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**SPECIAL ISSUE: CONSTRUCTING THE SOCIOLOGY (OR  
SOCIOLOGIES) OF WINE**

Guest Editors

**David Inglis**

University of Helsinki (FINLAND)

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## Introduction to the Sociology of Wine—The Sociological Decanter: Pouring Sociology into Wine, and Vice Versa

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### ABSTRACT

Wine from grapes is both ancient and highly modern, increasingly widespread across vast swathes of the planet, and made, marketed and distributed by a huge industry that directly and indirectly employs millions of people and generates huge profits, at least for some. Yet despite wine's social and cultural importance, sociology and sociologists have remained remarkably quiet about wine, unlike those in other academic disciplines. There is today no such thing as a scholarly field called the sociology of wine. This introductory paper to the special issue on wine and sociology considers this state of affairs, and what might be done about overcoming the relative silence of sociology on wine matters. It offers an extensive literature review covering what international sociological work there is on the wine/sociology interface, considering this relatively modest body of literature in relation to the more voluminous amounts of wine-related analysis offered by anthropologists, geographers, economists, and others. These scholarly domains are represented in the paper by reference to classic works and indicative readings. The paper poses a series of questions as to what a sociological field of wine analysis could look like, and what it would take to build such a thing. It also illustrates how the papers published in the special issue contribute to posing and answering some of these questions.

**Keywords:** wine, economics, sociology, anthropology, geography

All stultifying drunkenness, such as comes from opium or brandy, that is, drunkenness which does not encourage sociability or the exchange of thought, has something shameful about it. Wine and beer provide intoxication for social purposes; wine has simply a stimulating effect, while beer is more nourishing and satisfying like food. There is, however, a characteristic difference. The beer-drinking bout is associated with taciturn fantasies, and frequently with impolite behaviour (Kant, 1798 [1996]: 59).

Thus spoke one of the West's great philosophers, espousing the highly conventional view that, while wine makes you witty, because it is a civilized and civilizing beverage, beer makes you moody or ready for a fight. Since then, the discipline of philosophy has engaged with the nature of wine and wine drinking sporadically, sometimes bringing in more 'social' concerns, but often treating wine matters as if they existed in a sociological vacuum (Allhoff, 2007; Peters, 2009; Smith, 2007). That raises the question of where is sociology when it comes to considerations of wine, and how people make it, sell it, drink it, and talk about it?

As the wine spills out of the bottle, so does the ink. It is impossible to enumerate how many words have been written about wine since humans started making an alcoholic drink from certain kinds of grapes about 8,000 years ago. Wine seems to be particularly alluring for wordsmiths: poets have praised it, religious authors have both eulogised and condemned it, aficionados wax lyrically about it, technical specialists produce reams of text about it,

industry professionals earn their livings discursively presenting it, popular writers present overviews of wine to broadening publics (e.g. Estreicher, 2006; Millon, 2013; Phillips, 2018), commentators present sometimes polemical texts ranged against the contemporary ills of the wine world as they see it (Nossiter, 2009), and today different sorts of academics engage with it through the lenses of disciplinary specialisations. Wine and words have become inextricably entwined, with the latter not only describing the former but also actively shaping it in multiple manners.

Yet sociologists have remained remarkably quiet about wine, despite their loquaciousness otherwise, and their capacity to analyse just about everything else imaginable which exists on the planet. Few sociologists, relative to the total number of them, have systematically engaged with wine, either in the past of the discipline or today. This has been so both in the countries which have historically had little or no wine-making traditions, and, perhaps more surprisingly, in countries like France, Italy, and Spain, which have long-standing wine industries.

It is not going too far to claim that there is today no such thing as a (sub-)field called the *sociology of wine*, let alone a systematically and coherently organised field that could be termed the social science of wine more broadly. This is particularly strange given the importance and significance of wine and wine-related phenomena across the world at the present time.

Sociology's historical and current neglect of wine matters is especially odd given the social, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political forms of significance wine has had in the past and continues to have today. Wine's various significances are in fact today not diminishing but instead growing and spreading to ever more parts of the world. As wine making and drinking have become more geographically extensive, the various roles wine plays in the lives of different sorts of people have expanded and complexified too. More persons of more diverse types nowadays drink wine than was ever the case before. Wine is made in more diverse places than ever before too. The apparently simple word 'wine' actually refers to multiple constellations of heterogeneous, complexly interlinked, phenomena, all of which have significant social and societal presences. Therefore, wine should certainly be a matter of major interest for sociology in general, and for sociologists of many different types.

Wine today can be understood as being organised in terms of *industries* (which make and sell wine), *worlds* (which socially organise wine drinking) and *cultures* (which construct the appreciation and understanding of wine by different groups of drinkers) (Inglis and Almila, 2019). Sociology has by and large ceded the study of wine industries, worlds, and cultures to other disciplines. Yet all of these encompass tens of millions of Dollars of economic activity annually. They involve tens of thousands of people directly, and many more indirectly, in the production, distribution and sale of wine. Many more millions of people drink wine, regularly or occasionally. Wine is produced on a massive scale, with billions of litres produced annually. Wine production contributes hugely both to the economies of producer countries and to the tax revenues of importer countries (Veseth, 2012). Wine is both highly globalized in multiple ways, and also a means by which globalization – of taste, lifestyle, profession, and so on – is developed, promoted, spread, thematized, and sometimes resisted, by many different sorts of people (Inglis, 2019b).

Thus, even in the simplest terms of economic significance and the large numbers of people involved in wine-related activities, wine is an important element in and of large parts of the world today. That significance is growing all the time, sometimes very rapidly indeed. From Denmark to Thailand, new wine producing areas are coming into existence and prominence (Anderson and Pinilla, 2019). At the same time, new groups of wine drinkers are appearing, not just in the more spectacular cases of China and east Asia (see Ho, 2021a), but also among lower social groups in more established wine drinking contexts, as is the case in north-western Europe. Wine drinking is becoming ever more an accepted part of middle-class lifestyles around the world, or at least a component of aspirations towards them (Colman, 2008).

Today's wine industries, worlds and cultures are globalized in complex and intricate ways. Ownership of vineyards and wineries varies from massive multinationals to tiny independent producers. While wine is booming in certain ways and in specific locations, it is in deep crisis in others (Anderson, 2004). The complexly globalized nature of wine both reflects, refracts, and in some ways contributes to, much broader social, cultural, economic and political processes, including the changing politics of nationalism, post- and re-nationalization, neo-colonization, neo-liberalization of markets and industries (and de-liberalizing trends, such as trade wars), Europeanization (and its opposites), post-industrialization, social and cultural reconfiguration and fragmentation, cosmopolitization (and its antagonists), and (late- or post-) modernization (Inglis and Almila, 2019). Wine is created in and through such processes, as well as being an important index of how they are working and in which directions they are moving.

Wine is profoundly caught up in issues to do with labour struggles and exploitation (Guy, 2019), and the politicization and publicization of these for diverse audiences of consumers (Herman, 2018, 2019). Wine is also deeply tied to phenomena of climate crisis, ranging from the degradation of environments caused by unsustainable vineyard practices, through to older wine-growing areas being undermined by climate change, at the same time as new locales are made possible for wine making by rising temperature levels (Almaraz, 2015; Ashenfelter and

Storchmann, 2012; Nicholas, 2015; Pincus, 2003). Wine is thoroughly bound up with contemporary ‘politics of nature’, with increasing numbers of producers and distributors keen to promote their ‘green’ credentials to ever more environmentally concerned groups of consumers (Dans et al., 2019).

All the above points to the great, and increasing, social, societal, cultural, political and economic significance of wine in and across the world today. So, it is particularly remarkable that sociology, which otherwise is meant to be, and is, engaged with the sorts of processes indicated above, barely deals with wine, either now or in the recent past. The absence of much sociological analysis of wine is a notable feature of contemporary sociology, and a peculiar and perhaps rather troubling one too.

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Nonetheless, instances of sociological thinking being applied to various aspects of wine, both in terms of production, distribution, and consumption, do exist. These are in the English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian languages (e.g., Chauvin, 2010; Corbeau, 2004; Diaz-Bone, 2005; Fischler, 1999; Germov, 2017; Herzog, 2020; Inglis and Almila, 2019; Navarini, 2015; Pape, 2012; Pinkert, 2017).

It is noteworthy that studies and ways of thinking emanating from particular countries tend to reflect and refract both the wider sociological field in a country, as well as that country’s typical wine production and distribution systems and consumption culture. Thus, sociological studies of wine undertaken in France, and produced at least in part for a French audience, will most likely express certain theoretical and methodological tendencies to be found in wider French sociological circles, while at the same time tending to take production, distribution, and consumption phenomena occurring in France as their main object of study. This makes them rather different, in both epistemological and empirical terms, from, for example, comparable sociological studies carried out in Germany. While trans-national and cosmopolitan wine phenomena may be studied, they will probably be done so through quite nationally specific forms of sociology, and in terms of field-sites and trends that exist within the nation-state in question. That state of affairs raises the interesting question of what a more explicitly and systematically cosmopolitan sociology of wine could look like in the future.

Some sub-fields of sociology do sometimes deal with certain wine-related phenomena, usually as exemplars of more general issues of interest to specialists. Thus, economic sociology – probably the specialism that has had most to say about wine – deals with phenomena such as value judgments and price formation in markets, as well as auction-house dynamics (Beckert et al., 2017; Carter, 2019; Chiffolleau and Laporte, 2006; Karpik, 2010; Ody-Brasier and Fernandez-Mateo, 2017; Zhao, 2005, 2008).

Cultural sociology – which in these matters often overlaps with economic sociology – has dealt with issues of collective classification of wine and wine regions (Allen and Germov, 2011; Fitzmaurice, 2017; Fourcade, 2012), as well as the development of the institution of wine criticism (Rössel et al., 2018), changing configurations of social class and other factors among wine connoisseurs (Howland, 2013; Rössel and Pape, 2014), and the aesthetics of wine labelling (Woodward and Ellison, 2012). There are occasional works in historical sociology which deal with wine matters, such as Rihouet’s (2013) analysis of changing wine glass design in relation to Norbert Elias’s conception of the European civilizing process.

Meanwhile, qualitative empirical sociological studies, of various theoretical persuasions, has deal with questions of wine tasting and appreciation (de Benedettis, 2019; Hennion, 2007; Teil and Hennion, 2004). These overlap with, and could in future take further inspiration from, interdisciplinary qualitative studies of similar matters, both of drinking and appreciating wine (Brighenti, 2018; Ducker, 2011; Hampton, 2012; Latkiewicz, 2003; Michalski, 2013; Silverstein, 2016; Skinner, 2016; Sternsdorff, 2014; Vannini et al., 2010), and of making it (Berkowitz, 2014; Dans et al., 2019; Lukacs, 2002; Stephens and Neil, 2010).

Sociology of consumption, as well as the wider consumer studies field which it contributes to, contains some consideration of wine matters, but perhaps not as much as one might expect, given the increasing presence of wine over the last few decades in the lives of those consumers these studies otherwise touch upon (useful studies that are nor explicitly sociological in nature but which have clear sociological relevance include Groves et al. (2000), Mora and Moscarola (2010), and Zhang (2018)). The work of Smith Maguire, which traverses sociology, marketing, organization studies, media studies, and other fields, has pursued a range of interesting approaches to wine over the last decade and more (e.g. Smith Maguire, 2013, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019a, 2019b; Smith Maguire and Charters, 2021; Smith Maguire and Lim, 2015), and she pursues a distinctive line of thought about sociology’s relations to wine in this volume.

Issues of gender and gendered inequalities in wine have been dealt with to a certain extent in some disciplinary contexts (Atkin et al., 2007; Barber et al., 2006; Bryant and Garnham, 2014; Kennedy, 2017; Martin, 2001; Matasar, 2006; Mayor, 1994; Nicolson, 1990; Parasecoli, 2010; Russell, 2003), and are beginning to be attended to from sociological perspectives (Almila, 2019; Inglis and Almila, 2022). One such approach is presented in this volume by Almila (2021).

The racial and ethnic aspects of wine remain radically understudied (exceptions are Crenn, 2015 and Peace, 2006). This is despite the fact that major intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre (2001) and Roland Barthes (2013 [1957]),

and, perhaps more obliquely, the eminent sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Haddour, 2009) had already commented, in the time of the late French imperial period, about the heavy price paid by native Algerians, when the French colonial regime restructured the agriculture of the country to create a huge amount of terrain under vine that would service the demand for cheap, basic wine in metropolitan France. The relative lack of scholarly attention to matters of ethnic biases and inequalities in wine making and drinking will likely change as the Black Lives Matter movement has increased calls for the decolonization of wine, both in terms of professional practices and the languages they operate with, and also in terms of consumption dynamics too (Inglis and Ho, 2022).

How gender, ethnicity and class intersect with age and generations is also another area that marketing literature points towards (Atkin and Thach, 2012), but which the other social sciences have barely touched, as yet. An approach to wine matters informed by the sociology of generations in general, and the sociology of trans-national and putatively 'global' generations in particular (Thorpe and Inglis, 2019), would resonate well with issues to do with mass market wine drinking as part of the quotidian lifestyles of generational formations within the so-called 'global middle class' (Smith Maguire, 2019a).

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So, today there exist some sociological inroads into wine matters, but such analyses have appeared, and continue to appear, sporadically, and not in ways suggestive of the existence of a systematic body of accumulating knowledge or of a well-organised international field of study. Why this relative neglect of wine by sociologists has existed and continues to exist is something of a puzzle. Cognate social sciences, especially geography and anthropology, and the discipline of history – which spans the social sciences and humanities – have seemingly had no such inhibitions about engaging with wine. It is they, rather than sociology, which majorly contribute to the emerging interdisciplinary field of 'wine studies' (Black and Ulin, 2013; Charters, 2006; Dutton and Howland, 2019; Harvey et al., 2014; Howland, 2022; Inglis and Almila, 2019; Lachaud-Martin et al., 2021; Morgan and Tresidder, 2016; Patterson and Buechsenstein, 2018). The field is both well represented in, and brought into more concrete and self-conscious existence by, a recent major handbook which offers a synthesis of the field at the present time (Charters et al., 2022).

The nearest discipline to sociology which gives wine issues some sustained consideration is anthropology. To a certain extent, a self-conscious field called the 'anthropology of wine' does exist, although it is a relatively small specialism within the wider discipline. The edited book by Black and Ulin (2013) brings together many of the major contributors to this sub-field. Two of the most prominent practitioners are Demossier (1997, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2018) and Ulin (1987, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2013), the former's fieldwork concerning Burgundy, and the latter's dealing with the south-west of France. Ulin's writing brings in neo-Marxist conceptions to understand power inequalities in the wine making areas he is concerned with. Other anthropological or semi-anthropological analyses of wine growing areas and specific industries include Trubek (2008) and Domingos (2016).

Along with sociology, anthropology is one of the contributing disciplines to the interdisciplinary constellation of Science and Technology Studies (STS), and those disciplines in return take up ideas created within STS. Notable STS writing on wine has emerged over the last decade or so, involving analysis of such phenomena as the means by which far-flung producers and consumers become connected with each other (some of it is summarised in Itçaina, Roger and Smith, 2016). It includes the work of the historian of science Shapin (2012, 2016) on formations of wine tasting, the sociologist Hennion's (2007; also Teil and Hennion, 2004) Actor-Network Theory-inspired and pragmatist analysis of tasting practices (intended as a sharp critique of Bourdieu's (1984) understanding of wine as primarily a marker of social status), and Genevieve Teil's (2012) analysis – which is also a contribution to economic sociology – of the collective work involved in creating *terroir* (also Teil et al., 2011).

The strongly relational epistemology of STS studies – concerned to understand how human-to-human and human-to-non-human relations operate – are clearly close to sociological considerations, and stand in contrast to the sometimes more human individual-oriented approaches to the sensations of wine developed in psychology, although these may also contain valuable insights into how brains react to and make sense of wine's chemical properties (Perullo, 2021; Shepherd, 2017; Siegrist and Cousin, 2009; Solomon, 1990).

Other work coming from STS includes Phillips (2016) on how tastes are 'assembled', and Pont and Thomas (2012) on the socio-technical networks that make wine happen. Such thematics resonate with approaches to wine developed in geography. Geography is perhaps the social science which engages most with wine matters, perhaps an unsurprising fact given the centrality of wine production to the agricultural and symbolic economies of major wine producing countries. French geographic studies have been particularly important in developing understandings of the historical development of wine-making in that country, with such major figures as Roger Dion (1959; also Delay and Chevallier, 2015; Dion and Timoner, 1994) and Jean-Robert Pitte (2000, 2013) profoundly contributing not only to analysis of the central role of wine in the French countryside, but also to shaping broader French public debates and self-understandings of the place of wine in the national culture and society (Dutton, 2019).

In English-speaking geography, both Dan Stanislawski's (1975) and Hans de Blij's (1983; also Hiner et al., 2014) work helped to set out wine as a major research agenda, as did Tim Unwin's (1991) magisterial overview of the long-term history of wine's changing geographic dynamics. This work has clear resonances with, and uses for, sociology, as it is not narrowly focused only on physical geography but on matters of social and cultural geography too, and with the socio-spatial aspects of wine, considered in a broad sense.

Contemporary studies of wine within geography are many and manifold (e.g. Dickenson and Salt, 1982; Dougherty, 2012; Jones, 2003; Sommers, 2008; Unwin, 2017), many providing interesting analyses of vexed issues of *terroir* (Barham, 2003; Gade, 2004; Moran, 1993;) and legal definition and protection thereof (Parrott et al., 2002), and also appreciating the role of such industrial phenomena as value chains, agro-industrial conventions, regional wine-making clusters, regulatory regimes, and forms of competition and collaboration between companies (Beebe et al, 2013; Guthey, 2008; Haughton and Browett, 1995; Patchell, 2008). There are also contributions to the sub-disciplinary areas of economic geography (Cassi et al., 2012; Hayward and Lewis, 2008; Rainer, 2016, 2021; Turner, 2010;), human geography (Brabazon, 2014; Lagendijk, 2004), and cultural geography, which considers, among other things, representations of *terroir* matters in professional and popular media (Hill, 2018, 2021). Most geographical studies concern primarily the production and distribution of wine, although they have implications for consumption trends (Gwynne, 2008), especially in terms of Fairtrade and other ethical initiatives in locations like South Africa and Chile (Hastings, 2019; Herman, 2018, 2019). A particular focus of some economic geographers is on globalization of production methods and customer orientations (Rainer, 2016), especially in relation to the restructuring of wine making since the 1980s through processes of neo-liberalization (Corby, 2010). Overall, there is enough geographic study of wine to allow for some geographers to talk of the 'geography of wine' as a sub-field in its own right, in a way that sociologists cannot yet speak of regarding a 'sociology of wine' field.

The historical and economic foci of many geographers place their work close to that of economic historians (e.g., Anderson and Pinilla, 2019; Nelgen et al., 2017; Taplin, 2011) and political economists. In terms of the latter, the classical political economists of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries often had interests in wine, especially in terms of how the collective reputation of a region could generate economic value for producers in that region (Chaikind, 2012). Karl Marx, critic of orthodox political economy, was highly attuned to wine matters, having grown up in the Mosel valley, and having witnessed the struggles of the local wine makers against the punitive policies of the authorities of the time, his reporting on such matters being one of his first endeavours in politicised journalism (Goldberg, 2013; Lubasz, 1976). Research today is particularly concerned to connect wine production and distribution to the broader dynamics of the global capitalist economy, with a focus on empires and imperial political economies in research dealing with times before WWII (Pinilla and Ayuda, 2002; Simpson, 2011), and dealing with trans-national neo-liberal political economy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Banks and Overton, 2010; Howson et al., 2019; Itçaina et al., 2016; Overton and Banks, 2015; Overton and Murray, 2013, 2016, 2017).

Political economy is in most cases closer to sociological considerations than is economics, although the sociologist of wine must attend to the work of economists too. Journals which traverse the space between academic economists concerned with wine and professionals in the wine industry include the Journal of Wine Economics, the Journal of Wine Research, and the International Journal of Wine Business Research. Major works in the self-styled field of 'wine economics' include the following texts concerned with market dynamics, collective reputations, and the impact of wine critics on prices, among other economic issues (Ali et al., 2008; Anderson, 2004; Ashenfelter and Storchmann, 2010; Castriota, 2020; Castriota and Delmastro, 2015; Centonze, 2010; Cross et al., 2011; Duncan and Greenaway, 2008; Gergaud and Ginsburgh, 2008; Storchmann, 2012; Ugaglia and Cardebat, 2019). Some work in economics has clear sociological resonances (e.g., Diaz-Bone, 2017). There is also a plethora of wine research in the overlapping fields of business, management and organisational studies (Franco and Martins, 2020; Humphreys and Carpenter, 2018; Kwon and Constantinides, 2017; Simons and Roberts, 2008; Smith et al., 2013; Voronov et al., 2013; Zhao and Zhou, 2011).

