authentic experience. If heard, those flung words could be a catalyst for one's own flight. The second stanza picks up this task: springtimes, stars, waves on a beach, a violin singing from a window we pass by –these things *give themselves to us*. They **need**, clearly, one who, in singing about them, enables them be more authentically experienced. The Beauty of these things is, Rilke<sup>2</sup> says, *entrusted* to us. That Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo was entrusted to me. Its Taste was entrusted to me. This is completely different from my relation to the bottle of wine cared for by me for 34 years. But, can this task be accomplished? Rilke immediately interrogates himself. Are we not too easily distracted by *expectations*?

Everything announces itself as worthy of being loved. Presented a glass of mature *Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses* I would be so distracted by expectations that I would not manage to taste the wine openly. Writing these elegies Rilke was at the height of his poetic power and perhaps more than at any other time critically questioning his own ability.

He then instructs himself: if one *craves* being entrusted with such an assignment, sing of a beloved. Not any beloved but of a beloved who has been abandoned. His example is the Italian poet Gaspara Stampa. The famous passion of abandoned lovers is still not yet immortal enough for Rilke. Their passion is to be admired even more than the passion of gratified lovers. To sing of this passion poets are needed. Rilke's giving himself permission to sing of a Gaspara Stampa, craving to be entrusted to help her passion become adequately immortal, is once again not a decision he came to after careful reflection. It is rather a task that came to him from within. I can follow Rilke here because my need to write about wines of Beauty like the 85 Cordero Enrico VI was not a choice I made; my need to tell the story arose unexpectedly from within. Permission springs out of what Rilke names the *Open*. Hölderlin uses the term *Open* in a very similar way in Ch. 4 of this ebook.. In *The Open* Beauty that must be shared is entrusted to us. The abandoned lover is *alone* missing the beloved but also *alone* in the Open.

In Stanza 3, Rilke gives himself a new command:

Voices. Voices. Listen my heart, as only  
saints have listened hitherto.

Before we are told from whom these voices come, Rilke devotes himself to his listening. So intense is this listening that still-kneeling saints are lifted off the ground by the call they hear – yet remain kneeling, and do not notice their elevation. Such must be our listening. But instead of listening for the voice of God, Rilke listens to what he hears: the voice of the wind. Listen, he insists, to the incessant message building itself out of *silence*, murmuring towards us from those who died young. From asking if his own cry would be heard Rilke has become the one who *listens*; he needs to hear.

The first elegy ends with Rilke asking what do those who died young, whose stories, now entrusted to him as the one who has listened, want from him. They want him to overturn the appearance of injustice done to them. This injustice at times slightly hinders the movement of their souls. It is movement of Rilke's soul that makes him listen and then want to help the souls he hears. They must have their own authentic movement. That movement is to feel, gradually, *a trace of eternity*. Ultimately those who died young do not need help from us, but we still need them, or at least their stories. We need great *mysteries* (as was also insisted upon by Hölderlin in Ch. 4). Our souls often make progress, Rilke acknowledges, out of the mystery of grief (*Trauer*). He is finally telling us slightly more clearly why he cried out — through his lament for abandoned lovers and those who died young.

His own grief moved his soul. Earlier he mentioned revering the Terror that arises out of Beauty because it disdains to destroy us. That reverence might well come through Rilke echoing Friedrich Nietzsche's "What does not destroy me makes me stronger." Rilke names Gaspara Stampa as the abandoned lover about whose grief he must tell. Rilke was also an abandoned lover. In the late 1890's he had an intense love affair with Lou Andreas-Salomé, one of the most influential thinkers of that time. Andreas-Salomé met Nietzsche in the early 1880's; he was in his late 30's, she 21. Nietzsche instantaneously fell in love with her and proposed marriage. She declined. Fifteen years later Andreas-Salomé met 22-year old Rilke and then 4 years later she left him. This experience is woven into the *Duino Elegies*. Before meeting Rilke, Andreas-Salomé had written one of the earliest books on Nietzsche. Rilke unquestionably knew Nietzsche's quote above. To revere the strength that comes from not having been destroyed by grief is part of Rilke's own experience. Rilke, however, recalls the ancient Greek legend of Linus, a youth almost as beautiful as a god, who suddenly vanished forever. In the lament for Linus, Rilke *hears* the daring first notes of *song* piercing the barren numbness. In that startled space, in the *Open*, for the first time Harmony was felt. Music that enraptures, comforts and helps began.

