

MATTEO CORREGGIA

Canale

An oft heard apothegm: Barolo is the king and Barbaresco is the queen. Such regal accolades cannot do other than give rise to a bit of head swelling for even the most modest Langhe farmers who, after all, hold this highfalutin viticultural Piedmontese monarchy in their hardworking hands. And so it follows in this pseudo aristocracy that other nearby pretenders could be condescendingly dubbed with lesser highnesses; Gattinara or Ghemme as, say, Duke or Count, etc. But regarding the Roero - "rive gauche" of the lordly Langhe - those on the other side of the River Tanaro have always looked long and snootily down their noses seeing it as a place for canning peaches, not bottling fine wine.

Then along came Matteo Correggia. A contemporary of the likes of Renato Corino and Giorgio Rivetti and a student of Elio Altare, Matteo's was a unique character. The work ethic in Piedmont is second to none, and nobody toiled harder than Matteo. The labours of a small farm are heavy and oftentimes exhaustingly drawn out, but he seemed to revel in it. It seemed to refresh him and interruptions, complications, set backs - the kinds of things that dash my concentration and irritate me utterly - never fazed him at all. He was not furiously driven to some consummate idea of success; rather he was powerfully motivated by a broad vision of what was possible in the Roero, not only for himself, but also for the whole zone. And like a benevolent contagion, his spirit did catch on; the Roero indeed is on the map and highly esteemed for its wines.

His entrance on the scene in the early 1980s was modest and entrancing: a still and dry Brachetto (this varietal is usually vinified allowing residual sugars in a pétillant style) displaying

a stunning exuberance of fruit with an intense bouquet of dried rose petals and talcum powder, so fragrant and persistent as to be matchless in my experience. This is a wine that soared beyond all possible expectations. Ampelographic studies have shown



Brachetto to be closely linked to the Muscat family, and more precisely to the highly aromatic Pink Muscat found in Alto Adige. This, and the fact that the Roero zone has the youngest soils of the whole region - young, white, sandy/limy with a small amount of clay - predisposed, one would almost say, to yield fine bouquets. No matter how exquisite it is, in a world where red wine is measured by far different parameters, such an idiosyncratic wine as "Anthos", as it is called, can have but limited appeal; only to the most inquisitive and open palates and to adventuresome chefs who can marvel at finding a true match for asparagus. Fortunately, these same soils grant expression to other varietals. His Arneis is one of the very finest of its kind, delicately scented, crisp, finishing pleasingly dry, with uncommonly complex aromas and a rare richness of body due to an accurate cold maceration on the skins. His other white wine, a 5,000 bottle production of Sauvignon Blanc, aged half in new oak and half in steel and then fined in the bottle for 12 months before release, is even more concentrated, coolly lubricating the palate with a fresh pronunciation of this varietal. Barbera and Nebbiolo thrive as well, softer, more supple and subtle than their

Piedmont

Langhe counterparts. Matteo fashioned simple versions for each of these varietals and then came forward with two stunners, single vineyard barrel fermented Barbera d'Alba "Bricco Marun" and Nebbiolo d'Alba "Val dei Preti". If these wines turned a few heads, the first release in 1999 of the Roero "Roche d'Ampsej" 1996 got everybody's attention. Produced in a separate 3 hectare vineyard area of 100% Nebbiolo near Montà where the soils are of marine origin and completely sandy, the Roche d'Ampsej radiates breeding with its sinuous structure, more suggestive of a little dancer than Barolo's brawny wrestler's physique.

What Matteo Correggia accomplished in his two short decades of activity in the Roero is truly remarkable. His plans were so well conceived and executed that his legacy continues to unfold in steady rhythm. We can even look forward to a new red wine to be released in 2004. I have no intention of revisiting the Piedmont/peerage analogy when I say that Matteo Correggia was a true prince, a noble man. There is wide recognition of his achievements, so much so that now when Langhe producers look over to the Roero they tip their caps.

Anthos Brachetto

Rorero Arneis

Zone: *Canale Roero*

Varietal: *Arneis*

Vineyard Ext.: *3.5 hectares*

Average Prod.: *26,000-28,000 btl/s*

Barbera d'Alba

Barbera d'Alba "Bricco Marun"

Nebbiolo d'Alba "Val dei Preti"

Roero Nebbiolo

Roero Roche d'Ampsej

Zone: *Canale Roero*

Varietal: *Nebbiolo*

Vineyard Ext.: *3 hectares*

Average Prod.: *11,000 bottles*