Much of the wine marketing literature is aimed at wine industry audiences, creating knowledge that is meant to be useful for pragmatic marketing purposes, but some of it has clear sociological interest in terms of how producers aim to connect to consumer groups and in doing so create categories of consumers (Charters and Pettigrew, 2006; Lorey, 2021; Yang and Paladino, 2015), while also tending to present vineyards and wine making in highly idyllic ways which may erase uncomfortable social realities to do with labour exploitation and other problems in the wine industry (Beverland, 2005; Beverland and Luxton, 2005; Charters and Pettigrew, 2006). Some studies of wine tourism collude in such myth-making, while others may puncture it (Carlsen and Charters, 2006; Kruger et al., 2013; Ravenscroft and van Westering, 2001).

Wine is thoroughly tied up with legal phenomena. The disciplines of law and legal studies show how legal regulations and classifications operate at national, international, and transnational levels (Cavicchi, 2013; Maher, 2001). Legal disputes about who has the right to name particular wines in specific ways are common, and such struggles are bound up with trade disputes, both between countries and between trading blocs (Mahy and d'Ath, 2017; Robertson, 2009; Veseth, 2012).

Wine is nothing if not highly political and often politicised, in various senses (Colman, 2008; Veseth, 2012). While the discipline of political science has barely touched upon wine matters, policy studies can yield insightful accounts of how law and politics interpenetrate in wine production (Roger, 2010). More common are analyses of the cultural politics of wine (Certomà, 2011). France is especially well covered in this regard (Barthel-Bouchier and Clough, 2005; Smith, 2016; Waters, 2010). A range of academic writings about French wine politics (Trubek, 2006) came out in the wake of the worldwide popularity and notoriety of Jonathan Nossiter's polemical documentary *Mondovino* (2004), which controversially portrayed a story of southern French resisters ranged against the foreign behemoths of the international wine industry. How wider political controversies feed into, and are represented through, wine, has been a recent focal point for scholars working in various disciplinary traditions (Handel et al., 2015; Monterescu and Handel, 2019).

The disciplines of archaeology and history traverse the social sciences and humanities. Archaeological work on the origins of wine has been pioneered in particular by McGovern (2003) and McGovern et al. (2017). With ancient history and classical studies, there is a long-standing scholarly engagement with wine matters (Brun, 2003; Dietler, 2006; Lissarrague, 2016; Lutz, 1922; Maniatis, 2013; Papakonstantinou, 2009; Russell, 2003; Sealey, 2009; Wilson, 2012);<sup>1</sup> This includes work which traces ancient legacies on modern drinking patterns, including the millennia-long association of wine with civilization and beer with barbarity (Engs, 1995; Gautier, 1997; Nelson, 2014), which continues to resonate with present-day attempts to legitimize beer as being as serious a drink as is wine (Koontz and Chapman, 2019). Theology and religious studies offer materials which contribute to the long-term religious framing and uses of wine, especially in Christianity; Jesus famously turned water into wine, and in early Christianity he was often conflated with Dionysos, the Greek god of wine (Bacchiocchi, 2001; Friesen, 2014; Fuller, 1996; Inglis, 2022; Kreglinger, 2019; Younger, 1966).

Within historical studies of more recent times, historians tend to produce, on the basis of archival research, monographs concerned with wine in particular times and places. Post-medieval England and France are particularly well represented in this literature (Bohling, 2018; Campbell, 2004; Guy, 2003; Harding, 2019; Heath, 2014; Holt, 1993; Hori, 2008; Ludington, 2013; Parker, 2015; Smith, 2016; Whalen, 2009; White, 2017). Other locations covered by historians include various other European countries (Conca Messina et al., 2019), the trans-Atlantic wine trade (Hancock, 2009), the Americas (Cinotto, 2012; Hannickel, 2013; Hendricks, 2004; Huber, 2011; Peck, 2009; Pinney, 1989), Australia (Brady, 2018; McIntyre, 2012), South Africa (Fourie and Von Fintel, 2014; Nugent, 2011), and other locales (e.g., Pankhurst, 2006). The discipline of cultural history has also examined changing cultural representations of wine (Brennan, 1989; Classen, 2017; Garrier, 2002; Hilgard, 2008; Varriano, 2010).

The humanities disciplines offer a range of approaches to wine. Literary studies have considered the presence of wine in literature in various national contexts (Anderson, 2018; Bruera, 2013; Del Puppo, 2016; Mayer-Robin, 2008). Cultural studies yield critical readings of wine-related phenomena in ways which are familiar to cultural sociologists (Cappeliez, 2017; Dutton, 2020), while media studies concern the representation of wine across multiple media (Schirmer, 2014; Smith Maguire, 2019a; Smith Maguire and Lim, 2015). Linguistics and other disciplines concerned with language offer analyses of how wine vocabulary operates (Langlois et al., 2011; Lehrer, 1975; Lindstrom, 1975; Tiefenbacher and Townsend, 2019), phenomena which sociologists would want to connect more thoroughly to issues of social power and inequalities (Inglis, 2019a).

In terms of the natural and medical sciences, there are vast literatures in multiple fields. Medicine and public health consider the health impacts of wine drinking (Johansen et al., 2006), as do, in other ways, interdisciplinary alcohol studies (Törrönen and Maunu, 2017). The practices of viticulture, viniculture and oenology, and the sciences, such as microbiology, which underpin them, are also very significant areas of study (Belda et al., 2017; Matthews, 2016). There is also a large literature in environmental science, an especially crucial topic area as climate change increasingly changes established patterns of vine maintenance and wine making (Almaraz, 2015; Nicholas, 2015). Such changes have stimulated much debate about how to make the wine industry more ecologically and socially sustainable (Forbes et al., 2020).

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Sociology can have multiple relationships with the disciplinary and sub-disciplinary formations and their respective literatures which have been indicated above. First, sociologists can draw on and refer to empirical data generated by them. Second, the best work in each area can serve as an inspiration for the formulation of specifically sociological questions about the sorts of wine-related phenomena other disciplinary specialists have already

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<sup>1</sup> One of the greatest historians of Western antiquity, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon, was a very serious wine drinker. “A great deal too much wine”, in Gibbon’s estimate, “was near two bottles apiece”, but he sometimes drank much more. When Gibbon went on his Grand Tour he exhibited a Jekyll and Hyde syndrome: the scholarly young man of fashion would change to one who, he confessed to his diary, was looked on “as a man who loved wine and dissipation” and who would, when outside of a couple of bottles of wine, indulge in “unparalleled impudence” with the more permissive ladies of Lausanne. Thus, early in life Gibbon became an alcoholic, and Madeira and plenty of it soon became essential for his health’ (Foster, 1979: 1634).

engaged with. Third, certain kinds of theory, which sociology shares with other disciplines, can be taken in more explicitly sociological directions, while forms of sociological theory hitherto barely applied to wine matters can be deployed, therefore extending the theoretical reservoir open to the emerging field of interdisciplinary wine studies. Fourth, sociology can both learn from and contribute to that area.

Fifth, wine today is usually examined within the standard conceptual, thematic, and methodological apparatuses of disciplines, each one processing wine matters in its customary ways, highlighting some phenomena, while underplaying or ignoring others. By and large, specialists from each discipline focus on those aspects of wine that one would expect them to focus on. Thus, where disciplinary orientations seem too narrow to capture the full range of possibilities inherent within a particular set of wine-related phenomena, sociology can extend the analytical purview of studies of such phenomena, in like manner to the way that both anthropology and economic sociology have broadened the purview of more narrowly focused studies of matters such as wine price formation.

Sixth, and more generally, despite the promising emergence of an interdisciplinary field of ‘wine studies’, that field remains largely organised in disciplinary terms. Today there is still too little truly trans-disciplinary thinking and research which brings together the diverse phenomena concerning the many and manifold aspects of wine, taken in all their abundance and plenitude. Sociology is well placed to encourage such thinking: after all, it is the social science that seeks to deal with *all* possible types of phenomena, be those referred to conventionally as ‘cultural’, ‘political’, ‘economic’, or whatever. Of course, there should be more sub-disciplinary studies of wine, by areas of sociology that already do so (such as economic and cultural sociologies) or could in future do so (political sociology, historical sociology, postcolonial sociology, sociology of ethnicity, sociology of genders and sexualities, and so on). All of that is necessary but not sufficient to develop a sociology of wine field and associated sociologies of wine in the plural.

There lies a potential in sociological thinking and research practice to try to connect as many different sorts of wine-related phenomena which until now have been left relatively disconnected and mainly dealt with in disciplinary and sub-disciplinary silos. Sociology’s connective capacities can be deployed to bring together wine-related things that are usually, but unsatisfactorily, defined as either macro-, meso- or micro-level in nature. Illustrating how all of these may interpenetrate and inform the others can be sociology’s over-riding concern. Connections must be made that range imaginatively across time and space (e.g. showing how the neo-liberalization of the wine-making regime in Chile has gone together with the cultivation of new drinking practices in Lapland). Sociological analysis of wine should be self-consciously cosmopolitan in cultural and geographical scope, and also deeply historical, ranging across the centuries, taking in not just very recent developments, but grasping the whole of wine history in its total 8,000-year span.

Both geography and anthropology have made strides in these sorts of directions, but sociology can aim to make such connections – especially those that are not obvious and may operate in more subterranean fashions – in its own distinctive ways too. That can and should be the ambition for those working sociologically on wine, while learning from wine at the same time, and thereby possibly challenging their own habituated ways of thinking and researching into the bargain.

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This special issue aims at *constructing a sociology of wine*, just as, for example, a sociology of arts and artists had to be self-consciously *constructed* thirty years ago and more (Zolberg, 1990). We wish to explore what sociology as a discipline, and as a set of multiple, overlapping concerns, perspectives, and theorisations, can bring to the understanding of wine. ‘Sociology’ is a broad set of endeavours, with loose and porous boundaries to other disciplines. Still, we can inquire as to which sorts of added value sociology can bring to wine analysis. We can consider which types of phenomena may be understood more profoundly than before if they are subjected to sociological scrutiny. We may think about which connections and linkages can be made by sociology which have hitherto remained obscure or have been conceived of in other, non-sociological, terms. We can reflect on what happens when wine is, as it were, poured into a sociological decanter. We can see what transpires when sociological analysis is poured into wine.<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of constructing a more capacious interface between wine and sociology than has existed before, we propose a research agenda which will in future involve providing multiple, possibly overlapping, and possibly contradictory, but still compelling, answers to the following four sets of questions:

## 1. Theory, Foci, Methodology, and Methods

- a. Which resources, either more- or less well-established, in sociological theory (and in broader social and cultural theory, or any other kind of theory) can the sociology of wine draw upon, as well as contribute to and subject to critique?
- b. Which units of analysis should the sociology of wine construct and deploy?

<sup>2</sup> Given mainstream Western sociology’s roots in classical European philosophy, if sociology itself were to be de-Kanted, all that would be left would be some Hegelian sediments.

- c. Which methodological orientations, and which specific research methods, can the sociology of wine deploy, both in terms of more established and more novel orientations and techniques?
- d. How might sociologists of wine carry out studies of wine-related phenomena on various scales ('local', 'sub-regional', 'regional', 'national', 'continental', etc. etc.)?
- e. How can research projects carried out at various scales be connected?
- f. How might comparative research be conceptualised and organised?
- g. What might be the established and emerging areas of ethical concern that sociologists of wine must navigate in their research practice?
- h. Which social, societal, cultural, political and economic wine-related phenomena should the sociology of wine be particularly concerned with today?
- i. Which geographical areas (both 'real' and 'imagined'), social actors, social groups, and other sociological entities, should the sociology of wine study?
- j. Which phenomena in wine industries, worlds and cultures are already quite well covered by analysts, either within or without sociology, and which phenomena are important but under-researched?
- k. How might the sociology of wine draw upon, and contribute to, previous, current and future analyses of food and other drinks, both alcoholic (such as beer, including novel "craft" versions thereof) and non-alcoholic (including tea and coffee)?

## **2. Disciplinarity and Beyond**

- a. What would the (or a) core of a 'sociology of wine' look like and involve?
- b. Is constructing such a core possible or desirable?
- c. Who would construct it?
- d. Who would challenge and critique it?
- e. Should or can there be *a* sociology of wine, or instead ought there to be multiple *sociologies*?
- f. Should sociological analysis of wine be understood as sociology *of* wine, or rather, as Jennifer Smith Maguire's paper in this volume proposes, sociology *from* wine?
- g. Is there a meaningful and/or productive difference between *sociology (or sociologies) of wine*, and *wine sociology (or sociologies)* and similar terms, such as *oenological sociology*?
- h. How might sociology of wine relate to various established general sub-fields of sociology, such as cultural, economic, political, and health sociologies, as well as more bespoke areas, such as the sociologies of food, alcohol, agriculture, rurality, and so on?
- i. Is an inter-, trans- or pan-disciplinary social science of wine possible, and if so, what is sociology's potential role(s) within that, as one specialism among others, or as a unifying and synthesizing exercise, or as something else?
- j. Is it possible or worthwhile to create a synthetic and panoptic (social) science of wine in all its various aspects?
- k. How can the sociology of wine make productive use of studies and approaches coming from other disciplines?
- l. How can and should it work with scholars from other social science disciplines, as well as those from the humanities?
- m. How may the sociology of wine interact with diverse practitioners of the environmental and natural sciences, ranging from, for example, wine scientists to those concerned with climate change?

## **3. Politics, in the Broadest Sense of the Term**

- a. How might the sociology of wine connect wine-related phenomena to broader issues of sociological and political concern, such as power dynamics, inequalities, and exclusions based on a host of social factors (class, gender, ethnicity, locality, religion, sexualities, disabilities, etc. etc.)?
- b. How might sociological accounts of wine and power relate to, overlap with, replicate, and differ from, accounts of power in wine industries, cultures, and worlds offered by other types of social scientists?
- c. In what ways might the sociology of wine contribute to the broader politics of wine? Which wine-related groups might sociologists of wine wish to ally with, or set themselves against?
- d. What may be the ways that sociologists of wine engage with more powerful and less powerful actors in wine industries, cultures, and fields, including industrial, political, and professional groups?
- e. Is it possible or desirable for the sociology of wine to make value judgments, such as those concerning vexed issues like that of *terroir* (Teil, 2012), or of the alleged superiority of some wines or wine-producing areas over others?

#### 4. Organization

- a. What might be the likely funding sources, and other forms of support, for sociological studies of wine, and how can funders be encouraged to take such research seriously?
- b. How might international, cross-border and cross-regional cooperation among sociologists of wine, as well as with cognate others, be fostered and managed?
- c. How can the sociology of wine be grown in and through journal publications, books and book series, blogging, vlogging, social media, and other means and mechanisms?
- d. How should sociology contribute to, and learn from, interdisciplinary wine studies? Could sociology help transform that from an interdisciplinary formation to a transdisciplinary constellation?

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The papers in this special edition seek to answer some, but not all, of these questions. They may be understood as initial and tentative, but also imaginative and productive, attempts to start to fill out what sociology can say about wine, involving analyses that hopefully will be variously useful, thoughtful, and sometimes striking. While each specific contribution studies, and proposes the study of, wine in different ways, they all in one way or another point out that wine is neither fixed nor stable. It is possessed of multiple qualities and affordances, and it is subject to many different ways of bringing it into being and putting it to work, while at the same it also makes things happen and moves many things around.

The overview piece by David Inglis begins with reflections on the relations between the sociologist and wine as the object of study. Drawing on parallels with the sociologies of music and of art, Inglis depicts some of the pitfalls involved when the sociologist has a love of wine but must submit it to the vagaries of sociological analysis. He then considers the manifold processes that wine is caught up in, and which it makes possible, suggesting that these should be scrutinized in very long-term historical perspective. Focusing on the *-ization* processes that have been at the conceptual core of sociology since the time of the classical sociologists, Inglis reflects on how sociology can provide a capacious vision of the whole history of wine, and across the whole range of societies where it has been made and drunk. On his view, a sociology of wine needs to be highly ambitious in terms of trying to capture the interplay between factors of all sorts, factors that other disciplines typically treat in isolation. More hidden connections and resonances are thereby brought to the fore that might otherwise not have captured the attention of the more narrowly focused analyst. In this understanding, sociology of wine is a historical sociology in a deep sense, covering not decades or centuries only but millennia, and casting its eye over the whole planet, tracking wine's mutations as it travels hither and thither across the ages. On this view, sociology provides a generalizing science of wine in ways that other disciplines cannot or will not attempt.

Jennifer Smith Maguire is likewise focused on various processes to do with wine, in an approach she calls *vina aperta*, a sociology *from* wine. Her argument is that three kinds of foci and perspectives are needed for a rounded sociological understanding of wine. First, wine must be understood as processual, involving both long-term processes and specific moments within those. Second, wine is interconnected with(in) the world, in the sense that its autonomy as a system is always relative, and it involves a diversity of heterogeneous connections between humans, things, and multiple materials. Third, wine is also interdependent, with the physical world, between humans, and within an individual human and their embodied senses. In her approach, Smith Maguire considers it essential that a sociology *from* wine avoids the traps of limitations and closedness that the creation of any sub-field in academic research is prone to. She thereby rejects the idea of a sociology *of* wine. She stresses that wine – a manifestly interdependent field – may be ill suited for limited sociological or historical approaches. Thus, she agrees in some ways with Inglis, but differs in other regards, for what she rejects – a sociology *of* wine – he embraces. (Let us hope that this dispute can be resolved amicably over a bottle of wine, the precise kind being chosen consensually between the disputants.)

Anna-Mari Almila's starting point also stresses openness and flexibility in analysis, but her focus is very different. She considers how wine has been and remains highly gendered in various ways. In a methodologically flexible approach – namely using different illuminative vignettes to explore the deeply engrained nature of gender boundaries and constructions regarding wine – she illuminates how matters which are seemingly trivial may bring such structures more clearly into view. Dealing with topics ranging from rosé wine to menstruation, and from musical hall songs to perfume, Almila takes apparently trivial phenomena and uses them, in the manner of Georg Simmel, to draw out much wider patterns of significance which reoccur throughout history, although with novel features as time goes on. While wine's alcoholic character is central to its perceived 'danger' as regards gender boundaries, wine is also always much more than just alcohol. It is deeply symbolic, powerful, and also vulnerable to gendered forms of pollution. In Almila's Mary Douglas-inspired analysis, wine's gendered cultures are shown to variously demonstrate, challenge, adapt, re-construct, and accommodate existing and emerging social and cultural systems of gender.

The recent rise of China as a major power, both in the buying of foreign wines (Capitello et al., 2016; Ho, 2019; Kjellgren, 2019; Zhang, 2018), and in the development of a national industry to meet local demands (Howson and

Ly, 2020; Zheng, 2019), has been well documented by authors from various disciplinary perspectives over the last decade. Building on research about wine in Hong Kong (Ho, 2021b), Hang Kei Ho endeavours to widen the analytical lens somewhat. His focus is not only on China, which has risen to spectacular levels of prominence in various wine-related matters over the last two decades, but also East Asia more widely. He considers wine in the wider alcohol cultures of the region, and also as a luxury product which has become ever more important in the societies in question. He recognizes a number of influences that have led to the emergence of wine consumership in East Asia, such as forms of European and Asian colonialism, Westernization processes, influential ideas regarding the high cultural status of European wine in general and French wine especially, the increasing disposable economic capital of the higher reaches of the middle classes and social elites, the aspirational cultural capital of more middling players, and the activities of local cultural mediators in educating the expanding ranks of willing and curious consumers. He stresses that despite the often-mentioned changes in wine cultures in East Asia, many traditions and beliefs nevertheless survive, shaping the variety of local consumption habits.

Geneviève Teil's previous work, deploying and extending pragmatist sociology and resonating with thematics of Actor-Network Theory, has already yielded highly original accounts of both the collective elaboration of *terroir* by winemakers and multiple other actors (Teil, 2012), and also of the practices of wine appreciation (Teil, 2021; see also Teil et al., 2011). Her article shifts away from conventional foci concerning the wine economy and wine's various economic regimes. She argues that wine is not just one kind of an economic market, but instead there are two kinds of market logics at play, each targeting consumers who have differently operating tastes and taste preferences. She starts from the understanding that 'quality' is an agreement rather than an absolute factor, and that quality indicators and guarantees, such as those elaborated in and through the French AOC system, are not absolute but rather operate in a deeply contested terrain of understandings of quality. In this sociological pragmatist approach, which examines how wine phenomena emerge through intertwining processes, Teils looks at winemakers' understandings of consumer tastes and desires, and the economic consequences thereof. She concludes that while a 'standard' wine market regime operates with notions and practices of stabilized quality, involving constant monitoring of customer tastes, and discreetly handled changes to wine tastes and styles, another market regime also exists. This is 'exploratory' and is based around variety, change and the constant emergence of new customer tastes and styles, serving committed but open-minded wine enthusiasts. She ends her article with some reflections as to what extent wine production can be said to have gone through processes of 'artification', where the winemaker emerges as an artist-like creator of ever transforming innovative wines and winemaking.