## Agrarian opera

Among the great mysteries needed by mortals, Rilke experienced his own need to be a poet, his need to write about abandoned lovers and those who died young. He has no idea why that force resided so powerfully inside him and yet he experienced it deeply rooted within. His connection to Gaspara Stampa is to another abandoned lover who long ago whose poetry sang of her grief. But few abandoned lovers become poets and only some of them write about their own grief directly or obliquely. Lovers of wine might say similar things. We do not know how our passion came into being nor why some wines remain so profoundly mysterious despite our experience and understanding. And similarly few lovers of wine need to write about that passion. Rilke takes a further look at his own internal passions in *Elegy Two*. He intentionally sings to the terrifying Angels now described as *almost* deadly birds of the soul. Throughout the elegies birds are a metaphor for the movement of the human soul. "We" (poets) joyfully *Look* at mountain ranges with peaks glowing red at dawn as being the Beauty of Creation. These spaces of Essence (*Räume aus Wesen*) give *some* poets material to sing about. These spaces *mirror* the Beauty of that which created them; a Beauty entrusted to poets. From the hearing and listening of the first elegy we have moved to looking and seeing.

A Space of Essence was present in my Taste of the *85 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Enrico VI. Mirrored* in the taste was

... a great wine, which many call a "work of art" ... the work of nature, the work of the sun, the climate, the soil composition and so on; to use a cavalier and paradoxical term, it is an *agrarian opera*.

—Paolo Cordero di Montezemolo

To call a great wine an *opera* (*oeuvre, Werk*) is to consider it exactly as I do, a work of art. The paradox of the term *agrarian opera* has a fascinating connection to Rilke's exploration of the poetics of Beauty. Agrarian (and *acre*) come to us from the Latin *ager* and Greek *agros*: cultivated field. *Enrico VI* is a single cultivated field (vineyard / *monopole*) in the Villero *MGA* within the municipality of Castiglione Falletto in the Barolo DOCG. In German (and Italian and French) there are different words separating distinct human productive activities. Rilke would clearly distinguish the activity of *Arbeit* from *Werk* as the Marchese Cordero di Montezemolo would distinguish *lavoro* from *opera*. A *lavoratore / travailleur / Arbeiter* is one who repeats tasks over and over and that includes many tasks in tending a vineyard. The creation of an *opera / Werk* may take a long time as the *Duino Elegies* did but once completed the *Work* has its own persistent life including inspiring this essay. English does not so clearly distinguish these activities but one hears the idea in sayings like, "One has to do the small things in order to do the big things." These two fundamentally different kinds of activities and outcomes have parallels in Rilke's ongoing discussion with himself about poetry and Beauty.

When humans feel things, such as Beauty, deeply, Rilke notes, we take them in and then they evaporate (*verflüchtigen*), we breathe ourselves out and away like glowing embers releasing heat and aroma. Again this movement includes the metaphor of flight. The *we* is, still, poets. A reader may, Rilke notes, say to a poet, "You have filled this room (space) where I am, this springtime." Praise of this kind does not matter because that person "cannot hold us," cannot preserve the feeling brought forth by the experience. We vanish while being the reader so moved. The first elegy began with a wish to know if an Angel would hear his cry yet he immediately says he would vanish if an Angel actually approached. This ephemerality seems an inescapable ground upon which Rilke exists.

Describing a vanishing feeling as a receding wave, and then as giving off a weaker aroma Rilke moves from the visual to the olfactory and, for us, closer to the gustatory. Before describing where this sequence of reflections has brought him Rilke summarizes the essential characteristic of our experience. "Alas, that is what we are!" Our *Being* is in its essence ephemeral. Is there anything any more ephemeral than a great wine? The Barolo Enrico VI that brings me into these elegies had changed within its life as is well known. I did not examine this Barolo's maturing process carefully yet knew the details well. Barolos generally, and Cordero's Enrico VI specifically, go through a slow evolution and are particularly unrevealing of eventual character for a long time. I waited to taste this one until it should have reached its mature stage. Bottles were finally tried one and two years earlier. The first two were case studies of fine Barolo. The last one was different. We who taste fine wine as well as the wines we taste share the ephemerality Rilke describes as *what we are*, and more broadly, both mirror "What is." This ephemerality is also mirrored in human *lavoro / Arbeit*.