Peter Howland – in an article introducing a highly innovative, and greatly amusing, way of writing about wine, which takes the form of a self-interview – argues that sociologists should not forget 'the obvious' when analyzing wine, especially in terms of economic matters. Such an ignoring of blatant economic forces, he claims, often accepts capitalism as a *de facto* unchanging and unchallengeable condition, rather than critically analyzing and evaluating the extremely unequal economic and labour conditions established in the (capitalist) wine industry worldwide. He also recognizes further issues to do with sociological approaches to wine. The research focus often is on small-scale production, which may involve apparently charming people making lovely wines. The researcher's need to gain access to the field – in this case, the vineyard and so-called 'boutique' winery – may unintentionally end up taking the focus away from the more obviously capitalist-industrial end of the wine-making scale, while also hiding multiple economic, labour exploitation, and ecological problems persistent also in independent small-scale production. For any industry-facing wine research, identifying and overcoming these kinds of problems are highly relevant. Howland suggests that sociologists should take care to 'follow the money', paying attention especially to luxury wine production (as does Ho's paper), but also to the economic failure of some vineyards and wineries. He also recognizes that while economy must be at the heart of sociological research on wine, wine is nevertheless a set of material and scientific phenomena too, and these must not be forgotten by the sociological investigator. Grape wine is both a very specific thing, a world unto itself, a domain interpenetrated in many ways by globalized capitalism and its various attendant ills, and all sides of it should be explored by the sociologist.

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We hope that the reader enjoys the special issue as a whole, as well as its constituent parts. If you read it while sipping a glass of wine, that would seem an appropriate response to what we have offered to you: a series of texts which request that you savour them and that you hopefully extract some forms of productive – or indeed constructive (Douglas, 1987) – pleasure from them.

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## Towards a Sociology of Wine: The Power of Processes

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with how to construct a sociology of wine. It begins by considering the sociologist's relations to wine, making comparisons to how sociologists relate to music and to art. It comments on the interplay between a love of wine and a sceptical attitude towards wine world phenomena. The major part of the paper concerns proposals to create a sociology of wine based around sociological conceptualisation of long-term processes. This kind of sociology takes as its object of analysis wine's whole 8,000 year-old history, and how wine has travelled around the world. Various -ization and -fication processes are identified, as are the multiple interplays between them. In so doing, a general framework for the sociology of wine is laid out.

**Keywords:** history, wine, sociology, processes, winemaking

I like on the table,  
when we're speaking,  
the light of a bottle  
of intelligent wine.

Pablo Neruda, *Ode to Wine*

### PREAMBLE: THE SOCIOLOGIST AND WINE

This paper will attempt to sketch out one possible approach to understanding wine sociologically. But let us begin not with sociology, but with those who make it, namely sociologists, or those who take on the social role conventionally referred to as 'sociologist'.

It is possible to study wine, sociologically or otherwise, and to have no personal interest in it whatsoever, or even to dislike it. Such a scenario is the more possible the more that the reason for studying wine is more impersonal and the research methodology the more at a distance from actually tasting any wine. Thus, one could take wine merely as case material for thinking about some general intellectual issue or problem, such as how certain sorts of markets work. And one could study this issue by examining statistical data that represent, at a very great epistemological distance from any actual wine, such workings. Doing sociology this way, one need never encounter even just one real grape or barrel or glass. And one could create a very valid study, of interest to other specialists like oneself, without knowing much about wine, apart from some basic information about conventional quality classifications, and one need not even like the stuff to write about it. Instead, wine is rendered into a distant object of analysis, and is processed accordingly, by intellectual tools customarily used in a particular field of study. The lessons from the wine case having been ascertained, one can then move on to another such case, which is also grist to your epistemological mill, be that, for example, coffee, baby food, or gobstoppers.

Yet most sociologists who would want to talk about wine for one reason or another probably have some personal interest in it. Why spend so much time building up a knowledge base for something you cannot stand, or

which—if you are an alcohol-abstainer—you are opposed to on moral or some other grounds? After all, if you publicly present yourself as an analyst of wine, you are publicly associating yourself with it, and audiences will read you as linked to wine in some way. (The hostile reception to wine talks I have given, by students who seemed to be of a religious fundamentalist persuasion, is a case in point.)

Moreover, if you are going to study wine in some sort of way informed by qualitative methods, you are going to have to be around it, and you are probably going to have to taste or drink some of it at some point. You are also going to have to converse in fairly knowledgeable ways with both wine professionals and amateurs—whether the term ‘amateur’ is meant in the English sense of non-professionals, or in the French sense of those who adore wine. Complete ignorance of wine will not facilitate fieldwork, and indeed there is often quite a high entry cost to entering professionalized wine worlds: people will be more likely to talk with you if they think you know what they are talking about. Hence some wine-related cultural capital is a necessary condition to study wine if you are going to be in some sort of proximity to it and the persons whose social roles and activities are concerned with it. And the easiest way to possess such capital is already to be interested in wine as a private person, holding knowledge which can then feed into one’s professional sociological practice. As I like to say at the start of interviews with wine professionals, as a sociologist of wine I am in the business of mixing business with pleasure (in the same manner perhaps as a *blanc de noir* Champagne: 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier).

Yet the conjunction of personal interest in wine and professional doings concerning it involves a series of challenges. First, there may occur a reproduction of what seems to happen in more basic exercises in the sociology of music. In that field, the person in the sociologist’s role is sometimes either a fan of the music they are studying, or used to be, or still currently is, a practitioner of that kind of music. In such cases, the problem arises of the analyst being so close already to the object of study that they may fail to create an adequate distance from it. Therefore, there is a risk that the resultant writing may uncritically reproduce the viewpoints of those musicians being studied. The analysis remains at the level of basic description, not sociological analysis per se, with more unpleasant societal factors of inequalities of class, ethnicity, gender, and so on, being delicately airbrushed out. The study may become a narcissistic exercise in studying not only people like oneself, but also oneself too.

The same scenarios can arise if one is a wine aficionado who is also playing the role of sociologist. (This is a problem I feel particularly acutely when reading Geneviève Teil’s account, in this special issue, of wine enthusiasts; her descriptions of their doings sound uncomfortably like my own. Clearly, in some ways I am one of them.) There could result fan-girl and fan-boy studies, both of the kinds of things one happens to like, and of persons akin to oneself, and for whom one feels at least some positive affinities. All the potentially more unpleasant aspects of the lifeworld under study might again be airbrushed out. This is especially so if recurring access to field-sites requires discretion as to what one writes about them publicly. Too much uncensored and critical sociology may hinder repeated access to places where the wine-related action is. A highly critical account of a specific wine environment—possibly playing up both the tacit and not-so-hidden classism, racism, and sexism of wine phenomena—may possibly also sound like sour grapes. Highly critical analyses may be—or be seen to be, by those being subjected to criticism—a function of the ex-fan turning negatively on the previous object of adoration.

The sociologist of wine therefore must strike a balance, between having enough interest in, knowledge about, and access to wine and wine-related people, on the one hand, and some sort of critical distance, which allows for more ‘critical’ and possibly controversial things to be said, on the other. The relation to the object of study requires the kind of reflexivity and self-distancing advocated by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Thus, an important part of doing a sociological study of wine involves carrying out a sociological analysis of your own relations to wine, and to the different sectors of the wine-related culture, world, field, or whatever other conceptualisation you may have, both of the more immediate wine phenomena and locations you are dealing with, and also of the wider wine-related context, such as a given wine-making region, or a regional or national wine market. A sociologist of art must reflect upon her or his own orientations to particular styles of art and particular types of art world actors (Inglis, 2005). So too must the sociologist of wine subject to sociological self-scrutiny her or his own relations with, and especially sympathies and antipathies towards, various different wine regions (‘established’ or ‘emerging’, etc.), styles (‘classic’ or ‘hipster’, for example), and types of wine-relevant actors. Only then will an adequately thought through sociological practice emerge vis-à-vis wine, which neither unwittingly reproduces personal biases, nor makes the mistake of being too close to, or conversely too distant from, the subject matter in question.

But even if the working out of such a sense of epistemological balance is at least roughly possible in practice, another challenge remains. The *sociologizing* of wine may involve, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, each analyst killing the thing they love. What if one’s study of wine production reveals horrible forms of labour exploitation? What if one is forced to conclude that wine connoisseurs—especially those akin to oneself—are essentially a bunch of self-obsessed and snobbish bourgeois idiots, rife with the typical stupidities of their class position? What if professional and amateur wine contexts turn out to be hotbeds of ethnic exclusion and gendered discrimination?

Such findings will probably play well with editors of sociology journals, for those kinds of findings are the kinds of findings such publications typically publish. But will such accounts receive as warm a welcome from industry-facing academic and non-academic outlets? They might possibly, if what one is saying fits with the general temper of the times; if, for example, the critique of ethnic biases from within the wine industry, that has been stimulated partly by the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, continues, and also keeps on winning supporters among the editorial gatekeepers of industry and industry-facing publications. But even if one's critical sociological reflections find some sort of an audience, perhaps that is at the expense of one's own enjoyment of wine. One can no longer operate in the more naïve fashion one did before one sociologized wine and thereby revealed all the various sorts of social unpleasantnesses involved in its making, distributing, and consuming. Sociology has the capacity to spoil the enjoyment of wine much more deeply than does a tainted cork. That is what the sociologist of wine is compelled to risk, as is the potential hypocrisy involved in trying to disassociate one's own private likings from one's professional revelations.

Perhaps the wine-loving sociologist is ultimately left in the manner of the reader of horoscopes identified by Adorno (2001) in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, simultaneously not believing and believing what s/he reads in the astrology columns. In this case, the dialectic of belief/disbelief lies in the sociologist's reactions to winemakers' and marketers' claims about such matters as *terroir*, tradition, and authenticity (Inglis, 2015). S/he knows all about the ideological biases and deep-rooted cultural assumptions which underpin such claims, as well as being alive to the sometimes outright phoniness and cynicism that can permeate wine talk and sales pitches. Yet still, when s/he savours the bouquet and with relish tastes a particular wine, she cannot dismiss all claims about wine expressing a sense of place and of its being crafted in ways that are irreducible to profit-seeking and techno-scientific interventions. The charm of the wine reasserts itself in the face of sociological scepticism.

After all, given that one could study many other things in the world, the wine-oriented sociologist has most likely chosen to examine wine because, ultimately, s/he likes the taste of it, and finds its multiple contexts endlessly fascinating, despite discerning the socially and environmentally problematic features of them. To continue over time to be a sociologist of wine probably involves and requires the constant reappearance or irruption of the love of wine amongst the proliferating intellectual impedimenta generated by and accompanying sociological investigation of wine phenomena. Can sociology kill that love? In most cases, probably not, although it may have a very good attempt at doing so.

## A PROPOSAL: WINE AND SOCIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

We now turn towards consideration of what 'sociology of wine' could look like, intellectually speaking. The introduction to this special issue (Inglis and Almila, 2021) pointed to the various disciplinary, sub-disciplinary and interdisciplinary formations which currently study wine. Many wine studies tend to focus on specific times, places, and personnel, and less on longer-term and trans-contextual dynamics. Yet there are some notable exceptions to that tendency, which engage in 'big picture' thinking about wine across time and space (e.g., Anderson and Pinilla, 2018; Inglis, 2019; Itçaina et al., 2016; Simpson, 2011; Unwin, 1991). But those accounts come from the overlapping areas of geography, history, economic history, and political economy. While they overlap with, and can certainly inform, sociological thinking about wine, they are not sociological per se. Therefore, there is an analytic space which sociology can fill. Sociology can exist as a complement to existing forms of social scientific and humanistic knowledge about wine, while formulating issues in a somewhat different manner, drawing on more specifically sociological theoretical vocabularies.

The main proposal set out in this paper is that a sociological consideration of wine can have the benefit of involving 'big picture' thinking. The sort of sociology I have in mind here involves making connections between *all* possible types of wine-related phenomena, especially discerning connections that otherwise would not be made by other disciplinary approaches. The analytical purview of this sociology should be as wide as possible, both in time and space. The frame of reference must be 'global' in several senses at once. This involves coverage of the whole planet, and within that general outlook also involves consideration of relations both between all parts of the world, and also between all possible factors which are operative within them (which are conventionally labelled 'political', 'economic', 'cultural', 'social', 'legal', and so on). The coverage must also be trans-historical, taking in the whole history of wine making's 8000-year history, and discerning connections between apparently unconnected historical periods. In other words, sociology can be a generalizing science of wine, making generalizing statements about how wine in the broadest sense 'works', both in the past and today, and showing how the past continues to influence the present.

I propose that a generalizing sociology of wine can be rooted in the depiction of long-term processes. Sociology is in some ways an exercise in the depiction of '-izations'. The so-called 'classical' sociology developed in, and involving reflection upon, Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was a science of multiple overlapping -izations, including 'urbanization', 'bureaucratization', 'secularization', 'scientization', as well as the master category

of ‘modernization’, which was often taken to describe the confluence of all of the more specific trends. As one of the masterly figures in the sociology of long-term processes, Norbert Elias, noted, while a focus on such processes may be highly engaged politically—as in the classic case of Karl Marx—it can also foster a sense of detachment from the object of study, allowing for a coolly dispassionate manner of looking at the dynamics whereby history, including of wine, is made (Kilminster, 2009: Chapter 2).

I am not here going to draw explicitly on Elias’s approach to such matters, although others have occasionally done so on wine-related issues (Rihouet, 2013), as well as on alcohol matters more generally (O’Brien, 2018). But I do think that Elias’s overall reflections on the nature of processes can help the sociology of wine in at least two ways.

First, his work, and that of his followers, points to both longer-term and shorter-term social processes, with the former much more likely to be unintended by any actors, whereas shorter-term processes may be partly unintended and partly intentional on the parts of certain actors deliberately seeking to stimulate some sort of change that acts upon other actors. In both cases, multiple processes feed into each other, possibly having various sorts of unintended consequences (a review of this literature is offered at Inglis (2021)).

Second, Elias’s sense of a relatively detached understanding of general and long-term processes helps to deal with the problem alluded to above; that is, the sociologist needing to maintain a certain attitude towards wine-relevant subject matters, encompassing a keen interest in, and knowledge of, wine, while at the same time not becoming overly attached to any particular position on the issues at hand, and not ‘taking sides’ for or against any particular political position or set of actors in a given wine environment (Kilminster, 2009).

For example, the kind of focus on long-term processes that I have in mind involves not taking any particular side vis-à-vis major wine world conflicts over such matters as the nature of *terroir*, or the effects of ‘globalization’, or the status of ‘natural’ wines, and so on. This is particularly important as the few words which exist in contemporary wine worlds and are widely used by actors, which are English language -ization words, or are synonyms of them in other languages (especially French), generally refer to certain processes that are depicted in highly negative ways. Thus, the English term ‘globalization’ and its French translation ‘mondialisation’ are generally deployed by (some) wine-related actors in ways which suggest unacceptable homogenization of wine production methods and taste styles (Barthel-Bouchier and Clough, 2005). The related term ‘Parkerization’ is coined and used by those critical of both the allegedly overweening power of the American critic Robert Parker to rate specific wines and thus to shape production in multiple locations around the world in manners which alter existing wine styles in order to fit his specific taste categories, and of the more general trends towards subjecting apparently every wine in the world to some sort of rating involving points out of 100, or a certain number of stars out of 5, or some such scale of judgement (Feiring, 2008).

Processes referred to by such terms as ‘Parkerization’ usually are understood by those using them as very negative tendencies, and such terminology often works as a rallying-cry to commence and continue resistance against such perceived pernicious tendencies. Thus -ization words used by wine-related actors tend to carry negative and critical connotations. Even some technical terms referring to techno-scientific interventions in winemaking—like Chaptalization (adding sugar during fermentation) and micro-oxygenization (adding oxygen to shape flavour, texture, and smell)—can be framed by critics of such matters as unnecessary and damaging to the character of a wine, and more broadly to the style taken to be a virtuous expression of a specific *terroir*. Thus Jonathan Nossiter’s polemical and highly influential documentary *Mondovino* (2004) mocked the travelling wine advisor Michel Rolland for his constant demands to micro-oxygenate the wine at seemingly every winery he was hired by, thereby creating a blandly homogeneous style that Nossiter viewed as exactly the worst aspect of globalized fine wine production. Techno-scientific intervention processes are hereby strongly connected to negatively construed societal processes such as globalization and Parkerization (Parker also being a target of Nossiter’s, as well as a friend of Rolland) (Nossiter, 2009).

But terms coined by sociologists that refer to wine-related processes need not carry either negative or positive connotations. And if they do not, a more dispassionate vocabulary specific to sociology of wine can be forged. As a result, sociologists’ -ization processes can be used as intellectual tools to analyze the same sorts of tendencies that wine world polemicists engage with, but doing so in more distanced ways than those of the passionately engaged, while the words and actions of the polemicists themselves can be contextualized within, and thereby understood within the terms of, the very processes that the sociologists can discern.

Nonetheless, a more neutral vocabulary of processes can be supplemented by the sociologist if s/he wishes, and such terminology is available from within the history of the discipline. In classical sociology—and especially in the works of Marx and his varied followers—critical sociological terminology also developed, involving accounts of various ‘-fication’ processes, such as ‘commodification’ and ‘reification’ (Nisbet, 1966).

Words in English ending in -ization and -fication refer to concepts which seek to identify broad trends over time, leading from one sort of condition to another in a process of transformation. The political orientation of any

given analyst shapes the evaluative colouring of the word and the concept it represents, with any given process being construable as more desirable or less desirable, depending on which specific author is using it (Bendix, 1967).

In this paper, I will apply to wine matters some central -ization, and a few relevant -fication, words which are important within sociological analyses of long-term trends. The paper is merely an initial sketch in such a direction. As a result, it does not define these categories in any detailed manner; it seeks merely to give an initial setting out of what a sociology of wine focused around -ization, and to a lesser extent -fication, processes could generally look like, and what kinds of things it can tentatively say about wine, making connections that otherwise might not get made. Later work, whether by myself or others, can flesh out the concepts in more specific ways, drawing on particular schools of sociological thought to render them more concrete. What follows is a very generalizing set of remarks about sociology as a generalizing science of wine. Much remains to be said about the particularities of sociology's capacity to make wine-oriented generalizations.

Nonetheless, a potential benefit of focusing on the kinds of processes outlined here is that they cut across conventional ways of conceptualising wine in some sort of social scientific manner. At the most basic level, one could analytically divide wine up into realms of *production*, *distribution*, and *consumption* (in short, PDC), and then trace out connections between these domains, and how dynamics in one may have different sorts of reverberations in the other two. Alternatively, one can make analytical distinctions between *wine worlds* (construable as social spheres involving interacting persons involved in one way or another with wine), *wine cultures* (comprised of sets of wine-related ideas and values), and *wine fields* (comprised of competing ways of talking and making judgments about wine)—in short, WCF—and one can also trace how they affect each other (Inglis and Almila, 2019).

The kinds of processes which I identify in this paper traverse all the domains identified in both these sets of concepts. While any specific process may, at a certain time or place, be primarily located within, say, wine production or a wine world, it is not necessarily restricted to that domain, for it may also be at work, either contemporaneously or at a later date, also in wine distribution and consumption, or in wine cultures and fields. Identifying how such processes move within and across PDC and/or WCF formations, both synchronically and diachronically, can be a central focus of the sociology of wine.

I will illustrate the general wine processes that I identify below with historical examples of them in operation that I happen to know about. Any number of other examples could have been used by other authors seeking to make the same sorts of general points. The examples I use are scattered in time and space, giving the paper a rather mosaic-like quality. I hope that that feature does not distract from, but rather reinforces, the central point being made here. This is that general wine processes certainly occur across time and space in context-specific manners; but to discern only the specificities without seeing them as instances of more general processes, is to miss the very level of generalizing analysis that sociology is particularly well-equipped to bring to the study of wine.

## WINE'S AMBIGUITY: ITS SIMULTANEOUS ROOTEDNESS AND ITS TRAVELLING TENDENCIES

To begin to unpack the types of general processes concerning wine that sociology can develop and utilise, I will start with some basic propositions about the trans-historical quality of wine made from grapes. I contend that wine is deeply ambivalent, located between apparent stasis and diverse forms of mobility. Any such account of wine must commence, at least in part, with the grapes, and that in turn means accounting for the vines from which the grapes derive.

About one hundred grape species grow wild across the world. But wine is initially a phenomenon—or set of interlinked phenomena—that is Eurasian in origin. It is just one single Eurasian grape species, *Vitis Vinifera* L. *subsp. Sylvestris*, which is the source of 99% of the world's wine today. In its wild, uncultivated form, *Vitis Vinifera* grows from Central Asia to Iberia, spanning a distance of about 6,300 kilometres, within a north to south band of about 1,300 kilometres. All domesticated grape varieties derive from it, in an astonishing variety of shapes, sizes, combinations of sugars and acids, and flavours. There are today as many as 10,000 cultivars or clonal types. Viticulturalists have exploited *Vitis Vinifera's* tremendous potentials for being altered, manipulated and transplanted to new places. Roughly speaking, cultivated grapes have grown between 30 degrees and 50 degrees latitude, in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres (Taber, 2005).<sup>1</sup>

The earliest evidence of making wine from grapes dates from about 6000 BCE, in the area of the Caucasus now called Georgia (Kassam and Davis, 2017). Evidence shows that wine making was going on about 5000 BCE

<sup>1</sup> In recent years, viticulture has been developed nearer to Equatorial regions, in places with relatively hot climates like India, Thailand, Peru and Brazil, as entrepreneurs seek to open up new areas for production, and to supply both old and new markets of consumers. As this has happened, so too have new hybrids been developed to grow effectively in novel grape-growing environments (Huber, 2011).

in the Zagros Mountains in Iran. The Neolithic period provided suitable social conditions for wine making, as humans were living in the types of settled habitations conducive to domesticated grape-growing (McGovern, 2003).