## Touch and Eternity

Although the first elegy expressed the preference to write about abandoned rather than satisfied lovers Rilke subsequently turns to lovers who are gratified in one another. He asks gratified lovers, " ...about *us*." The *us* once again addresses people with intense ephemeral feelings entrusted to them. Rilke initially told us those very ephemeral feelings, expressed by a poet and heard, cannot be *held*. Now, he reminds himself, Lovers *hold* each other. *Look!* he instructs himself. But just as he did not listen for voice of God as saints do but rather listened for voices he hears, he now *looks* at his own hands. They sometimes become aware of each other, sometimes give shelter to his face. He calls that face "time-worn" and much experienced including much grief. His hands' *Being* becomes *inward* and in so doing give him a slight sensation. That sensation is perhaps like the cry with which he began. It is not, in being *slight*, insignificant but rather, is a mystery, an opening to further exploration of our inwardness. Lovers, in the rapture of the other being held, grow. Each may grow richer, Rilke says, like "vintage grapes". In this growth one lover may disappear while the other completely emerges.

To the lover who has disappeared in this manner Rilke says. "I ask *you* about us." And then Rilke says, "I know". He knows:

a lover touches so ecstatically  
*because* the caress preserves,  
*because* the place does not vanish that you cover so tenderly,  
*because* underneath it you feel pure Duration.  
So you promise Eternity, almost, from the embrace.

The movement *almost* made invites our attention. To connect to the Eternal through *Touch* is even more mysterious than through Hearing or Seeing.

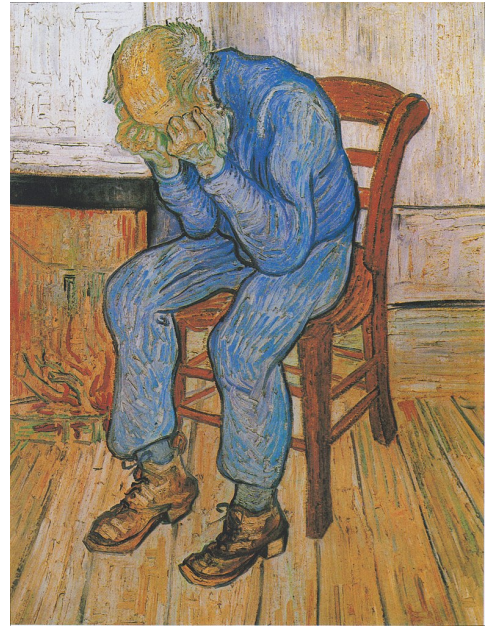
This Space of Essence clearly connects to my experience Tasting an extraordinary wine like the Cordero Barolo Enrico VI. We can start with disappearing because the other has emerged so completely. The Taste of that wine emerged completely and I vanished. Or to say it slightly more clearly; there was a complete forgetting of my ordinary self in the experience. This is fundamentally different from the vanishing of ephemeral feelings, already considered, things that cannot be held. My ordinary self would have recognized and reported in my consciousness that this Barolo was special. Neither "extraordinary" nor "special" nor any words were in my consciousness other than an inarticulate, "Oh my!" I would normally have recognized and described its difference from its "sibling" 1985 Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo Monfaletto. The Monfaletto comes from grapes grown in a different "cultivated field" / *monopole* inside the MGA Gattera within the different municipality of La Mprra in the Barolo DOCG. These two vineyards are located on opposite sides of the "Barolo Valley" section of the Barolo DOCG. My ordinary self would have recalled that the landscapes, as Alessandro Masnaghetti calls them, of these opposite sides of the valley are different and produce Barolos of different character. On a recent visit to the Langhe winemakers in the "Barolo Valley" (the basin bounded by ridges at La Morra, Castiglione Falletto and Ravera) and one in the narrower Serralunga d'Alba Valley" (bounded by ridges at Serralunga d'Alba, Monforte d'Alba and the other side of the Castiglione Falletto ridge) showed us exposed walls of differing soils in their underground cellars. The different soils explain the differences separating wines from these two valleys. The Monfaletto *should* be more elegant while the Enrico VI *should* be richer and longer lived coming from landscapes on opposite sides of the same valley. My ordinary self could have recognized the differences in development between these wines that should age differently. I could list more observations of the ordinary self except that none of that took place. That usual self tasting a wine had vanished as Rilke notes *may* happen with lovers. He said he "knows" because it is his own experience he is describing. The same is true for my tasting that Barolo. The vanishing of the normal self Rilke and I know is *not* what happens in almost all cases of tasting fine wines or of lovers embracing. It is the rarest of experiences and announced its difference to each of us with a cry from within.