The grape vine's 'pliable, almost chimeric nature' is perhaps its most notable feature (McGovern, 2003: 13). Part of that polyvalent nature is wine's simultaneous locatedness and its propensity towards movement. A fundamental principle of the sociology of wine should involve recognition of wine's paradoxical nature. On the one hand, wine is in some ways rooted (literally) in the particular places where grapes are grown, and where grape juice is turned into the finished product. Moreover, wine marketing has for millennia been about 'placing' wine, in processes which we could call **the localization of wine**: that is, presenting a particular wine—especially one thought of as being distinguished and of high quality—as being somehow quintessentially redolent of the place it has come from (Beverland and Luxton, 2003; Meneley, 2007).

For example, social elites in the Roman Empire were very keenly aware that what they thought of as good wine came from not just anywhere, but from specific noteworthy regions. These were all in Italy and the Greek islands (Dalby, 2000). In the late republican and early imperial periods, Falernian wine from near Naples was widely perceived to be the best available, along with those from Surrentium, Albanum (today's Alban hills), Praetutium (on the Adriatic coast) and Rhaeticum (near present-day Verona) (Millon, 2013). The author Pliny said that the wines of Campania were famous all across the world, indicating that the concept of global reputation for what are perceived to be especially fine wines is not new (Geraghty, 2007: 1048). Pliny added that two-thirds of the greatest producing regions are in Italy—perhaps an instance of chauvinism in wine appreciation, a phenomenon that also seems to be trans-historical. The great Italian wines were regarded as worthy rivals to the esteemed wines of the islands of Cos, Chios and Lesbos. Elite Romans were keen to be assured as to the original location, provenance and quality of the wines they drank, in ways that are in some sense like those of today's wine aficionados (Dalby, 2000).

Despite the very long-term existence of social processes which 'place' wine, sociology of wine must be founded on the recognition that wine is also all about the travelling and movement of all the elements which make up total wine making and wine drinking processes. From early times, there have been multiple forms of **wine mobilization**: vines and wines have moved along river and sea trading routes (McGovern, 2003; Phillips, 2000).<sup>2</sup> Then they were enabled to move across oceans by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (Hancock, 1998, 2005), the point at which we may perhaps be justified in calling the start of the globalization of wine, properly speaking (Inglis, 2019).

Wine has over history been much more likely to travel than beer and other fermented drinks, for in comparison to them it has more potential for moving over long distances and becoming a circulating commodity, the other drinks historically being more for immediate consumption in the places they were made. Wine therefore has had more capacities, relative to most other beverages, for making socio-economic and other kinds of linkages between different places and for being offered for long-distance commercial sale. It has been less likely than other drinks to be made in contexts of simple domestic production, being more often made in specialized commodity production sites—that is, wineries—which were often separate from places where the drink was actually consumed (Dietler, 2006). For most of the time that wine has been made, special wines made for higher status and wealthier consumers have travelled more and further than have ordinary wines for everyday consumption; moving significant amounts of *vin ordinaire* across very long distances only became economically viable on a very large scale as recently as the 1980s (Capatti and Montanari, 2003: 141).

In all historical periods, it is not just the final product that has travelled, for everything associated with the grape growing and wine making process has travelled too. As well as vines, the human actors dealing with them—viticulturalists and viniculturalists—have moved over often long distances too, as have their respective forms of technology and knowhow. Grape growing, wine making and wines, and all the various appurtenances associated with them, have over history constantly moved around large geographical areas (Inglis, 2019).

The interplay of wine's apparent rootedness, and its simultaneous tendencies towards movement, has generated ambiguities that people have tried to manage. As long ago as the Egypt of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, the writing on wine jars, and the stamps on clay seals put onto the jars, sometimes indicated quite detailed information: the year of the vintage, the vineyard where the wine was made, the name of the vintner, and sometimes the perceived quality level. All these were important indicators for traders and buyers of where the wine had travelled from, and were early ways of dealing with a subsequently perennial problem—should I trust the person I am buying the wine from, and are they telling me the truth about it, including where it came from (Meneley, 2007)?

<sup>2</sup> The Greek historian Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE described in some detail the developed wine trade that ran from the headwaters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers through to Babylon, which was operated by Armenian wine merchants. This trade could have existed as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. Boats made of willow frames and animal skins could take up to 25 tons of wine at a time. We know that circa 1750 BCE, wine could be transported in very large jars of 1000 litres or more, indicating the movement across borders of wine in bulk even at this time. At the end of the journey down the river, the boats could be dismantled, the frames sold off, and the skins taken back up the river again, to be re-used on the next journey—an example of ingenuity and flexibility in the movement of wine (McGovern, 2003: 167).

For example, during Roman imperial times, wines from the island of Cos came in distinctive shapely *amphorae*. This design was copied by unscrupulous merchants from all over the region, to sell inferior wines from elsewhere as if they were from Cos, to cash in on the latter's high reputation (Dalby, 2000). Selling inferior products that could have come from anywhere, packaged as superior items that purport to come from a reputed region, has continued to be a big problem down through the centuries. Modern wine legislation at national and international levels has been in large part concerned to deal with this perennially recurring challenge, involving multiple processes of **the legalization of wine** (see below).

Keeping finished wine from spoiling while it travels over long distances has been a challenge across the millennia. Wine in medieval Europe was often bitterly complained about because of spoilage problems. Barrels—which had replaced ancient *amphorae* as the solution to making wine portable (Murray, 2007)—were often poorly sealed and the wine inside would rapidly oxidize, making it taste very unwholesome. Even when barrels worked properly, once they were opened the wine was good for only a few days before turning sour (Turner, 2004).<sup>3</sup> The spoilage during transit problem has prompted different sorts of technological fixes at different times. Thus, spice was initially added in Greek and Roman times as a preservative, but then drinkers got a taste for it, so it was added also for aesthetic reasons. This is an anticipation of different sorts of modern scientific and technological interventions to make wine appeal more to the mainstream palates of drinkers at any given time, of which more below (Lukacs, 2013).

## WINE AND RELIGION: THE SACRALIZATION OF WINE

Wine has abounded in religious significance for a very long time. In the eight millennia of its existence, grape wine has been strongly associated with, and used by, the major religions of central and western Eurasia. In that wide geographical/cultural region, wine has had, and been thought to have, various affordances for religious purposes, with wine being subjected to processes of **sacralization** and **ritualization** accordingly (Lutz, 1922; Younger, 1966). It is only within recent centuries that religious aspects of grape wine production and consumption have shrunk, these becoming largely secular, and wine production and consumption being desacralized accordingly, even if wine still plays some significant roles in religious rituals today.

Wine drinking can create forms of exuberant fellow-feeling among religious congregants (Fuller, 1996). But wine's ambivalently enlightening and befuddling capacities have made it feared or shunned altogether by various religious authorities, especially those oriented towards more austere and self-controlled forms of worship (Fuller, 1996). The meanings attributed to wine in any religious context are 'embedded in a much wider system of "analogies" that accentuate its symbolic role in mediating between the mundane and the extraordinary, the secular and the sacred' (Fuller, 1996: 113). Wine libations used in religious rituals, whether carried out by religious specialists or lay-persons, are simultaneously symbolic and practical: they achieve certain purposes and symbolize certain things. They involve making offerings to the gods, either the wine itself, or the blessings uttered by wine-drinking worshippers (Dietler, 2006: 241).

Wine-based offerings *to* the gods are particularly likely to be offered by human adherents if wine is understood as a gift to humanity *from* the gods. In some creeds, the gods' gift of wine seems like a straightforward benefit to humankind, bringing joy and consolation for life's vagaries. In other religious systems, the gift is seen as more ambiguous, the affirmative elements mixed up with negative, 'poisonous' ones. When wine is understood as divine in origin, it will seem especially precious, possibly sacred *per se*, and sometimes as dangerous and in need of careful ritual handling. If divine origins are attributed, wine is especially worthy of being offered back to its divine progenitors, part of an ongoing cycle of gifting relations between exchanging parties in heaven and on earth. This sort of scenario can be seen in contexts as diverse as ancient Egypt (Poo, 1995, 2010), and medieval Christianity (Montanari, 2015). Even among populations in which wine's origins and nature were not conceived of as divine, it still has been widely understood as a worthy gift offering for deities (Heath, 2003: 149).

Wine was highly valued in ancient central and western Eurasia. Fermented grape juice was often the most common source of alcohol, and alcohol was the most ubiquitous intoxicant (Purcell, 1985: 2). Wine was variously 'a common table drink, a desirable trade item, a gift to kings, a medical aid, a ritual offering, and part of nearly every aspect of life', used to 'celebrate happiness and sorrow, worship and covenant' (Seely, 1996-7: 207). Religious rituals often involved wine offerings, while explicitly wine-oriented rituals, including at festivals of the grape harvest and new vintages, were important features of the seasonal calendar (Wilkins and Hill, 2006: 182).

<sup>3</sup> French commentators singled out the badness of wine drunk in England. In that country, spoiled royal stocks were sometimes given to the poor, in order to use it up. In the year 1374, the English king allowed a Great Yarmouth merchant to avoid the ban on exporting wine from England, to send twenty casks of spoiled Gascon wine, which even the London poor would have turned their noses up at, 'to the less discriminating drinkers of Scotland and Norway' (Turner, 2004: 131).

In ancient Greece, wine was regarded as a gift to humanity from Dionysos (in Latin, Bacchus)—the wine god *par excellence*. As viticulture spread westward from Egypt, through Crete and the Aegean, to mainland Greece, the cult of Dionysos followed and mutated as it went, taking on some Egyptian and Minoan cultural elements (Ruck, 1986: 180; Stanislawski, 1975: 428). Otto (1965: 151) points out that modern people ‘are accustomed to use the gifts of nature to suit [them]selves without being amazed by its secrets’. So, ‘whenever there is talk of wine, we think of geniality, high spirits, and, perhaps, also of the dangers to health and morals’. The Greek viewpoint on Dionysos and his gift went much deeper. Wine was a miraculous divine gift, stimulating serious reflection on ‘pleasure and pain, enlightenment and destruction, the lovable and the horrible’ (Otto, 1965: 151). Dionysos was a friend of humanity, but sometimes also a force for disruption, chaos, and terror. His gift of wine was likewise ambiguous. It was a *pharmakon*: an important aid to humans, but also a poison (Lissarrague, 2016: 5-6). In Greek myths about the origins of wine, Dionysos’ gift to humankind was usually accompanied by violence and the deaths of the first recipients of wine (Nencini, 1997: 191). Humans had to learn to treat this most powerful beverage, ‘liquid fire’, very circumspectly indeed (Wilson, 2012: 31).

Wine was also understood by the Greeks as profoundly mysterious, which could be represented as involving the **mysticization** of wine, a tendency found in other societies, both in ancient and medieval times. The Greeks did not know why the fermentation of grape juice happened spontaneously. Mystical reasons were offered as explanations (Otto, 1965: 147), these both assuming and reinforcing the notion that such a mystifying process must have divine origins and must be a gift from a god. Dionysos was not just a gift-giver, offering joyous bounty; he was also thought to suffer by reason of his giving of the gift. Just as the harvested and crushed grapes had to ‘die’ to create the marvellous blood-like liquid, so too it was thought that Dionysos suffered, died bloodily, and then was miraculously and life-affirmingly reborn (Ruck, 1986: 191). It was therefore by sacrifice of his own body, an act thought to be mystically re-enacted annually at grape harvest time, that Dionysos could repeatedly give the gift of wine to humankind (Ruck, 1986: 202).

Wine is important in the books of the Hebrew Bible and Judaism’s other canonical texts, a situation involving the **theologization** of wine (Smith, 1996 [1975]). There are more references to the vine in the Torah than to any other plant (Phillips, 2018: 71). In many texts, wine is depicted as being given as a gift (Sasson, 1994: 405). Vineyards, vines, and grapes were symbols of fruitfulness and God’s care for his children. As Seely (1996-7: 223) puts it, ‘the fruit of the vine gave many gifts to ancient Israel’, being symbolic of God’s grace and the salvation He promises true believers, as well as, on occasion, of his wrath wreaked against impious humankind (Sasson, 1994: 410).

In the Christian New Testament, wine plays various important roles. Indeed, one might say that Jesus is in some ways a wine god, given his repeated associations with wine, both in early accounts of his life, and in subsequent interpretations over the centuries (Phillips, 2014: 50). It is most significant that Jesus’ first miracle occurred at the wedding feast in Cana, where he transforms water into wine (Furnal, 2011: 410). Turning water into wine is a feat associated with Dionysos, making the notion of Jesus as both parallel and response to that earlier wine god plausible.<sup>4</sup> The ability to conjure a miraculous appearance of wine when there was none became a favoured miracle of saints in later Christianity. But St. Augustine observed that the real miracle, performed by God every day, is when He transforms water into wine through the medium of vines (Montanari, 2015: 148).

The use by Jesus at his last meal of wine in a cup, explicitly representing his blood, harks back to the Old Testament notion of the covenant between God and His people being sealed by Moses through a blood offering (Klingbeil, 2016: 432-433). Wine, blood, Christian community, and individual salvation thereby became profoundly interlinked (Seely, 1996-7: 222). The sharing of wine was seen to be the major constitutive act of creating and re-creating communities of adherents, while excommunication involved withholding the wine cup (Senn, 2001: 293).

In Christianity’s earlier phases, there was an ‘intense [and trans-national] propaganda campaign in favour of wine as both an alimentary symbol and a ritual tool of the new faith’ (Montanari, 1996: 122-123). We may describe this as the **Christianization** of wine; no other major religion engaged in such a systematic appropriation of wine for its own purposes. Throughout the Middle Ages, Christianity constantly asserted the excellent qualities and exalted status of wine. Wine could not signify ‘the mystery of human nature, the ardor of the Holy Ghost, the knowledge of the Law, the word of the Gospels, spiritual understanding, the blood of Christ, conscience, contemplation, love’ and other important matters, ‘if it were not itself a product of excellence’, surpassing ‘in dignity and preciousness all other fruits of the earth’ (Montanari, 2015: 141). So holy was the gift of blood/wine that from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the laity were banned from partaking of the communion cup, for fear of desecrating it through spillage, the officiating priest instead drinking it on behalf of the assembly (Holt, 1993: 84; Senn, 2001: 292).

Protestantism made further changes, Catholic mystery being replaced by reading and verbal exhortations (Turner, 2017: 138). The Catholic belief in wine being transubstantiated into divine blood was dropped in favour

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Jesus is seen to turn water into *good quality* wine, and not the usual inferior stuff that would typically be served towards the end of the feast when the better wine ran out.

of wine as mere symbol of blood (Harvey, 2015: 36). Wine could thereby be restored to the laity in the communion service, and God's wine gift was to some extent theologically **democratized** as a result (Phillips, 2018: 85), of which more below.

## WINE AND EMPIRES: COLONIZATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Historically speaking, wine is so inseparable from empires that it is largely an imperial product, a result of the imperial dynamics involved in the **colonization**, at both pragmatic and symbolic levels, of land, plants, and people (I take some inspiration here from the contemporary sociology of empires literature—Steinmetz (2014)). Wine-related phenomena have especially been liable to travel when certain sorts of socio-political and socio-economic structures, institutions, and modes of societal organization have been in place that have facilitated movement within and across specific territories and jurisdictions. Pre-eminent among such modes of organization are empires. The primarily westwards shift of wine knowhow from the Caucasus region over the millennia following the invention of wine making, was in large part due to that knowledge travelling both within empires, and also across their borders (McGovern, 2003; Millon, 2013). Thus, another fundamental principle of the sociology of wine is as follows. Processes pertaining to what we could call the **imperialization of wine** have operated in various ways.

A taste for wine drinking may come to colonies and the colonised from imperial centres. This may happen either in the form of correct behaviour to be imposed on subject populations, and thus taken as evidence of the colonized people's new 'civilized' social condition, or also perhaps as high-status behaviour to be emulated by those wishing to take on the manners of their imperial superiors (Dietler, 2006; Sweetman, 2007). The long-term interplay between empires on the one side, and on the other, the originally Greco-Roman notion that wine was a 'civilized' drink—unlike beer, which was for barbarians (Nelson, 2005)—is particularly noteworthy. The Greco-Roman world understood the agricultural trinity of wheat, olives, and wine as profound symbols of civilization, and promoted them accordingly (Serventi and Sabban, 2002: 163).

In a very long-term and durable imaginary, inherited by Europeans from Greco-Roman antiquity, the presence of vineyards in a territory betokened that region's civilized status. The tropes involved here are well captured by de Blij's (1983: 113) rhapsodic prose, involving imagery which obfuscates the brutal realities of past colonialism and present-day social inequalities:

The cultural landscape of viticulture is the scenery of civilization. Its impress extends beyond vine rows and terraces to the homes and buildings of the winegrowers, the artifacts of industry, even the lifestyles of those who create the wines. Entire regions are dominated, saturated by the imagery of the vine and its culture history. Wherever in the world one enters a winegrowing region, the atmosphere is unmistakably unique, a combination of serenity and civility.

Working with such assumptions, the British authorities in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia promoted the cultivation of vineyards as a way of taming the terrain, while also weaning the immigrant population off hard spirits (McIntyre, 2012). Appropriation of indigenous people's land for winemaking, and the consequent history of alcohol dependency among the indigenous population (Brady, 2018), are just some elements on the broader barbaric tendencies of a colonial administration which claimed to be working in the name of 'civilization' (van Krieken, 1999).

In mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century California, the development of a wine industry was thoroughly tied up with notions as to the 'civilizing' of the West of the continent, and with the need for the US state, which by now was beginning to nurture its own imperial ambitions, to have a wine culture as sophisticated as that of one of its major historical role models, the Romans. Viticulture allowed the landscapes of newly conquered territories to be located within an imperialist narrative of world history, which 'claimed that all powerful nations, since antiquity, had transcendent grape cultures'. Planting vines, as well as making and drinking wines was part of 'an international set of colonial tactics for transforming landscapes and for propagating a particular worldview of cultivation and control' (Hannickel, 2013: 15).

Colonies can also become vital sources of wine supply for metropolitan imperial centres. For example, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Moghul empire's elites were kept supplied by wineries in the Indus Valley and Afghanistan (Anderson, 2004). When new territories for wine making are opened-up by colonial expansion, such as in North Africa under the Roman empire, the scale of production will generally be on a relatively very large scale. Imperial conditions tend to involve much larger production scales than in areas, such as much of Western Europe since medieval times, where a free peasantry have owned smallholdings over multiple generations. At the time of the Roman emperor Nero, only 6 proprietors controlled *all* wine production in Roman North Africa (Johnson, 1989).

Such a situation of massive production and concentration of ownership was repeated in the same region some two millennia later. Just as the Romans had set up North Africa as a massive source of wine production, so too

did the late 19<sup>th</sup> century French set up Algeria as their major source of supply (Pinilla and Ayuda, 2002). As the local peasantry were thrown off the land in favour of a small number of large industrial wineries owned by big French companies, French colonial wine production jumped exponentially, from 1 million hectares under vine in 1885 to 8.4 million hectares in 1910 (Simpson, 2011). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, France occupied the paradoxical position of being by far both the main producer and the largest importer of wines in the world—most of the imports coming from Algeria—and accounting for more than three-quarters of world wine imports as a whole (Pinilla and Ayuda, 2002). By the 1950s and 1960s, the expropriation of Algerian peasants from their lands to make way for vineyards had become a prime source of anti-imperial politics by leftist French intellectuals (Barthes, 2013 [1957]; Sartre, 2001). It should be added that colonial expansion could also involve the introduction of peasant smallholders who have tiny wine businesses, as was the case in 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina and California (Simpson, 2011).

Vine growing and wine making also could have profound effects on the economic and social makeup of core imperial territories as well as those of the colonies. The Roman case is again instructive here. Huge amounts of wine were made and transported around certain parts of the empire, such as from Italy and North Africa into southern and central France (Dietler, 2006). With such large amounts of wine being transported, more land was put under vine, at one point taking up to 85% of all cultivated land in Italy. Wine production required constant and intensive labour throughout the growing season, and so slave labour was more effective than free labour in producing it. Imperial expansion meant grain, from which came the bread that the mass of the population depended on, came increasingly from Egypt and North Africa (Geraghty, 2007). As a result, Italian grain prices went down, compelling large estate owners to move more into wine production. (At the same time, Italian wine prices went up, due to more demand for wine from consumers in the Romanized provinces around the Mediterranean.) As more parts of the Italian countryside were turned over to vines tended by slaves, the free peasantry increasingly migrated to the cities. This was part of a great movement of millions of people from countryside to urban areas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, a relatively rapid and certainly vast urbanization process that was not to be matched until the massive rises in London's population more than 1500 years later (Sassen, 2001). In this period of economic boom, the richest landowners who owned vast vineyards became even richer, with massive socio-economic inequalities being created, of a kind comparable to those we see today in an age of extreme neo-liberalization (Geraghty, 2007).