This disappearance does not, however, mean there is no self present. A transformed self, a fundamentally different self is present. This self *experiences* the caress preserving, the place so tenderly covered and not vanishing — and feels pure Duration, a promise of eternity. This passage describes the experience I had tasting the Enrico VI Barolo better than any I could produce. Through his words I grasp Rilke's role as poet entrusted with writing about Beauty experienced. The Taste of that wine completely filled my experience and did so without any of my regular interactions with a wine. Above all the taste had one complete quality, pure Duration. I do not mean by this the usual sense in which fine wines are described in temporal terms. We note that the finish of a wine lingers. Some even count how long it persists. That is a completely understandable counting. But that is, again, the recognition by the usual self tasting a wine. I do this as regularly as others. But in that Taste, cognizance of the countable was gone, vanished. This did not occur by intention. It was replaced by a taste that was



different qualitatively not quantitatively from the usual. had a purity, a completeness and a Duration that was not temporal. The taste was a sensation of inwardness.

Rilke asks the same gratified lover, the lover who has disappeared in the embrace how one feels *after* the experience is over. When we have “survived the terror of first glances” and survived “the first walk together, only once. through the garden”, “Are you still the same?” He does not answer. He knows. “Oh how strangely each walks away from this experience.” Within the experience does not observe that it is different. That realization comes afterwards as does recognizing the rarity of the experience. There is only one walking away from the wine taste experience I am describing. But it has its own strangeness as do we who walk away, of not being the same. Perhaps this is what R. L. Stevenson tried to express in *Silverado Squatters*, “Wine..a deity to be invoked by two or three, all fervent, hushing their talk, degusting tenderly.”



It  
the  
one

Not able to hush his talk Rilke turns to a related experience.

Were you not astonished by the caution of human gestures on Attic gravestones? Was not love and farewell laid so gently on the shoulders that it seemed to be made of a different substance than we are? Remember the hands, how weightlessly they rest, despite the power in the torso.

Saying farewell to one's lover, those tombstones bring together Rilke's themes of lovers and death too early. Hands, as touch, still fills his attention. One suspects his friend August Rodin had no small role in this. These are, however, not hands of Michelangelo's *Moses* or *David*, despite Rodin's recognized debt to that sculptor. Rilke's hands sheltered his face. A closer example of hands is Vincent Van Gogh's 1882 drawing he titled *Worn Out*. Rilke may not have seen it nor the 1890 painting *Treurende oude man (Grieving Old Man)*<sup>3</sup> based on the earlier work. In a letter to his brother Theo in November 1882, Vincent wrote:

It seems to me that a painter has a duty to try to put an idea into his work. I was trying to say this in this print — but I can't say it as beautifully, as strikingly as reality, of which this is only a dim reflection seen in a dark mirror — that it seems to me that one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the existence of 'something on high' in which Millet believed, namely in the existence of a God and an eternity, is the unutterably moving quality that there can be in the expression of an old man like that, without his being aware of it perhaps, as he sits so quietly in the corner of his hearth. At the same time something precious, something noble, that can't be meant for the worms. ... This is far from all theology — simply the fact that the poorest woodcutter, heath farmer or miner can have moments of emotion and mood that give him a sense of an eternal home that he is close to.