The spread of wine making across continents was in large part due to the broader trajectories of European colonization. Spanish Jesuits had begun wineries in Peru in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while Franciscan monks did the same in Mexico, and then in California, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Colman, 2008). In both cases, the motivations were religious rather than commercial. Partly because of new colonial opportunities, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries more and more money was invested in wine production itself, and not just in the processes whereby it was traded across distances. Investment in search of speculative profit went in into new wine-making regions, like the Portuguese-controlled island of Madeira and the Dutch colony of the Cape in Southern Africa. The Madeira vineyards were begun after the colonial sugar cane trade had been shifted to the Caribbean and Brazil (Hancock, 1998, 2005). New regions did not necessarily produce only bulk wine: Constantia wine from the Cape in South Africa already had a high Pan-European reputation as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Unwin, 1991).

Wine as a major profit-making entity became more possible the more there was mass migration across oceans and continents. As many as 100 million people migrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, half of them Europeans (Held et al., 1999). A significant minority of these drank wine in their countries of origin, taking their tastes with them across the seas and oceans. A much smaller, but still culturally significant, number also took wine-making skills with them. People from southern Europe migrated to locations including Algeria, the US, South Africa, Argentina and Uruguay, and as new vineyards appeared across multiple continents, this led 'to a significant diversification in the world production of wine' (Pinilla and Ayuda, 2002: 55).

In areas such as California, Mendoza in Argentina, and Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, wine making was densely concentrated, and levels of production grew rapidly, creating homogeneous bulk wines in large quantities. This was made possible by a combination of the natural endowments of land and climate, where huge amounts of grapes could be cultivated, plus the use of modern farming technologies such as ploughs that could be used between the rows of vines (Unwin, 1991). These were fertile terrains for the growth of large industrial wineries, with grape-growers often operating in separate enterprises from the wine makers. Large wine-making enterprises, producing basic wines on an industrial scale, have been a hallmark of much New World production ever since. Already in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, much New World wine making was highly concentrated, with about 70% of wine in Australia and the US produced by the top 5 companies in each, while the corresponding figure for Argentina and Chile was about 50%. At the same time, European wine making was still firmly based on small family and co-operative enterprises (Simpson, 2011). It was therefore due to processes of empire and colonialism that the groundwork was laid for the development of what in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century would come to be defined as the 'New World' of wine.

Earlier phases of imperialization and colonization continue to shape wine today in multiple ways. One such is the overwhelming dominance of wine-related activities by white people today, involving the **marginalization** of non-whites (Inglis and Ho, 2022) and the selective incorporation of some people from some ethnicities but not others (see below).

Another important aspect of the ongoing presence of older imperial formations on wine today involves how, since the 1970s, **neo-liberalization** has played out in terms of how wine is made and by whom. Neo-liberalization of economies and accompanying social relations may be conceived of a form of neo-imperialism (Harvey, 2007). Wine-producing regions which were created as direct consequences of earlier imperialism, most notably Chile and Argentina, underwent enforced neo-liberal reconfiguration in the 1980s and early 1990s, as part of the wider neo-liberalization of those national economies that was enforced by the major institutions of the global capitalist economy, the IMF, the WTO, and the World Bank. There was massive restructuring of patterns of ownership and styles of production, and the ending of protectionist tariffs. Small producers, who had since the beginnings of those national industries made basic table wines not intended for export, now had to survive in harsh new open market conditions, and wine companies had to adjust by making new types of wine that could sell abroad, especially to European, notably British, supermarket chains, which demanded consistent quality and easy drinkability at prices often ruinous for smaller companies. But other enterprises flourished in such conditions, becoming corporate behemoths themselves (Gwynne, 2008; Pont and Thomas, 2012).

In South Africa, another country where winemaking was a direct import of colonialism, from the 1990s onwards neo-liberalization of the industry also meant a massive movement away from domestic towards export markets. In a still predominantly white-owned industry, there were multiple challenging consequences for communities of rural black vineyard and winery workers. A rural lumpen-proletariat was created, scrambling their living outside of the safety-net of white paternalism, an instance of enforced **proletarianization** and **pauperization** of the wine workforce (Ewert and du Toit, 2005). The manner of treatment of workers has more recently been subject to process of politicization, as we will see below.

## WINE AND POWER: SOCIAL CHANGE AND ITS OBFUSCATION

Wine must always be understood in relation to the dynamics of social power, within empires, national states, and national and transnational economies, capitalist or otherwise. In wine-making regions around the world, interested parties very often have wanted to present to the world that their wines are expressions of unchanging tradition and very particular senses of place. Social elites in such regions have been particularly concerned to define what winemaking involves, as far as the rest of the world is concerned (Crenn, 2015). They have also engaged in processes of **consecration**: defining which vintages, wineries, regions, and so on are worthy of appreciation, and thereby commanding higher prices, and also, by implication, which are not so worthy (Allen and Germov, 2010). We may refer here to the **hegemonization** of wine, whereby elites define and frame wine-related phenomena in ways that seek to promote their own interests. They may do so in ways ranging from very deliberate and highly self-consciously on the one side, through to unconsciously in the other, with a great deal of semi-conscious practices in-between (following the terms of Bourdieu (1998)).

While representations of the supposedly quintessential characteristics of wine regions have existed in embryonic forms for centuries, they really only became systematized into a coherent, systematic, thought through, and to some extent self-conscious, manner in France after World War I, most especially in Burgundy. Such innovations were pioneered by an alliance of wine makers, politicians, and journalists in the 1920s and 1930s (Whalen, 2009). They collaborated to deal with problems of overproduction and regional competition, as well as competition from Algeria, and collapsing demand due to Prohibition in foreign markets like the Nordic countries. They popularised and dramatized *terroir* notions (see below), connecting the wines of Burgundy to what were presented as the essential foodstuffs that make up the authentic cuisine of the region. They staged a new, media-savvy range of wine festivals, gastronomic fairs and newly invented brotherhoods of the vine carrying out supposedly arcane wine rituals at public events, which weaved together ‘natural resources, historical memory, marketing strategies and cultural performance’. In so doing, they put on a public face of the region’s wines and food which emphasised *terroir*’s ‘eternal, transcendent and metaphysical properties’ (Whalen, 2009: 68, 76).<sup>5</sup> So successful was this strategy, encompassing globally aimed publicity and encouraging international tourism, that it was widely copied, first by other French regions, and then later by imitators around the world.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The need to present this message on foreign markets was well understood. At the 1937 Paris International Exposition, one of the region’s tourism officials asked rhetorically, ‘Can anyone speak of the wines of this region without invoking the wines whose universal reputation has made Burgundy known across the four corners of the world?’ (cited at Whalen (2009: 95)).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Petrini’s (2004) account of how Piemontese entrepreneurs explicitly sought to emulate Burgundy’s forms of self-representation, so as to increase their status and presence on world wine and tourist markets.

Scepticism towards presentations of unchanging social conditions and the supposed perpetuation over generations of venerable wine making tradition, has been voiced by, among others, some geographers and anthropologists (Peace, 2006). Sociology can build upon such viewpoints, agreeing that oftentimes ‘reputation and tradition are constructed while helping to disguise the reality of social change’, and identifying which actors have the power to drive change, and subsequently to represent it, in specific wine making areas (Demossier, 1997: 56). One must recognise that loaded and essentializing narrations of the history of wine in a given area can contribute to the **naturalization** of conditions that are actually products of contingent social dynamics (Ulin, 1987, 2002, 2004)—the very type of phenomena sociology is well-equipped to identify in other social arenas.

A major scholarly challenge to essentialist ways of thinking came in 1959 with the publication of the French geographer Roger Dion’s (1959) book *Histoire de la Vigne et du Vin en France* (Gade, 2004). Dion showed that perceived prestige of wine-making regions has mutated over time. The location of the most prestigious French wine-making regions has changed often markedly through time. For example, in the medieval period, Paris had what were widely thought to be the best wines in France, but that reputation evaporated over time, as eventually did wine making in the city’s vicinity. The region of Montbazillac, which today is regarded as a source of pleasant but generally unremarkable sweet wines, was once more prized than Sauternes, which today ranks as probably the top sweet wine producing area in the world.

Dion noted that shifts up and down the prestige scale have often been strongly linked to forms of political power. One important reason why Burgundy enjoys such a high global reputation today is that in the medieval period the Dukes of Burgundy had sufficient political clout to put their terrain symbolically on the wine-making map, and to influence the opinion of social elites around Europe that the wine of the region was of outstanding quality (Moran, 1993). What helped here was that the vineyards were close to major travel routes, so the wines could easily be transported to other locations where their reputation could grow, and also that there was a constant stream of elite visitors from all over the continent to the monasteries where the monks had mastered viticulture to a high level (Pitte, 2002: 16). In this way, to do with political, social and economic factors as much as the quality of the wines themselves, Burgundy got onto the European (and later, world) map of elite wine, and has generally stayed on it for more than half a millennium.

Relatedly, the neo-Marxist anthropological work of Ulin (2002, 2004) has shown how the rise to eminence, first in Europe and then across the world, of Bordeaux, was also strongly bound up with political and trading factors. The English monarchy dominated parts of Western France in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it awarded privileges to the Bordelais producers of wine over their rivals located further inland. This stimulated Bordeaux’s exporting of wine to England and other countries, sowing the seeds of the strong orientation to world, rather than simply national, markets in the region that is so evident today (Colman, 2008). Bordeaux’s reputation for wines of serious quality was strongly intertwined with world market forces. Competition that arose in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from Spain, Portugal and Italy led to Bordelais growers replacing high yielding crops that produced more basic wine, with lower yielding vines that allowed for higher quality production. These newer wines found ready markets in places as far away as North America and Russia. In a polemical vein, Nossiter (2009: 92) argues that since the 12<sup>th</sup> century Bordeaux has been profoundly shaped by the dominant political power in the region, and then the world, at any given time: first the English, whose dominance lasted until at least the period after World War II, then the Americans in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then in the early 2000s, the newly economically empowered Chinese.

Because Bordeaux was integrated into (proto-)capitalist export-driven commodity markets as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, social conditions there did not generate a strong history of political radicalism and dissent. But the opposite was true in the Languedoc, which still today has a reputation for being a centre of small-scale producer resistance to perceived globalization (Ulin, 2002). Political conditions were also further complicated by developments within France itself. After the Revolution of 1789, aristocratic wine properties in Bordeaux were seized by the new government but mostly remained intact. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prosperous bourgeois took them over, while using aristocratic symbolism to present an image to the world of unchanging tradition (Ulin, 2002, 2004).

Conversely, in Burgundy, where much wine making had been on Church lands, once these were confiscated by the revolutionary State and redistributed to the peasantry, they became fragmented into often tiny smallholdings. This situation still today constitutes much of the complex patchwork that characterises the social relations of land ownership of Burgundian wine making areas, and this helps explain the hostility among smaller producers there to the Bordelais and to the kind of profit-grabbing globalization they are widely thought today to represent (Pitte, 2002).

In essence, how particular wine regions are represented, by those either within or without them, is tied up in complex ways with both the property and other socio-economic relations characteristic of a region, which are often the results of long-term historical processes involving many different political, economic, and sometimes religious, struggles between different social groups, and also the socio-legal apparatuses which ratify and regulate them (Colman, 2008).

## WINE AND TECHNO-SCIENCE

For thousands of years, wine was bound up with the sacred elements of life in deep and complex ways. The **de-sacralization** of wine from the early modern period was of course bound up with wider processes of secularization, themselves complicated and uneven in their geographical and cultural reach (Inglis, 2022).

A major factor in the modern **techno-scientization of wine** was the devastating spread of the phylloxera disease across European wine-growing regions from the 1860s through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Phylloxera spreads when tiny insects feed on the roots and leaves of vines, eventually killing off the plants. The disease wreaked havoc across the continent, such that by the start of the new century, nearly all vineyards in the affected regions had to be uprooted and replanted with resistant rootstock (Campbell, 2004). Phylloxera was thoroughly trans-national in both nature and consequences. It spread rapidly across European borders, probably carried on plants transported by the new railway network. While railways could take finished wines to ever more distant consumers, they also helped move around Europe the blight that seriously threatened the very existence of the wine industry in most European countries (Macedo, 2011).

The pest most likely had originated in North America, brought over the ocean by steamship. The eventual solution to it was trans-oceanic too: European vines were grafted onto more phylloxera-resistant American rootstocks. In this sense, North America was both source of catastrophe and salvation for the European wine industry (Campbell, 2004). The disease was recognised at the time as a profoundly trans-national problem. International scientific-cum-political congresses devoted to dealing with the threat were called in the 1870s, creating what today might be called an international risk community. International governmental action sought to control the transportation of vines within and between countries (Unwin, 1991).

There were numerous profound consequences of the disease and attempts to stem it. A new topography of vineyards came into existence, intended to make the disease monitorable. This involved much more surveying of wine-growing areas than hitherto, involving the new technology of photography, which rendered in visual terms for the first time a sense of the *terroir* of particular locations (Macedo, 2011). Scientific forms of monitoring and control of vineyards became more systematic and more commonplace, paving the way to the situation dominant by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century where vineyards and wineries were as much spaces of applied science and technology as they were of 'nature'. Wine started to be made as much in the laboratory as the vineyard, even if the marketing of it denied that fact. Wines made in the immediate post-phylloxera period, from grafted vines, probably in many cases tasted more generic than those made before the disease, potentially paving the way for new, more homogeneous and trans-local wine flavours (Lukacs, 2013).

Scientific wine research facilities, often based in universities in wine-growing areas, came to prominence in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first school for grape-growers opened in Saxony in 1811, and a major wine-making faculty was opened in Montpellier in 1872 (Lukacs, 2013). By the early 1900s, viticulture and oenology were regarded as legitimate academic disciplines. The University of California at Davis established in 1903 a model farm to investigate how wine making could be brought under more stringent scientific regulations. Scientists from that facility were increasingly a presence in the Californian industry from the 1950s onwards (Campbell, 2004).

After WWII, the idea that humans should exercise instrumental rationality and control over all aspects of grape-growing and winemaking, began to take hold. Earlier tendencies towards the **rationalization** of wine were extended, deepened, and accelerated. The most famous exponent of this worldview in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Bordeaux-based Émile Peynaud, who evangelised for the elimination of both mystical beliefs from wine-making and accidental occurrences, in favour of strict scientific regulation (Lukacs, 2013). The new 'techno-science' of wine was, particularly from the 1970s onwards, the product of trans-national cooperation, between research facilities in major locations like California, South Africa, Australia, and France, and the new know-how was then disseminated trans-nationally (Pinney, 1989).

By the 1990s, innovations in scientific and technological knowledges travelled rapidly around the globe-spanning circuits maintained by the likes of itinerant wine advisers. The new knowledges were taken up rapidly, because now most sizable wineries had laboratories and personnel, often trained in universities with wine-making faculties, competent in applying such innovations. Large companies took up the new knowledges with alacrity, as they seemed to offer the possibility of creating reliable and similar tasting wines year after year, with seasonal variations being brought under control by scientific and technological intervention (Lukacs, 2013). We pursue such matters further below.

## TERROIR-IZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

The ways in which many people, professionals and amateurs alike, today associate wine with place, are strongly influenced by ideas of *terroir*. These suggest that wines made in a certain place must and should come from vines

that have been grown in that place, preferably for a very long time. When wine making in a given region is subjected to and framed within notions of *terroir*, we can discern **terroirization** processes at work.

*Terroir* notions have a long history in France, stretching back to the time of the Renaissance (Parker, 2015). From then onwards, there were strong associations made between the taste of foodstuffs with the region in which they were made, and the allegedly causal power of the land itself to create identifiable foods and wines, as well as distinctive cultures more generally. Wine was widely thought by intellectuals by the 17<sup>th</sup> century to possess and express *gout de terroir*. In tandem with literary intellectuals, French geographical scientists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, led by figures such as the eminent scholar Vidal de la Blache, carried on those assumptions about profound connections between region, soil, vines, wines, and people, and gave them a scientific as well as literary validation. Terms connected to and assuming the existence of *terroir* proliferated: *climat*, *sol* (soil), *terrain*, *canton*, along with more generalized words like *pays*, *territoire*, and *province*. School textbooks promoted ideas about regional ‘genius’ being expressed both in wines and in the works of the best local authors (Parker, 2015).

The ubiquity and taken-for-granted nature today of *terroir* ideas across the world is itself a sign and product of globalization, as well as a stimulant of further globalization. The term was not used much in English language discussions of wine until 1980s, at which point its use rose hugely (Matthews, 2015: 148). *Terroir* ideas have travelled the world from their birth-place in France and have been strongly globalized, nowadays constituting the ‘international cult of terroir’ (Hannickel, 2013: 12).

Some of the most bitter controversies in wine worlds, cultures and fields today concerns *terroir* (Black and Ulin, 2013; Ulin, 2013). One of the key lines of fracture is between those who believe that *terroir* wines and wine making are under threat from the homogenizing forces of what they see as ‘**globalization**’ (mostly meaning huge companies making characterless, apparently place-less wine), and those who believe that *terroir* is over-rated or some kind of scam. If the globalization of wine means the production of ever more standardised wines that all taste roughly the same, and therefore could be made *anywhere*, then this is thought to seriously threaten the existence and integrity of wines that truly express a particular *terroir*—that is, wines that have definitely come from *somewhere*.

One reason for the bitterness of disputes over the nature and benefits of *terroir* may reside in the fact that the term means different things to different people. The phrase has fluid and multiple meanings, even within France. As it has spread around the world, it has become ever more polysemic. A tendency in the US is to understand it as referring primarily or exclusively to the properties of the soil in which the vines grow. French meanings, however, involve the multivalent idea of ‘place’, which encompasses physical, geographical, cultural, and historical facets (Trubek, 2004).

Those critical of *terroir* ideas—who include some actors in the wine world, as well as some academics who write about such matters—have listed a series of reasons for their scepticism. Some would argue that the notion of *terroir* is both essentialising—it fabricates a homogeneous entity that does not really exist—and vague—products of a given *terroir* are usually known not by what they *are* but by what they *are not*. When asked, even small-scale producers who might be expected to be experts on their own area, can struggle to say exactly what their *terroir* ‘is’, but they can say what their wines are *not* like—they are not like the wines of some other *terroir* (Parker, 2015).

Critics also allege that *terroir* ideas imply a kind of environmental determinism—somehow the earth ‘speaks’ through the wines. It then becomes potentially awkward for the wine maker to describe their own role in the process. Are they just ‘midwives’, allowing the *terroir* to speak for itself? If so, how does one account for the fact that the winemaker is actively involved in all sorts of ways in making the wine? What about her agency, and the array of scientific knowledges and technological devices she uses to bring the wine into existence? What if all wine, including that billed as unique, is less made in the vineyard than in the techno-scientific-informed winery (Matthews, 2015)?

Wine marketing—the scripts of which have been globally spread—frequently utilises *terroir* imagery, and often implies that wine has been made in a particular place in that particular way since time immemorial. But this disguises the scientific and technical basis of most modern winemaking (Beverland and Luxton, 2005). It also covers up the fact that in the past, winemakers engaged in trial-and-error experimentation to see which vines and which techniques worked best in that environment. But how the wines are made today is presented as somehow natural and eternal, rather than the result of experiments and chance. Meanwhile, the qualities of the wine are attributed to the environment alone, rather than to human agency as such, although ‘tradition’ can be invoked as part of *terroir* too (Moran, 1993).

For critics, *terroir* ideas and symbolism involve a sort of double freezing, of both history and geography. They indicate that in a particular locale, tradition rules and wine-making techniques have never changed in major ways over time, while implying that the vines and grapes have always been there and did not travel there from somewhere else. According to some, *terroir* thinking is mostly or wholly a marketing strategy (Laudan, 2004). It helps producers and marketers project onto potentially global markets and cultural circuits images of a special sense of place. As those images circulate around the world, the place is apparently subject to **decommoditization** (this is wine made

by tradition and out of love, not for profit), and yet the *terroir* imagery helps fetch higher prices for the wine than if it had not been sold that way. *Terroir* is a way of constructing the ‘local’ in order to circulate it globally and to accrue profit from it (Heath and Meneley, 2007).

One outspoken critic of *terroir* ideas, the American oenologist Mark Matthews (2015), cites cases of various blind tastings where expert tasters could not differentiate between French and non-French wines:

The difficulty in identifying the origin of top wines in blind tastings suggests that, given sufficiently similar environments, genotypes, cultural practices, and winemaking technologies, similar (but never the same) wines can be produced from different locations ... [E]ven if there are important flavours of the wine that derive from the soil ... [it] may be managed toward those desirable flavours, perhaps even to the extent that ... the wine from one soil could be made *indistinguishable* from the wine from another soil (Matthews, 2015: 190).

In other words, for critics like Matthews, science and technology can trump *terroir*, which is precisely what advocates of *terroir* would vehemently deny. *Terroirizing* talk is no match for techno-scientization. For such critics, and for some natural scientists, ultimately the idea of *terroir* is too woolly and vague to be a respectable term. It seems to cover everything, from soil composition to the alleged ‘spirit’ of the winemaker. It points to inexplicable and ineffable matters, apparently beyond description or criticism, *terroir* claims thus becoming unassailable assertions rather than provable statements. However, as Teil (2012) points out, scientists who want to disprove the existence of *terroir* or its alleged effects on wines seek to reduce it to a stable list of determining factors. When that cannot be achieved, they think of *terroir* as an imaginary thing. Producers and others who believe in *terroir* instead see it as irreducible to those factors, regarding it as a real and resistant object that cannot be infinitely manipulated by human beings.

Some *terroirist* producers say that *terroir* is less a currently existing thing than a quest, an object-in-the-making rather than a finished one. On Teil’s subtle account, *terroir* is neither simply real nor fake, nor is it a cunning marketing strategy alone. Just as ‘taste cannot be separated from the process through which it emerges, *terroir* is inseparable from the vintner who brings it into being’ (Teil, 2012: 489). *Terroir* on her view is a changing entity that is widely distributed among many winemakers, and is an ongoing collective production, provisional every year on collective actions by multiple people involved in wine production in that area. The qualities of the wines are therefore not pre-existing things, but ‘the plural, diverse and relatively unpredictable result of a production process’ involving multiple actors across time (Teil, 2012: 490). This approach suggests a way for sociologists and other social scientists to look at *terroir* which avoids buying into one side or the other in the deeply polarised debates that go on across the world today, which we will return to below.

## WINE AND LAW

Wine is today subject to a vast array of national and transnational rules and regulations enshrined in law. The **legalization** of wine—not in the sense of it ‘becoming legal’, like in the US after the repeal of Prohibition, but rather in its being subject to proliferating modes of legal governance—predates the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but was massively expanded during that century and on into the current one.

There is some evidence to suggest that a legally recognised region of wine production was running in Paris as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, although the border apparently was not fully legally codified until the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. As wine came to consumers more regularly from further-off places, so too did levels of uncertainty rise as to its provenance, and such anxieties in turn led to more demands for regulation of the market, with groups of producers sometimes responding. Claims have been made for 18<sup>th</sup> century Tuscany, Hungary, and Portugal as the sites of the first real legal recognition of distinctive wine-making areas (Matthews, 2015: 153). For example, in 1756 the Marquis de Pombal instigated geographical boundaries and regulations to guarantee the authenticity and quality of Port wines for their major market, British merchants and consumers (Stening et al., 2004).

Yet the main location of proliferating legalization of wine is France throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was against the longstanding and deep cultural background of *terroir* thinking that the French AOC (*Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée*) legal apparatus which officially recognises *terroir* in law and governmental classifications was created. AOC classifications go beyond simple geographic indications which merely outline the boundaries of a particular *terroir*. Instead, appellation rules are pre-eminently about restrictions—as to which grape varieties may be planted in the area, how great yields per hectare may be, allowed and disallowed wine-making methods (‘traditional’ ones are allowed, non-traditional ones likely not), permitted minimal alcohol levels, and so on (Moran, 1993).

A 1905 law against widespread fraud required a delimitation of the location of origin of each wine, but it did not specify which factors made particular locations unique.<sup>7</sup> A 1908 law stipulated that the wine of a given area is so if it has an association with the area that was 'local, loyal and constant'. The boundaries of the Champagne region were officially delimited this way (Guy, 2003). That law did not specify how wine should be made in a delimited region, or how much of it could be made and sold. The major development came in a 1935 law which dealt with such matters, and created the regulatory agency, the *Institut National des Appellations d'Origine* (INAO), to formulate and enforce AOC regulations (Trubek and Bowen, 2008).

An AOC designation defines the geographic boundaries of an area, and in so doing protects the group made up of all producers within the boundaries, rather than particular individuals or specific corporate business entities. Only those wines that the INAO recognises as having clearly defined and provable linkages to the *terroir* in question are protected by the designation. There also must be identifiable and proven boundaries to the area, preferably 'natural' (e.g. all production happens in one valley), but these also can be purely administrative (e.g. all production happens within a particular political territory) (Trubek and Bowen, 2008).

When groups of producers come together to seek recognition of a new AOC, a clear geographical area to be covered and a long-standing history of traditional practices are initial factors that investigating committees assess, but petitioners must bolster claims with scientific data about issues like micro-climate and soil structure (Trubek, 2004). Such committees, and the INAO more generally, are not simply governmental bodies, but are complex configurations of both local-level and national actors, spanning diverse professions (Gade, 2004). In this way, AOC territories are not imposed from top down, but are negotiations between more local and more non-local players. Collectives of producers can request changes to existing AOC regulations, these are usually granted, and local actors are likely to obey the rules as they partly formulated them themselves.

AOC recognition has both more local and more national dimensions. It protects the appellation as the collective property of all the producers *in situ*, as well as recognizing the appellation's role as part of French national cultural, agricultural and gastronomic heritages (Barham, 2003). Recognition also has more global ramifications as regards recognition and recognisability of the area and its wines outside of France, with concomitant effects on prestige and prices. Despite the benefits to some producers, the INAO system also works to keep in check 'too much individuality on the part of a producer', because wines must exhibit 'typicity' of the area, and what that counts as is open to often controversial debate (Gade, 2004: 855) Younger, sometimes more iconoclastic producers therefore today often prefer to avoid what they experience as constraining AOC rules, and to sell their wines under less restrictive nomenclatures.

An AOC appellation and the *terroir* it regulates can be seen as a complicated—and possibly ambiguous—'assemblage' of nature, culture, land, plants, technologies, and practices (Meneley, 2007). Its genesis partly explains its very hybrid nature. The 1935 law that brought the system into existence came about through an alliance of very diverse actors, including agricultural scientists (intent on improving grape varieties and controlling disease), lawyers (interested in the regulation of wine markets), and geographers (interested in the nature and quality of *terroirs*, and restricting wine-making practices supposedly to reflect each *terroir* at its very best). The interests of the most powerful and vocal producers of the time, who had the ears of journalists, overlapped with these various dispositions. A winning alliance was formed that got its (mixed, possibly contradictory) vision enshrined in French law and the State apparatus. The objections of merchants, who disliked *terroir* ideas as they seemed to outlaw the possibility of selling as wines of a region blended wines which used grapes from outside the area, were overcome, in a notable win for those producers who stood to gain majorly by the new rules of the game (Simpson, 2011).

The specific classifications that came about as a result of this particular alliance of players become generalized and autonomized over time. It came to define legitimate wine-making practice, while seeming to most people to be ever more natural and relatively non-controversial, and thereby becoming hegemonic. 'Over the course of many decades, no debate could reach an audience unless it focussed on the search for the best varieties or treatments, the geographic categorizations of *terroirs*, or how these *terroirs* were then recognized in the legal definitions of appellations' (Roger, 2010: 10). The INAO and AOC are often presented as developments purely French in nature and internal to France. Yet various players who passed or approved of the legislation certainly had their eye on the regulations as a way to win in foreign markets. The budget minister of the time (1935) remarked: 'The era when we could sell anything to anybody at any price is over. We must produce quality products to retain the loyalty of our foreign customers', and the way to do that was the official protection of *terroirs* (cited at Whalen (2009: 81)).

Most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be seen as an era of French ideological dominance in international thinking about the legalities and politics of wine, partly because their country was the most economically important in the world wine-wise, and because successive governments were more activist in wine legislation than other nations'

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<sup>7</sup> French politicians and experts had already been effective at imposing their definitions of good wine-making practices in early international agreements about wine, like the Paris Convention of 1883 and the Madrid agreement of 1891. French delegates at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 required all signatory countries not to use the word 'Champagne' in the selling of their own sparkling wine (Peck, 2009).

administrations. French thinking rapidly spread abroad. In 1924 an agreement signed between France, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary, Portugal, and Tunisia very much reflected French framings and concerns. An International Office of Vine and Wine was set up in Paris, dominated by French delegates. French university researchers, closely allied to government and major producers, exported their classification schemas abroad, 'imposing their supremacy beyond national boundaries' (Roger, 2010: 10). But this pre-eminence of French actors, and of typically French ways of conceiving of wine, came under increasingly severe pressure in the 1980s and after (Roger, 2010).

Critics have pointed out flaws and contradictions in the French AOC system, which is animated by *terroir* ideas, showing that it is less pristine than it bills itself as. While it may look like the physical boundary of a region is somehow the cause of the qualities of the wine, the borders of an appellation area could have been set more by economic and political factors than by the environment itself (Mueller and Sumner, 2006). Moreover, 'the attributes of the territory defined by the appellation, especially the physical attributes, are generously and often uncritically advanced as explanation' of quality, when that is open to question (Moran, 1993: 701). Sometimes in AOC assessments of a new *terroir*, the homogeneity of soil or geology in an area is invoked to define *terroir*, but at other times it is the heterogeneity of these that is used as a justification for granting *terroir* status.

One could also argue that the appellation system essentially works to benefit established producers and disadvantage outsiders (Moran, 1993). This involves what we could call the *politics of classification*. The history of winemaking since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is replete with instances of fights over the creation and maintenance of legally recognised boundaries which demarcate different wine-growing regions. Winners in such struggles are those who have been able to maintain boundaries that have suited their interests.

For example, those chateaux in Bordeaux which were awarded top status in the industry classification of quality and price undertaken in 1855, continue to trade off the reputation which that classification system still offers them today (Matthews, 2015; Ulin, 2002, 2004). Other winners include groups of winemakers who have banded together successfully to lobby government to recognise their region as special and distinctive. An early example here is the case of the winemakers of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, who succeed in gaining government recognition of their terrain in the mid-1930s, the classification transforming the region from a relatively obscure one without much prestige, to one which strongly features on the world wine map as a fine wine region (Moran, 1993).

Producers have also come together to prevent changes that upset their interests. As Meloni and Swinnen (2012: 6) put it, 'whenever changes threatened to reduce their rents, established producers have sought to constrain or outright remove the threat of new developments through political means'. Losers in such processes include winemakers whose properties fall outside of the boundaries of prestigious regions, and whose products therefore fail to share in the reflected glory of these regional reputations (Bowen, 2015). It is no surprise that such boundary disputes are often so bitter, when so much is at stake in them, financially, reputationally and culturally.

Over the last forty years, the exporting of that system, as a set of ideas and practices, to other domains has been remarkable, involving processes of **generalizing** wine-specific and France-specific ideas to other products, domains, and national contexts. Within France, there has been a marked movement to grant AOC status to a great array of foodstuffs, like cheese, salt, olive oil, red pepper, honey, and oysters (Parker, 2015). Partly through that means, olive oil has been reconstructed by some producers from being a mere basic ingredient to becoming a rarified and elite product, to be appreciated in similar manners as wine is, including the recognition of distinct *terroirs* (Meneley, 2007).

The European Union's food labelling programme—involving the classifications Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication, and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed—is a trans-national form of protection for 'national' and 'regional' food phenomena which is clearly inspired by the French AOC system. This can be seen in the fact that for achievement of PDO status, links between a product and an area must be firmly established, and it is not enough just to show that the area is specialised in production of a particular delicacy. Instead, a geographical, environmental or other 'local' link is crucial for recognition, and this thinking can be traced back to French *terroir* notions that animate the AOC wine system (Tschofen, 2008).

The European Union is both expression of, and mechanism for the promotion of, certain sorts of globalization, including the standardisation of production practices and consumer rights and expectations across national borders. Hence its adoption of French thinking and classificatory mechanisms involves a notable generalization and imposition of these, which should be remarked upon as much as the fact that the Common Agricultural Policy affects national wine industries. Paradoxically, the EU's protected status scheme is trans-national in nature, while it promotes 'gastronationalism'—the self-conscious presentation and celebration of products taken to be pure expressions of regions and nations (DeSoucey, 2010).

Other national governments and wine worlds have imitated and adapted the French model, with great consequences for winemaking in those countries. The Italian DOC system was started in 1963. It remains controversial, as it has a tendency to forbid innovation in wine-making practices, lacking the more delicate recalibrations of the rules possible under the French system. Indeed, elite producers in Tuscany gained international

recognition from the 1970s onwards for their wines partly through breaking DOC regulations and producing them in new ways more immediately appealing to international audiences (Gade, 2004).

Perhaps a more successful national system is the Spanish DO mechanism, which has been flexible enough to encourage innovation but within the rules it sets (Lukacs, 2013). The US has also developed a weak version of the French system, which denotes geographical boundaries of regions, but does not specify regulations as to what is to be done within them. However, given that the US is sometimes presented as one of the great antagonists of France in the world of wine, even the minor adoption of some French-style thinking about regions is testament to the global spread of the French approach. Moreover, the exporting through imitation of French legal apparatuses of *terroir* ideas to the US, not just to wine but to products like cheese, has driven the development of French-influenced ideas and practices of food production ‘craft’ in the perceived home of industrialised food, the land of McDonald’s and Coca-Cola (Heath and Meneley, 2007).

## THE PARTICULARIZATION, STANDARDIZATION, AND DE-STANDARDIZATION OF WINE

*Terroir* ideas and legal protection of the claimed uniqueness of specific wine regions involve and promote processes of **particularization**. These have developed alongside processes of **standardization**. Developments towards standardization and homogenization of wine production and distribution are not entirely new phenomena: they are to be found to some extent on any context where sizable amounts of wine are made and shipped, as in the case of the Roman empire. But the advent of the new technology of the glass bottle and cork in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE was a major development in the history of standardizing wine (Millon, 2013). By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the standardization of bottle sizes into metric measures significantly rationalised the exporting of wines across the globe.

Wine has not only been techno-scientized, but also has undergone successive waves of **professionalization**, which have promoted modes of standardization. The new breed of globe-trotting wine consultants which appeared in the 1980s and 1990s possessed an ever-expanding palette of overlapping skills, ranging from technical and scientific vineyard and winery knowledges, through to a grasp of economics and global markets, and marketing know-how to help reach crucial customer types (Gwynne, 2008). The highest-flying ones were also rich in social capital, enjoying connections to multiple sorts of power brokers, from the owners of prestigious properties, to influential critics and the organisers of international wine fairs (Pont and Thomas, 2012).

The more wine making was oriented to exports travelling very long geographical distances, as was the case from the 1980s, the less direct connections there were between producers and consumers. The high geographical mobility of the international adviser seemed to be able to bridge such gaps, to allow the wine, suitably modified to be as appealing as possible to certain perceived tastes, to travel to accurately defined consumer groups on the other side of the world (Pont and Thomas, 2012).

The new breed of experts no longer came from Europe alone, but also from areas that had up until the 1970s been regarded as peripheries, but were now understood as prestigious, namely California, Australasia, and South Africa. These experts both expressed and created a condition of what Lagendijk (2004) calls the ‘inter-connected locales’ of the globalized and neo-liberalized wine world. Wine-making information of all sorts increasingly flowed from multiple locations, in both Old and New Worlds, to receiving areas in the New World, and then later on back to ‘under-developed’ parts of the Old World. There was a dispersal of centres of knowledge-making and advice-giving, and of the complexification of information flows across the world. Personnel moved across Old and New Worlds, taking knowledge back and forth and disseminating it through multiple pathways, sometimes fitting in two harvest seasons a year by flitting between hemispheres. Today’s wine personnel will likely hold university qualifications in wine management, from institutions in France, Australia, the US and elsewhere (Chiffolleau and Laporte, 2006). These offer increasingly identical curricula, usually in English—the *lingua franca* of global business—which express convergent assumptions about how wine should be made and marketed (Roger, 2010). This convergence is partly due to academics and practitioners who teach such programmes sharing knowledge and engaging in cross-border pedagogic collaborations (Geraci, 2004). Teachers and pupils operate from increasingly similar scripts, whether they are trained in California, Bordeaux, Stellenbosch, or somewhere else.

This has all contributed towards a radical **de-localization** of wine-making knowledges and practices, as certain scientific knowledges, and wine-making practices based upon them, across the continents. Vineyards and wineries the world over became subject to identical forms of intertwining forms of socio-economic and techno-scientific control (Anderson et al., 2004). Thus centuries-old mysteriousness of the wine making process seemed to have been destroyed by the blinding lights of technological and scientific manipulations.

The kinds of present-day expertise described above were both responses to, and further stimulants towards, processes of standardization. By the 1990s, techniques of growing and making that were standardised across the world included: trellising and irrigation systems; the planting of vines at prescribed distances from each other; more

intensive pruning earlier on in the growing season; delaying of the harvest to maximise ripeness of berries; the use of stainless steel tanks for fermentation (allowing dry wines to be made in warm or even hot climates); precisely managed induced malolactic fermentation and the use of artificial yeasts; and imported French oak barrels for maturation and storage. A side-effect of the latter development was a massive growth in the barrel-making industry (Colman, 2008).

In the 1990s, ‘quality’ in mass market wine was redefined, now equalling ‘predictability, consistency and over-delivery’ (Pont and Thomas, 2012: 643). This way of thinking translated into ever higher levels of measurability and control in both the vineyard and the winery. This can be seen as a specific version of broader ‘McDonaldization’ trends, whereby every part of a production process is engineered to fit tightly defined templates (Ritzer, 2007). This is seen in the changing nature of wine world jobs, with the winemaker moving away from being someone simply making wine to her own personal taste, to becoming a sort of manager making standard products for the perceived consumer tastes that are thought to drive global markets (Pont and Thomas, 2012). This change of course sets up the possibility of rebellion from such prescribed roles, by seeing oneself as a winemaker who makes wines according to personal taste, a position markedly present in the ‘natural’ wine movement (see below).

Standardized viticultural and vinicultural methods helped stimulate the planting of the now-ubiquitous ‘international’ grape varieties, such as cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir, and riesling (Lagendijk, 2004). Grape varieties have always travelled both within and between countries, but the further back in the past this happened, the more slowly the travelling was and the more unremarked. Over long periods of time, grapes travelled to a place, were taken up by wine makers there, and were slowly indigenized and then presented as quintessentially ‘local’ (Huber, 2011). In the pursuit of wines that Developed World consumers would find appealing, wine makers in the 1990s onwards started to plant grape varieties in large numbers in areas never before associated with those types (Huber, 2011). Nowadays, the spread of a grape can seem dizzyingly—and to some observers, worryingly—fast. This is especially so if the new arrivals are planted at the expense of uprooting varieties that have been grown in a region for decades or centuries, these being dug up as they are seen either to make inferior quality wine that cannot be sold to anyone or are thought to lack wider name recognition (Gade, 2004).

The new forms of globalized, standardizing expertise drove quality levels up across established regions, hastening the end of the days of basic *vin de table*. But so too did the levels of homogeneity of taste and character, driven by techno-scientific interventions in the service of perceived consumer demand, such that ‘case one tasted the same as case one million’ (Colman, 2008: 104). Easy-drinking, consumer-friendly wine could now be made almost *anywhere*, regardless of the terrain, so long as certain prescribed practices were followed (Lukacs, 2013). The new breed of New World mass-market wines followed and promoted a standardized taste pattern: low on acids and tannins, soft textures, fruit-driven flavours, and relatively high residual sugars (Colman, 2008).

This was wine made in such huge quantities that exporting it in bottles was logistically challenging. New transportation technologies were developed, such that it was now sent in large shipping containers with 24,000 litre bags inside them (Murray, 2007). Such shipping methods have allowed for the bulk transportation of even the cheapest wines in the world. Indeed, one might say that some of the most standardized wines are precisely those low-quality productions whose equivalents a few generations ago would never have left their originating regions. Cheap Chilean wine sent in bulk to China may end up labelled as ‘Chinese wine’ when it reaches its destination, while red wine sold by a California-based brand may actually come from less prestigious parts of France and Italy (Veseth, 2012).

Wines bound for Developed World shelves were ever more marketed through what was an increasingly globalized system of semiotics on labels. These involve bold colours, easy-to-read text with standardised stories about flavours and the supposed natural endowments of the places of production (even if the wines were really made more in the techno-scientific-driven winery than in the vineyard), and the foregrounding of one of the internationally recognisable grape varieties on the front (Veseth, 2012). Such labelling stood in stark contrast to the arcane and cryptic labels of Old World producers which required higher levels of cultural capital on the behalf of consumers to decipher which grapes may have been used and what the wine tastes like (Peck, 2009).

At the same time as countries like Chile and Australia were becoming massive producers of standardized wine, certain regions within them were being constructed and represented as being worthy of entering lucrative premium wine markets. Certain regions became symbolically associated with specific grape varieties, and the new region/grape symbioses were presented by interested parties as being at least as good as established European areas (Corby, 2010; Sternsdorff, 2013). Hence Argentinian Malbec was energetically promoted as an emblematic grape that flourished so well in certain demarcated terrains in Argentina that it could be mentioned in the same breath as Bordeaux Cabernet Sauvignon or Sangiovese from Chianti. Thus, standardization processes happened simultaneously with, and partly in response to, **de-standardization** dynamics.

Apparently ‘unique’, higher-level wines are apparently non-standardized, and the marketing of them reinforces that perception. But as Robertson (1994: 40) points out, the world of marketing is populated by experts who promote putative uniqueness by using standardised templates recognisable in most, if not all, parts of the world.