Whether Rilke saw these works or the hands in “Potato Eaters” or the many drawing studies of hands, the connections are worthy of our attention. Rilke would exclaim, “Listen!” We have already noted Rilke saying that mountains, spaces of essence *mirror* the Beauty that created them. Paolo Cordero di Montezemolo's paradox of calling a great wine an *agrarian opera* adds to Van Gogh's list of wood cutters, miners and heath farmers another, a farmer cultivating

vineyards. Woodcutters, miners and vineyard farmers do not create *works*. They labor at tasks repeated over and over. What they produce does not last. Rodin was a craftsman making sculptural decorations for large buildings until he was 50. His name was not attached to any of those pieces just like the names of the stonemasons who build and re-built *Notre Dame de Paris* never are attached to it. Rodin's and Van Gogh's names are eternally attached to their Works.

A tender gesture came to mind when I read of Rilke's astonishment at those human gestures on Attic *stele* (almost always made by unnamed workers). That gesture was the *feeling* of the Taste of a 1994 R. López de Heredia Rioja Gran Reserva Viña Tondonia. Lopez de Heredia Gran Reservas are astonishing. Rilke's *erstaunen*, to render speechless, captures the strangeness of the experience. And Van Gogh writes of an *unutterably* moving reality dimly reflected in his drawing. These wines are recognized as the most traditionally made of all Riojas. Viña Tondonia is a cultivated field (a *monopole*) like Enrico VI. At 170 ha. it is far larger and produces 4 grape varieties whereas Enrico VI has only one grape planted on 2.2 ha.. The 1994 Tondonia GR is a blend of Tempranillo (75%), Garnacho (15%), Graciano (5%) and Mazuelo (5%) each fermented in separate 240hl American oak *tinias* / *vats* (Nebbiolo for Barolo in 100hl Slovenian oak *botti*) and then aged in 225 l. American oak barrels made at the winery. Barrel aging is the maximum allowed *10 years* before bottling unfiltered at seldom more than 12% alcohol. The cork is protected with a red "Cardinal's cap" wax seal. Tondonia Gran Reservas are then aged in the bottle in their cellars until they have reached the required maturity. The 1994 GR was held for 8 years before release. Having experienced how these wines improve greatly after release I cellared them another 8 years before opening the first one. Those *Cardinal cap* wax seals are used to protect the cork for long life in the bottle.

The winemaking process of R. Lopez de Heredia Gran Reservas is so clearly different from contemporary methods — making every bottle is astonishing. They taste unlike any other modern wines. Some greatly appreciate them and some find them impossible to enjoy and there are few responses in between. *Neither* binary experience describes my Taste of the 1994 Tondonia GR. From the beginning a Taste *in itself* completely filled the experience. Recalling that Taste later, my memory connected to "...seemed to be made of a different substance." Instead of remaining attentive to the cautious gestures Rilke felt on Attic gravestones, I was astounded by how the taste of this wine was so different. The essential component of that taste was a texture. This wine had a weightless eternal touch that *seems* as if it could only be made out of a different substance from almost all other wines. And yes it had its own anachronistic power. In our post-industrial, technological world power, speed and force have the highest status. These characteristics are praised in our wines as one would expect. Wines that reach drinkability quickly are preferred to ones that need the long slow maturing of the Lopez de Heredia Gran Reservas or even the Cordero Barolos. Intense fruit and high alcohol content have almost completely replaced wines of 12% making the Viña Tondonia astonishing in this oddity. The astonishing experience I had was *lightness*. Rilke's words here are crucial. hands "... *wie sie drucklos beruhen...*", how weightlessly they rest. The experience of that taste rested in me *druck-los, without* pressing. It was not at all showing itself by exerting pressure, by forcing itself. Van Gogh's images of the old man's grief (*treurnis*) connect to Rilke's human souls moved by grief (*Treurende*). Van Gogh's images, however, do not have the lightness of those Attic tombstones.

Paintings in which one can feel lightness are *natura morta*<sup>4</sup> of Giorgio Morandi, Rilke's younger contemporary. Morandi depicts vases, bowls, cups, the kinds of things Rodin made for years). These everyday things, made by human hands. are representative of the newly industrialized world in which Rilke and Morandi lived (see cover image). Utilitarian things, *tools*, share qualities with *lavoro, Arbeit* considered earlier. Tools need to be cleaned after each use. Tools wear out or break and have to be repaired or replaced. They are a part of Being, what Van Gogh calls "meant for the worms" and Rilke saw as feelings that vanish like the heat from glowing coals. Morandi's *natura morta* have the paradoxical quality of touching the eternal gently and

appropriately in the lightness of their Being. A paradoxical connection not any less so than what Marchese Cordero tasted in his *agrarian opera*.