So, standardised imagery of chateaux can equally well be used to represent a locality in Bordeaux—the original font of such symbolism—or in China (especially as the Chinese now build simulacra of Bordeaux chateaux to promote indigenous wine-making—Kjellgren (2019)). Globally recognisable imagery of Hispanic bodegas can be used to give a sense of place for Spanish or Californian wine. Universally utilisable scripts about provenance, authenticity and tradition are deployable on bottles from Patagonia and Georgia. These generalised ‘recipes of locality’ (Robertson, 1995: 25-26) are parts of much broader cultural processes whereby ‘variation is systematically produced’ today (Roudometoff, 2015: 9).

High-end wines as much as mass market ones are also made using globally standardized techniques and forms of knowledge, and with standardized ideas about what makes for good wine underpinning them. They are also consumed, especially by professionals and highly interested amateurs, in highly standardized ways too. These include: universal talk, debates and controversies about *terroir*; a ubiquitous ‘shopping list’ of stock words and phrases to describe scents, colours and flavours, a kind of global wine talk (Nossiter, 2009: 103-104); retail display mechanisms that can be found practically anywhere where wine is sold to private customers (the cheapest bottles at the bottom of the racks, the most expensive at the top, the bottles the seller wants consumers to trade-up to located at eye level); styles of glassware, designed by leading companies like Riedel to enhance flavours and scents, aimed both at wine professionals and at more discerning amateurs across all countries; the apparently inevitable presence of certain brands, such as Champagne marques like *Veuve Cliquot*, in putatively ‘upscale’ retail outlets the world over, alongside other generic, branded commodities like ‘designer’ perfumes and sunglasses (Ritzer and Ryan, 2002); and wine professionals the world over framing their products in light of globally-recognisable classifications of quality standards and price levels, such as Rabobank’s nomenclature that divides wines into *Basic*, *Premium*, *Super Premium*, *Ultra Premium*, and *Icon* categories. The apparently non-standard is therefore produced in and through standardization processes, as well as sometimes in self-conscious and deliberate rebellion against perceived standardizing homogenization (Inglis, 2019).

## WINE AND DE-POLITICIZATION, RE-POLITICIZATION, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Most wine marketing is concerned to present as rosy a picture of the place where the wine was made as possible (Beverland and Luxton, 2003). Meanwhile, wine-related tourism has developed significantly since the 1980s. This form of tourism is more oriented to winery-based tourist experiences than was the initial burst of touristification in France in the 1920s, which primarily wanted to lure tourists to a region’s restaurants and hostels but not to the sites of production themselves (Whalen, 2009). Contemporary wine tourism renders the winery as a site of attractive pleasure rather than of mundane labour and techno-scientific manipulation. Architecture plays an important role in conveying a certain sort of palatable image, and this ranges from faked chateaux for the edification of mass market visitors (a notable growth area in China), to iconic architects designing statement buildings, therefore reconfiguring wine regions as supposed cultural hubs for the more apparently discerning ‘creative’ wings of the upper middle classes (Allen, 2011).

Thus, marketing and tourism both tend to present notions of timeless production processes in rural paradises (Meneley, 2007). They each **de-politicize** wine, both in a given region and more generally. They help to create a sense of a coherent regional wine (and food) culture—the idyll that is Burgundy or the Adelaide Hills, for example—even if that is mostly a fabrication which hides local political social tensions, as well as the possible presence of exploited minority ethnic labour and of globalized capitalist agribusiness (Crenn, 2003; Peace, 2006).

Conversely, wine has become increasingly **re-politicized** over the last two decades. Much of what we have reviewed so far can be understood as the multiple processes that have made up the ‘globalization’ of wine. The phrase ‘globalization’ itself has become a key term in the globalized wine field. In the early 2000s it became a very hotly debated term. In 2004 the American filmmaker and ex-wine professional Jonathan Nossiter made the controversial documentary film *Mondovino*. In it he set out a case against what he and other radical critics defined as the negative consequences of globalization on winemaking.

Nossiter’s (2009: 90), target is ‘the barbarism of the new globalization’. On this account, ‘almost three quarters of the wines [made] in ... the winemaking regions of the world, are produced with total or near-total cynicism by industrial hawkers, false artisans, or misanthropic (or feud-ridden) family estates’ (Nossiter, 2009: 55). Mass-market branded wines made through techno-scientific manipulation for the ‘new consumer’ destroy the economic basis of *terroir* production, and without *terroir*-oriented winemaking ‘there is no individuality, no dignity, no tolerance, and no shared civilization’ (Nossiter, 2009: 11).

Although *Mondovino* is putatively about the globalized wine world as a whole, its primary focus is really on France and the presence of ‘foreign’ influences within it. The French focus takes the film in a very definite direction, reflecting the controversies in that country about ‘mondialisation’ more broadly defined, a term which in French has a mostly negative connotation. Mondialisation is seen by both the French political left and right as perniciously striking at the very heart of France, namely its traditional, *terroir*-based agriculture, and the foodstuffs and cuisine

which derive from it. In this vocabulary, the term *terroir* becomes the antonym of unceasing and rootless globalization, and a rallying cry against it (Waters, 2010). The winemaker, like the peasant more broadly, stands as either a tragic or heroic figure, depending on how successful they are in combatting the destructive forces of globalized markets and predatory foreign capital, of which American money is the most distrusted (Demossier, 2010).

As Heller (2007) shows, French views about threats to *terroir* winemaking regard the processes that constitute the threats as anti-cultural as well as anti-natural. For a long time, French thinking has worked with a definition of Nature that sees it as strongly socialized. What is under threat from globalization forces is not just a physical place but the long cultural and agricultural traditions that are said to have been characteristic of that place over long periods. Thus, what is seen as ‘bad’ food, like Big Macs, is anti-cultural more than simply unhealthy, because it undermines the possibility of making ‘good’ food in traditional ways. Genetically Modified food products and vines are both un-natural and un-cultural, because they go against what is taken to be long-standing ‘French Nature’. In Anglo-Saxon terms that is an apparent oxymoron—how can something be both cultural (French) and natural at the same time? But French thinking in general, and *terroir* thinking in particular, see no such contradiction. Fears of the end of *terroir* involve worries about the destruction of the French countryside, rendering it into a series of empty, placeless zones, populated by massive industrial food monocultures and ersatz entertainment sites for tourists. In the leftist version of this discourse, popularised by the farmer-activist José Bové who has become a global media star of the anti-globalization movement, the defence of *terroir* is not politically reactionary. Instead, small-scale and artisanal production rooted in place, standing in opposition to mass-market factory production that could be made anywhere, is defined as cosmopolitan rather than parochial (Bodnar, 2003; Trubek, 2006; Waters, 2010).

Nossiter’s story about winemaking in southern France is framed in terms of local heroes, foreign villains, and local sell-outs. Academic critics have pointed out its simplifications and possible mythmaking (Lukacs, 2013; Trubek, 2004). Demossier (2010) contrasts this with the actual complexity of the Langudoc region. It is today made up of many diverse actors, spanning local and foreign investors, some of whom are smaller producers who embrace varietal-based and brand marketing, and want to ‘go global’. The region is a more complicated and ambiguous terrain than the bucolic one that *Mondovino* portrays.

*Mondovino* was never just a representation of wine globalization, it was a polemical intervention into the globalized wine field itself. The controversies that *Mondovino* both crystallized and provoked have had multiple effects on the wine field, helping to structure how debates in it have been subsequently framed. *Mondovino* is simultaneously a representation of what it defines as ‘globalization’, a striking intervention in wine field controversies, and a structuring agent generative of further controversies and framings of them (Barthel-Bouchier and Clough, 2005; Trubek, 2006). Widely viewed by wine professionals across different countries, it has helped set the terms of ongoing debates in the field about what wine globalization involves, and what its effects are. It has both been adulated and bitterly denounced. Precisely because *Mondovino* and Nossiter’s other works, as well as works by others inspired by the film, have been widely shown in universities and training programmes to students who will be the wine world professionals as well as wine drinkers of the future, one can say that their effects on the next rounds of discursive struggles in the wine field will continue for some time yet.

Further re-politicization processes are at work today in terms of highlighting abuses of workforces in some national industries, most notably in South Africa (Moseley, 2008). South African labour conditions have recently become a matter of concern for filmmakers, journalists and concerned industry buyers, including those from the Nordic state alcohol monopolies, which may have ethical purchasing as part of their official remits. Whether Fairtrade wine initiatives—an attempted **ethicization** or **(re-)moralization** of winemaking conditions—benefit black employees or not has recently become a contentious public issue (Herman, 2019).

Such controversies point towards vexed issues of **democratization** of wine, both in terms of who makes it and who drinks it. The further back in time one goes, into the first few millennia of winemaking, the more wine is a prestige drink, financially accessible only by elites, and sometimes only to be drunk by those with sufficient social status or endowed with enough spiritual authority (McGovern 2003, Dietler, 2006).

The more wine is made and the more ease of access to it through expanding trade, markets and shipping, the more wine could become part of the lives of social strata existing beneath elites. Thus in 18<sup>th</sup> century England and Scotland, drinking certain kinds of wine—Bordeaux or Port—was a marker of middle-class national identity (Ludington, 2013), an instance of wine being an important part of **national identification** processes.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century high-level wine appreciation was a reserve of the upper and upper middle classes in those and other Western countries, with all the attendant forms of snobbery and social **exclusivization** processes one might expect when a product is widely understood to be requiring large amounts of economic and cultural capital for a person to participate in the appreciation of it. So-called ‘fine’ wine was by and large the preserve of higher class and older men, the supposed repositories of authoritative knowledge, in wine

as in everything else. Recurring processes of **en-gendering** and **patriarchization** of wine throughout the centuries is taken up by Almila (2019, 2021).

But by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, one could note a certain level of democratization of participation in wine matters. In some contexts, notably the UK and Ireland, this was partly driven by wine becoming a standardised commodity to be found not in specialist, and potentially culturally intimidating, wine shops, but in that most accessible of consumer locales, the supermarket (Gwynne, 2008). In this respect, we may talk of the development of a consumerist **cosmopolitization** of tastes for and in wine, as more and more people have been exposed to wines of differing styles from differing countries (although this heterogenizing trend goes together with the processes of standardization of production alluded to elsewhere in this paper). In some wine-producing countries, notably New Zealand and Australia, wine had moved since the 1970s from a more marginal position in the national drinking culture to occupying a central one. This shift was bound up with lower-middle and working-class people understanding that wine from their countries had become **legitimized** abroad, was winning international prizes, and was therefore a source of national pride, and something one could take an interest in without fear of being labelled a snob (Howland, 2013).

Yet in all such cases, it was primarily the white ethnic majorities in those countries that were undergoing and expressing (partially) democratized orientations towards wine, and not those in ethnic minorities. Notwithstanding the recent appearance of Chinese and other East Asians into the global wine arena (Ho, 2019, 2021; Kjellgren, 2019), still the marked cultural ‘whiteness’ (Ahmed, 2007) of much wine marketing and tourism imagery is mirrored in participation at wine events around the Developed World, where non-whites are usually very much in the minority (Inglis and Ho, 2022). The un-democratic nature of racialised and ethnically unbalanced wine phenomena has recently been challenged as part of the recent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. US-resident, Filipino-ancestry wine professional Miguel de Leon (2020) echoes the views of many other ethnic minority wine professionals who are calling for wine’s re-politicization on the grounds of challenging ethnic inequalities, when he calls for wine’s **de-colonization**:

Traditional wine tasting grids and wheels are biased to Eurocentric flavours, and crucial wine vocabularies can centre on foods completely foreign to ... [the typically] Asian [p]alate... Wine is rooted in Europe and its white adjacencies, themselves products of colonial and imperialist histories. From Chile to California, we feel the impact of how winemaking was affected by the conscious, hegemonic spread of Christianity ... The wine world does not take into account current experiences of its BIPOC [*Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour*] and LGBTQ+ members. It is steeped in a language that is coded and arcane, tied up with legal jargon and French techniques that only the privileged, monied [primarily white] few are able to decipher (De Leon, 2020: n.p.).

Initiatives both to politicize and de-colonize the wine world are growing. There is a burgeoning online presence of groups supporting BIPOC people interested in wine as both professionals and connoisseurs, especially in the US and South Africa (Beckett, 2020). The exclusion of non-whites from higher-level wine industry positions has already for some years been tackled by South African initiatives to involve more black people in professional roles, such as sommeliers (Govender-Ypma, nd). These initiatives intersect with attempts, both individual and collective, by female wine professionals and engaged amateurs to challenge long-standing male dominance within wine’s industries and symbolic regimes of judgment, enacting **de-patriarchization** processes as they do so (Almila, 2019, 2021).

Such challenges to long-standing white and male forms of dominance point to further democratization of wine, at least in potential. But other processes work in the opposite direction. One is the **financialization** of wine, where rich investors (including Chinese billionaires and Russian oligarchs) buy old, rare bottles, or new vintages of prestige properties, at very high prices, and are deploying such wine as investments that can accrue far greater value over time than do other comparable assets (Overton and Banks, 2015). This is a process which has become turbo-charged since the 1980s. It has the effect of taking not just particular wineries but sometimes whole regions, notably some in Bordeaux and to some extent Tuscany, out of the normal affordability capacities of ordinary consumers (Ho, 2019). Thus, as mass and mid-market wine has been democratized to some extent, that defined as ‘fine wine’ has been de-democratized at the same time. In the 1960s, a bottle of highly rated Bordeaux was under the symbolic mastery of old, white men, but still within the buying power of other sorts of persons. Today, the equivalent bottle is theoretically open to all at the symbolic level, but in brute economic terms, it is pragmatically only accessible to the (very) rich, of whichever national and ethnic background they may be (but they are still highly likely to be male).

Another trend which is at least partly de-democratizing in effects, if not in intent, is what could be called **hipsterization**. Highly fashionable and fashion-conscious connoisseurs, operating as either new-wave professionals or passionate amateurs, and concentrated particularly in fashion-centric megalopolises like London, Berlin, and New York, take great pleasure in constantly discovering obscure grape varieties made in ways that are represented as being traditionally associated with them (Lukacs, 2013). They also are very much interested in

'natural' wines (see below). They have particular orientations towards hyper-specificity in terms of places of origin (Smith Maguire, 2018). Such connoisseurs have a tendency to look down upon and disparage the taste preferences of both old-fashioned 'snobs' and 'ordinary' drinkers of mainstream, mass market wines. In so doing, they enact a certain kind of de-democratisation, raising new forms of symbolic boundary and cultural exclusiveness. This is compounded by the predominance of white males in hipsterized wine milieux, reinforcing gendered and ethnic forms of exclusion (Kramer, 2013)

## WINE, CLIMATE CRISIS, AND 'RE-NATURALIZATION'

Wine is ambivalently situated between human and non-human worlds, as well as being a hybrid that traverses and engages both of them. As human-induced climate change has come to impact on every aspect of human life, wine also undergoes a series of transformations.

Climate change is already having major effects on wine production, and it will likely have even more impact in the near future. For example, temperatures in Western Europe in the grape growing season rose on average by 3 degrees Fahrenheit from the mid-1980s to the 2010s. This is having major consequences for many aspects of winemaking, from choosing which varieties to grow in warmer conditions, to harvests happening earlier, and weather conditions becoming more erratic (Lukacs, 2013).

This means a consequent series of losses of human control over the wine-making process, the very objective that techno-science has been aiming at for centuries. This amounts to various enforced **de-rationalizations** of wine, and concomitant attempts by human actors to deal with them. Changes in climate also are affecting *terroir*, which ultimately is a form of thinking and wine-making practice that strongly associates particular vines, grapes, and wine-making methods with particular physical territories. As Pincus (2003: 87) argues, climate change, 'the fruit of the Industrial Revolution and continued population growth, is beginning to make decades of wine-making expertise irrelevant. In an increasingly warm world, the particular associations between wine and place will be difficult or impossible to maintain.'

Which types of wine have been made in particular locations, and how they have been made, has never been a matter simply of traditions stretching back to time immemorial. There has always been change, even if it was not thought much about or highlighted by those engaged in it. Yet the difference between the current period and earlier ones is the *rate* of change. In regions where there is a long history of winemaking, the totality of physical and natural endowments coupled together with human labour that has been given the name *terroir*, was born out of relatively slow adaptations of humans and vines to the environment around them, sometimes built up over centuries. The rate of adaptation sped up in some places from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and then almost everywhere after WWII, as increasingly globalized markets upped the tempo for how winemakers, in adapting to new markets, adapt their practices as to how grapes are grown and how wine is made (Unwin, 1991). The increased speed of change throughout the later 20<sup>th</sup> century was primarily economically-driven—that is, it was created by mostly human factors alone. But what makes the current period distinctive is that those factors are combined together with climate change, that itself is the unintentional creation of human agency (McKibben, 2006).

That combination, of human practices together with a thoroughly human-impacted 'nature', is rapidly accelerating the pace of change in the wine world today, in historically unprecedented ways. If *terroir* was made possible by relatively slow human and plant adaptation to a relatively unchanging environment, then in a period when human life is subject to faster changes than ever before, and when the environment is changing in rapid ways that our ancestors could never have anticipated, then it is no wonder that *terroir* is being unsettled in multiple manners today. As climate changes, it becomes possible to make richer, lusher wines almost everywhere where wine is made, even in classically 'cold climate' regions like Germany. By the same token, it is becoming too warm in some regions for some grapes and wine styles that require cooler climate conditions. In such areas, like Austria and Alsace, this will in future likely stimulate further moves to produce red grapes in locations that for centuries have only been able to support white varieties. This is a potentially radical disruption of what producers and consumers think of as the *terroir* of those regions. Such dynamics may speed up and radicalise trends to identify wines by grape variety rather than by geographic origin, at least for mass-market wines (Hannah et al., 2013).

Simultaneously, areas that were previously regarded as too cool for grape cultivation at all are being opened-up to wine making, such as the Netherlands and Denmark (Perkins, 2004). The spectacular and rapid rise to prominence of English sparkling wine over the last 15 years has been made possible by rising temperatures in the south of England, creating climatic conditions similar to Champagne (Field, 2008: 14). This marks a return to the southern part of England of widespread grape vines, which flourished throughout the Middle Ages until the mini-Ice Age of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries destroyed most English production. Even cold, damp Wales can now produce interesting white table wines. As investors define climate change as both risk and opportunity, new patterns of ownership emerge, as in the case of large Champagne producers investing in England in the hopes of having a ready supply of sparkling wine for global markets should production in the home region falter due to environmental

changes (Millon, 2013). English producers have adopted the universal terminology of *terroir* to describe the environment around them, and what they do to it and within it. This suggests that as growing areas change, *terroir* discourse will continue to be the way that producers, at least of higher-end wines, both make sense of what they are doing, and how they sell their wines on global markets. Climate change may indeed stimulate a proliferation of *terroir* ideas and practices—an extension of **terroirization** processes—rather than destroy them.

In terms of environmental degradation, as Hannickel (2013) points out, a lot of contemporary winemaking is just like other forms of industrialized agriculture. It involves such questionable practices as mono-cropping (which radically reduces biological diversity in the surrounding area), and the use of chemical pesticides, while the deployment of methyl bromide to sterilize soils prior to planting grapes contributes to the depletion of the ozone layer. As supplies of water become less available in many parts of the world, so too do fewer areas become available for the planting of new vines. Vines are thirsty plants. For existing vineyards, water shortages are likely to become a more chronic problem, given that in already dry areas they rely on extensive irrigation, misting, and sprinkling systems. Moreover, vineyards in higher areas can despoil delicate higher altitude eco-systems (Hannah et al., 2013).

In such an increasingly fraught global environmental situation, it is not surprising that both producers and consumers, in line with broader trends in food consumption among wealthier groups in the Developed World, have turned ever more over the last decade to wines that are apparently more environmentally sound and ethically virtuous. This has involved the rise of organically farmed wines (which may or may not end up in fully ‘organic’ wines), and of biodynamic vineyard management, which promotes biodiversity among the vines (e.g., the presence of cows to produce fertiliser, and the presence of insect-eating animals to reduce pest populations). Going beyond organic practices to embrace mystical ideas, first formulated by seers such as Rudolf Steiner, of the vines needing to be in alignment with lunar and astral movements, biodynamic grape farming challenges the idea of the vineyard as a self-enclosed plot of land, it sees it rather as intrinsically connected to the wider planet and cosmos. This could be construed of as a partial **re-mysticization** of wine. Despite the mystical elements, biodynamic winemaking still involves the use of soil science and careful research as to how elements in the total environment affect all the others (Lukacs, 2013).

We saw above that wine has undergone certain de-sacralizing and disenchanting processes over the last several centuries. Yet one might argue that thinking about wine more generally today, widespread among both producers and consumers, has certain ‘magical’ features (Picard et al., 2018). The dialectical interplay between techno-science’s rationalizing of production methods and outcomes, together with hyper-rationalized marketing regimes, on the one side, and the deployment of magical thinking in both these domains and also among consumers, on the other, is a fascinating area for further sociological investigation.