Rilke asks himself who can *hold* the deepest of human feelings, The first time he says, "I know" refers to lovers caressing each other. What he knows is his own experience as a caressing lover. He asks himself about us. My connection to Rilke's descriptions of experiences is through my own experiences: Tastes of wines like the Cordero Enrico VI and the Lopez de Heredia Tondonia GR. My experiences of each was one of *holding* them. The experiences entrusted to us are our own.

## Cappella Barolo

There is one more path to be explored. *Natura morta*, "dead nature", or as we say in English, following the Dutch, "still lifes" depict inanimate objects, things not animated from within (not having a soul within) or no longer animate. Rilke tells us very early, in the first elegy, that he has been entrusted by those who died young to remove the injustice done to them because it hinders the movement of their souls trying, gradually, to feel a trace of eternity. At the end of Elegy 4 he returns to those who die young. Instead of his earlier second and third person expressions Rilke now says "we". In *our* "hours of Childhood" we grow freely. We want to be grown up and yet, when alone as children, when playing, we are enchanted by what endures. We stand in the gap between world and toy, a place established, from the beginning, for a pure event. The *Open*. Being opens a space, provides the ground in childhood for one kind of pure event. Rilke's word for gap, *Zwischenraume*, mirrors the Spaces (*Räumen*) we breathe, into which we are told to fling the emptiness in our arms. This gap also mirrors the Spaces of Essence in Elegy 2. In saying "we" now Rilke is describing his own experience of childhood play. He then asks, "Who shows a child, as a child really is?" That means:

But this, Death,  
the whole of Death, even before having lived,  
so gently to hold, and not be revengeful. is indescribable

This is a different pure event. How a child does this, for Rilke, is indescribable, *unbeschreiblich*. He is writing about his own experience as both a child and a poet. He cannot explain how as a child he was able to gently hold Death and not be resentful. The very different experience I am writing about shares one essential similarity. I cannot describe the Taste of that Cordero Enrico VI Barolo, the Tondonia Gran Reserva or any other rare other wine experience of this kind.

Other such experiences are documented in previous chapters. These are experience of openness like those of childhood.



From the edge of the main plaza in in the hilltop municipality of La Morra (Cn), It. (location of the Cordero Monfaletto estate and many of the finest producers of Barolo) one has a magnificent view of vineyards beginning at the edge of the commune and stretching far down into the valley. A brightly colored building, the *Chapel of Barolo*<sup>5</sup>, stands out conspicuously part of the way down the hillside. In 1914 workers built the *Cappella SS. Madonna della Grazie* as a place of shelter in bad weather. The *cappella*, also called *Capella Brunate* because it is situated on a hilltop path between what are now known as the Barolo MGA's Brunate and Boiolo, eventually collapsed from neglect. In 1998 Ceretto Aziende Vitivinicole commissioned Anglo-Swiss installation artist David

Tremlett and American conceptual artist Sol LeWitt to renovate the *cappella* as a contemporary work of art. Rilke's first comment about his hands was that he sometimes shelters his face in them. The need for shelter, for protection persists throughout the *Duino Elegies*. *Cappella*, Chapel are related to cap and *chapeau*, things we wear as shelter for our heads. The German *Hut*, *hat* also names both places of shelter and protective headgear. R. López de Heredia describes the red wax cap on its Gran Reserva Viña Tondonia's as a Cardinal's cap. Van Gogh would undoubtedly describe this subtle religious thread as far from theology. Sol LeWitt called the chapel, "... a marvelous place to meditate and think... a space I could take possession of and interpret." David Tremlett called it, "... a place to sit, drink a glass of wine, read a book – maybe pray too."

<sup>1</sup> [Jackrosso](#), [Morandi - Bottiglie e fruttiera](#), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Paula Modersohn-Becker](#) artist QS:P170,Q234370, [Rilke](#), marked as public domain, more details on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Vincent van Gogh](#) artist QS:P170,Q5582, [Van Gogh - Trauernder alter Mann](#), change size, [CC0 1.0](#)

<sup>4</sup>See Morando's *Bottiglie e fruttiera* on front page of this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> [Ziegler175](#), [PmLaMorraC02](#), [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)