Recent years have also seen the rise of so-called ‘natural’ wines (Black, 2013; Rothbaum, 2006). These wines are presented as being made in as non-interventionist way as possible, rejecting the techno-scientific trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in favour of something apparently more at one with nature—an instance of (apparent, claimed) **re-naturalization**. Wild yeasts from the vineyard, claimed to be as much part of the *terroir* as the grapes and vines, are used rather than the artificial ones, which industrialized winemaking deploys in the winery. Fermentation begins spontaneously, which may create very different wines each year, making vintages more distinctive, which is the opposite of the year-on-year consistency demanded by heavily techno-scientific winemaking. Sulphur is used sparingly or not at all, although this increases the risk of spoilage. The wine liquid may be moved by gravity rather than by artificial means like pumps. The use of enzymes, filtering, and micro-filtration is avoided, creating wines that are often cloudy and full of sediment. These are taken to be ‘natural’ expressions of the ‘real’ wine of the *terroir*. These are wines that their advocates say are ‘laughing at modernity’ (Rosenthal, 2009: 202). As Goldberg (2013: n.p.) notes:

Natural wine ... appears to most of us as politically progressive, environmentally friendly, and seemingly more authentic than mass-produced, industrial brands. Among its great advantages is its alleged proximity to *terroir*. By consuming natural wine, we believe ... that we are circumventing the intrusive hand of man and drinking directly from the Earth, revelling in its unfiltered riches.

Despite the strong emphasis on the hyper-locality of natural wines, they still must be sold in globalized markets, creating the need for ever more emphasis being put on place-based ‘authenticity’ (Inglis, 2015). The selling of them stresses that very hyper-locality and radicalises long-standing *terroir*-based marketing that presents the winemaker as mere steward of the land, letting the natural endowments of the place come through with minimal actions on her part (Beverland and Luxton, 2005).

Natural winemakers for the most part genuinely believe that they are letting *terroir* ‘speak for itself’ in ways that more interventionist methods prevent. But this has created a tension between ‘naturalists’ and those wine-makers who believe that *terroir* can only really be expressed if certain interventions are deployed. The latter may well complain of the ‘excessively conventional taste typical of sulphite-free wines’ (Teil, 2012: 483). As one French winemaker explained to Teil (2012: 483), natural wines ‘lack identity ... you don’t know if you’re drinking a cabernet,

a syrah, a merlot'. Paradoxically, for their critics, natural wines betray *terroir*, as without intervention by humans, they all tend to taste the same, wherever they happen to come from—a perverse and unintended form of homogenization of taste. At a more institutional level, in the French case, AOC panels can refuse to certify as typical of a *terroir* some natural wines because of their alleged 'non-typicality', even if formally they comply with the letter of the AOC rules. Such dynamics have heightened disputes over what 'typicity' in a *terroir* actually means (Demossier, 2010).

Such disputes have stimulated more producers, especially younger, new-wave ones, to rebel against established classification rules, and to sell wines under generic regional classifications rather than *terroir* ones. In southern Europe, many of these newer producers are university-educated young professionals who have 'returned to the land', disillusioned with careers in global capitalism, or unable to find graduate-level employment after the economic crash of 2007/8. Such hip and knowing winemakers often have internet-based marketing savvy, in addition to various other forms of cultural capital, and can sell their apparently virtuous and pre-modern wines to the equally hip, hyper-modern young in major cities who are devoted to ceaseless changes in fashions and fads. Natural and biodynamic wines are being sold through the ambiguous means of a kind of anti-brand branding, involving apparently **de-commoditized** selling of what are still essentially commodities in a market (Rothbaum, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has set out a series of processes which future exercises in the sociology of wine can utilize and build upon further. Because this is an initial mapping exercise, inevitably the depiction of such processes remains abstract and lacking in empirical fleshing-out. Still, a focus on such processes can bring to the foreground varied things that otherwise might not be so clearly discernible.

Matters that can thereby become clearer include the following: multiple forms of ambivalence, created in part when various different processes interact, clash, or engender each other; the often ironic outcomes and unintended consequences of wine-related action and interaction, both between human actors, and between humans and non-humans of various sorts; and the continuing power and presence of longer-term trends, some of them lasting for centuries or even millennia, in present-day workings of wine.

The processes indicated here—and others I have intentionally or unintentionally omitted to mention—can now be developed using specific forms of existing sociological vocabulary, while the confrontation of wine phenomena with established bodies of theory may inspire scholars to modify some existing analytical orientations and empirical claims made within and by certain theoretical paradigms. Much could be made of the sociologies of figures such as Norbert Elias and S.N. Eisenstadt, for the purposes of tracing out very long-term trends, and Bourdieu and later practice theories, for the purposes of understanding modes of agency, domination, resistance, and struggles within variant types of wine-related milieux. Types of theorization attuned to matters of gender and ethnicity, as well as class and other forms of inequality, will be crucial in further developing a critical sociology of wine that operates beyond description and is unafraid to bring certain normative evaluations to bear on what it is observing. Any critical sociology of wine will have to come to terms with criticisms of such ways of thinking and researching offered by post-critical modes of conceptualisation, notably Actor Network Theory.

In all of this, what is important is that the sociology of wine be not just deeply historical, but profoundly theoretical too. The core of sociology is not its various methodologies, for any particular method can be carried out by various disciplines; it is the conjunction of sociological theorisations with methods of data collection that render any approach to any matters, including wine issues, sociological as such. There is currently very little sociological theorising about, and inspired by, wine. That stands in stark contrast to the small but vibrant and growing scholarly field of the philosophy of wine, which uses philosophical models to enlighten and enliven discussion of wine phenomena, while deploying the latter to compel proponents of a given philosophical position to justify or rework their views on various matters that wine implies (Allhoff, 2009; Smith, 2009). If philosophers can use wine as both object of analysis and as resource for rethinking some of their own suppositions, there is no reason why sociologists cannot now do the same. As the old saying goes, *in vino veritas*, and it is apropos of wine that sociology can discern new truths, as well as re-examining some of its own afresh. At that point, the sociological study of wine might become as intelligent as wine itself—a point gestured to by Pablo Neruda in the opening of this current contribution to the sociologizing of wine and the wining of sociology.

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## Towards a Sociology from Wine and *Vina Aperta*

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### ABSTRACT

In considering the wisdom of pursuing the development of a sociology of wine, I outline several dangers associated with sub-disciplinary specialization, including overlapping risks of silo-ization, sequestration, and scope and process reduction. In particular, I discuss the attendant risk of thinking of wine as *vinum clausum*, that is, as a closed and static object. In contrast, I outline an open, processual approach to wine as *vina aperta*, and consider three, interrelated features of conceptualizing wine as processual, interconnected, and constituted through interdependence between humans and the physical world, others, and themselves. Drawing on a number of process-oriented sociologists, and a range of existing sociological research on wine and related topics, I advocate for a sociology *from* wine, that is, for wine as an invaluable point of departure for a historically- and processually-oriented sociology.

**Keywords:** consumption, cultural production, interdependence, process, wine

### INTRODUCTION

There is a vibrant body of sociological and sociology-adjacent research with wine as its focus. Nevertheless, there is no ‘sociology of wine’ *per se*: a state of affairs that the Special Issue seeks to disrupt. Yet, to my mind at least, the nature of that disruption is far from clear. *Should* we have a sociology of wine?

As a response, I outline a number of reasons to resist the seemingly inexorable push and pull towards a separate sub-field. Well-charted pitfalls of sub-disciplinary specialization offer a cautionary tale as to the risks that are likely to pertain to a sociology of wine, to the detriment of both sociology and sociological knowledge of wine. I am especially concerned with the risk of “process reduction” (Elias, 1970: 112). Drawing from several process-oriented sociologists (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Elias, 1970; Latour, 2004), I set out two, contrasting approaches to thinking about and researching wine. On the one hand, we can think of wine as *vinum clausum*: a closed, static object, the production and consumption of which are treated as finite events that are calculable and predictable, and specific to a discrete set of actors and factors. This approach may not be typical of sociological analyses on wine (as opposed to much work in the marketing and consumer behaviour domains), but there is nevertheless cause for concern given the implications of specialization, and the nascent sub-field’s recurrent narrowness of scope in focusing on ‘spectacular’ forms of wine, which risks several blind spots. On the other hand, we can regard wine as *vina aperta*<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> An explanatory note for the curious, regarding the formulation of *vinum clausum* and *vina aperta*: Latin adjectives must agree with the noun in terms of number, case and gender. The noun for man/men – *homo/homines* – is masculine, whereas the noun for wine/wines – *vinum/vina* – is neuter. The adjectives of closed/open therefore vary accordingly: *homo clausus* (singular, nominative, masculine); *vinum clausum* (singular, nominative, neuter); *homines aperti* (plural, nominative, masculine); *vina aperta* (plural, nominative, neuter). I am indebted to classics scholar Ruaidhrí Maguire for the instruction in Latin conjugation.

a multifarious, multifaceted, processual ‘thing’ that is constituted through intended and unintended outcomes of humans’ interdependent relations with the world, others, and themselves. In outlining this latter approach, I revisit examples of sociological research on wine (my own and others’), linking to such themes as taste and tasting, the construction of heritage and place, consecration and qualification, and the nature/culture nexus. Rather than simply cautioning against a sociology of wine, I advocate for a sociology *from* wine, and attempt to demonstrate some of the ways in which wine is ‘good to think with.’ Thus, following Callois’s (1958) incitement to derive a sociology from play and games, I suggest that we might consider wine—specifically, *vina aperta*—as an invaluable lens through which to grasp some (I would not suggest all!) dynamics of social worlds, and to develop a more historically- and processually-oriented sociology.

## THE RISKS OF SPECIALIZATION

The institutionalization of a specialist sub-field is a substantial task. It requires a significant and widespread (if not necessarily collaborative) investment of time, service, passion, and graft. Yet, the political economic conditions of academia, and the long-term development of disciplinary knowledge, generate clear pressures towards specialization. Investing in the institutionalization of a sub-field may be a necessary or advisable undertaking in the entrepreneurial milieu of higher education, in which Universities of Excellence (Fish, 2005) compete for visibility, kudos, and cash (e.g., in the form of students or grants). Such an investment may also be an understandable—if not inevitable—defensive response to challenges posed by sociology’s ever-expanding body of knowledge, the individual mastery of which becomes increasingly difficult, thus pushing practitioners towards specialization (Goudsblom, 1977). Sociologists—of gender, family, religion, law, art, leisure, sport, and so on—thus build up and hive off sub-disciplinary domains, with specialist textbooks, courses, degree programmes, departments, conference themes and conferences, journals and special issues, anthologies and book series, research networks, professional bodies, PhDs, and faculty posts.

From the preceding list of milestones, it appears that the materialization of a sociology of wine is already underway, if only as a thread within a multi-disciplinary ‘social sciences of wine.’ An increasing<sup>2</sup> number of wine-specific contributions are being cast into the communal sociological pot, and/or cluster within a range of sub-disciplinary areas including sociology of culture, economic sociology, science and technology studies, organisation studies, food studies, alcohol studies, rural studies, tourism studies, and so on. And, various binding agents—such as edited collections (e.g., Charters et al., 2022; Inglis and Almira, 2020), textbooks (e.g., Morgan and Tresidder, 2016) and the present Special Issue—contribute to the gelling of a specialist area, generating momentum, visibility and legitimacy for wine as a sociological research focus. So far, so good.

The institutionalization of a sociology of wine (alone, or as part of a social sciences of wine) is nevertheless not without risk. By way of a cautionary tale, consider Bourdieu’s (1990: 156) characterization of the sociology of sport, which finds itself

doubly dominated, both in the universe of sociologists and in the universe of sport. ... [T]he sociology of sport... is disdained by sociologists, and despised by sportspeople. ... One thus has, on the one side, people who know sport very well in the practical sense but can’t talk about it and, on the other, people who don’t know sport at all well on the practical level and who could talk about it but disdain to do so, or do so badly...

Is such ignominy likely to befall sociologists of wine? Anecdotally (having had a foot in both camps; e.g., Smith Maguire, 2008), I would say it is unlikely. On the one side, I have found that wine producers and intermediaries are well versed in treating wine (in the glass, on the page, as practices of making and drinking) as an object of analysis, and often welcome a chance to reflect on their craft through a new lens. On the other, sociologists’ private, public, and professional lives are often well-lubricated by wine, making them comfortable, if not downright eager, to talk about wine (once the required ‘I’m no expert/snob/connoisseur!’ caveat has been proffered). More to Bourdieu’s (1990) point, wine’s heritage and cultural cachet tend to spare it—and its sociological interlocutors—the dismissiveness levelled at ‘less serious’ aspects of leisure (Maguire, 2011). (That said, I have received enough jokey asides and impromptu offers of research assistance to nevertheless detect a whiff of suspicion as to the seriousness of wine as an academic focus.)

More generally, critiques of sociology’s fragmentation highlight genuine dangers that attend the institutionalization of a sub-discipline, including interrelated issues of silo-ization, sequestration, and scope reduction. In terms of the risk of silo-ization: the specialist sub-field can become an increasingly isolated “fortress,”

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<sup>2</sup> As one (imperfect) indication: a search of Sociological Abstracts, May 2021, using search parameters of ‘wine’ in the abstract, and ‘sociology’ appearing anywhere in the record, shows a steady increase in peer reviewed outputs per decade, e.g., from the 1980s (25 records) to the 2010s (113 records).

with drawbridges raised and increasingly inaccessible (if not outright inhospitable) to non-specialists (Elias, 1970: 50). In turn, the potential for a sub-discipline's knowledge (theories, concepts, methods, findings, provocations) to impact on and contribute to sociology as a whole is curtailed. The sub-discipline neither feeds into nor feeds from the wider sociological enterprise.

Silo-ization stems, in part, from a turning inward. Within the sub-discipline, there is a risk of stagnation and decline in the production of reality-congruent knowledge (Elias, 1998) as inhabitants regard "whatever lies beyond their immediate problem area as they have learnt to define it" (Goudsblom, 1977: 3) as external and irrelevant (thus linking to the risk, addressed below, of scope reduction). At the same time, there is a turning away of (and by) those outside the sub-discipline, which entails the "threat of sequestration" (Inglis, 2014: 109). Contained within its own territory, defined and defended through distinct journals, departments, and conferences (if not also specialist concepts, theories, and jargon), the sub-discipline becomes readily pigeonholed and/or ignored by others. That side-lining may be wilful—e.g., by intellectual competitors vying for the same terrain—or inadvertent, thanks to the discipline's ongoing fragmentation and silo-ization. This leads to a profusion of reinvented wheels, and simultaneous yet disconnected insights, at the expense of significant and cumulative advances in understanding.

Both turning inward and turning away raise the further risk of scope reduction, limiting the sub-discipline's critical capacity. This may involve a narrowing of temporal scope—a form of myopia, if not outright historical ignorance, that misrecognizes (and misunderstands) the 'now' as 'new' (Inglis, 2014). Scope reduction is also evident in the generation and definition of problems, as when a sub-discipline becomes increasingly subservient to the here-and-now needs of the state, the market, and so on (Maguire, 2011). Scope reduction may also mean conceptual stasis and processual blindness. Inhabitants come to treat the fortress (e.g., sport, wine) as if it is a "universe closed in on itself" (Bourdieu, 1990: 159), thereby depriving them "of the means of accounting for the multiplicity of forces at play within their own field of investigation" (Goudsblom, 1977: 123).

This problem of "process reduction" (Elias, 1970: 112) is not exclusively a symptom of specialization; more generally, sociologists compound the usual (but not universal) human habit of rendering processes in the form of static concepts, and thereby forgetting their contingent and emergent character. To illustrate the point, Elias (1970: 119, *passim*) discusses "*homo clausus*" as the typical way in which sociologists (and everyday folk) speak and think about humans. The idea of an individual as a closed box, separate from society, and complete (that is, unchanging) is a myth that ignores humans' ineluctable interdependence on and with others. In this myth, interdependence and change are segregated to childhood; if they are acknowledged for the adult, they are typically compartmentalized (e.g., as a corollary of the division of labour, or an outcome of strenuous self-improvement). Yet, the adult is no less dependent than the child on relationships with others through which to acquire, enact, and realise those qualities that make them human (Elias, 1970: 113). Furthermore, change is endemic to life in its entirety, human and otherwise, even if it is a condition perhaps more readily detected in the earliest and latest stages of life, and even more difficult to detect if the timespan is that not of a lifespan but of societal development or species evolution (Goudsblom, 1977: 133). Thus, what are in actuality processes (individuals, societies, *things*) are habitually misrecognized, in everyday language and in sociological terminology, as static, unchanging *objects* (Latour, 2004).

What do these dangers of specialization look like for a sociology of wine, albeit *avant la lettre*? Silo-ization and sequestration may presently seem unlikely outcomes, by virtue of a community too small, with too few own platforms, to be an insular fortress. In addition, sociologists who study wine come from a diversity of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary positions, ensuring that parameters drawn around the focus of study remain generous and porous (for now). Even so, the risk is not nil. The sociology of wine always has the potential to be (or become) inhospitable to newcomers and outsiders, given that fluency in wine field terminology, knowledge, and rituals is typically bound up with forms of cultural capital associated with processes of distinction, stratification, and social closure (Bourdieu, 1979).

I would suggest that reductions of scope and process are more pronounced hazards, in the form of what we might call, following Elias, *vinum clausum* thinking about wine. A *vinum clausum* approach already holds sway in much marketing and consumer behaviour research on wine, in which wine is treated as a self-contained object, the choice of which is a rational, planned outcome determined by independent drivers such as price, country of origin, labels and logos, and pre-existing attitudes and intentions. Such knowledge *may* help model and predict purchase outcomes in very circumscribed ways, but does little to illuminate what wine means and what it does within its social relations of use. For example, research on organic wine purchasing intentions and behaviours may segment Canadian (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2015), German (Schäufele et al., 2018), Chinese (Lu et al., 2019) or Floridian (Bonn et al., 2016) consumers to identify the degree to which favourable attitudes, purchase intentions, and willingness to pay a premium are explained by level of wine involvement, health or sustainability consciousness, price sensitivity, and so forth. Yet, such research tells us little about how the same consumers choose, understand, drink, and evaluate organic wine 'in the wild' of their everyday lives (e.g., dinner parties, winery visits, selecting or receiving wine as gifts): situations in which such drivers may play very different roles (or no role at all). A *vinum clausum*

perspective is ill-suited to accounting for how the same wine may be chosen for different reasons by different people, or may be valued differently by the same people over time and in different contexts.

Lest I be too quick to point an accusatory finger elsewhere, let me also note the tendency in sociological research to focus on ‘spectacular’ versions of wine (e.g., premium-priced, critically-acclaimed, low yield, artisanal, biodynamic, natural). Explicitly or implicitly, ‘mass appeal’, ‘big brand’ and/or ‘industrial’ wine is often positioned as the stigmatized other against which spectacular wine is defined (for a nuanced exception, see McIntyre and Germov, 2018). This narrowness of scope runs several risks of closed-off thinking, including: a blindness to assumptions of exceptionalism (for wine vis-à-vis other consumer entities, and for spectacular wine vis-à-vis other wines); a fetishization of narratives of authenticity, *terroir*, and the lone, heroic winemaker (among others); and a reinforcing of spurious (and prejudice-affirming) dichotomies, such as big/small and industrial/craft (or object/thing; Latour, 2004). Such dichotomies may be embedded—and largely invisible—as data analysis devices and sampling parameters, or reproduced through generalizations that outreach non-comparative research design (i.e., naturalistic research may find that producers, consumers and intermediaries prize small-scale wine for notions of authenticity, heritage, and place, but this does not preclude that such qualities are also associated with ‘big brand’ wine). A *vinum clausum* perspective is blinded to the continuities of practice, discourse, and meaning across the spectrum of production methods and places, price points, and styles of consumption (and thus has a diminished capacity to identify, articulate and evidence what are the actual, meaningful discontinuities).

There is also a recurrent bracketing off of wine’s dimensions of intoxication and drunkenness, which are largely ceded to the sociologies of alcohol, health, and/or deviance (or DrunkSociology<sup>3</sup>), despite the fact that inebriation is central to what differentiates wine from the vast majority of other food and drink things, and consumption entities more generally. At the risk of slipping into a *vinum clausum* reification of wine, we might say that it is wine’s “power to banish care” (Johnson, 1989: 10)—to ease anxiety, fear, and pain; to facilitate sociability (Elias and Dunning, 1986), conviviality and conversation (up to a point!)—that fundamentally underpins its long-established and esteemed place in human history, rather than its various other attributes (e.g., capacities to signify place, enable performances of connoisseurship, generate revenue) for which it does not hold so near a monopoly.

The risks outlined above pose threats to a sociology of wine, if (and it is, indeed, *if*) we understand the task of sociology as a “quest for connectedness” (Goudsblom, 1977: 4). The sociological endeavour to locate and understand seemingly separate events and ‘unique’ realities within their larger social and historical milieux, to develop a sociological imagination that can grasp “the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society” (Mills, 1959: 6), cannot but be impeded by silo-ization, stagnation, side-lining, and the scope and process reduction of *homo clausus* and *vinum clausum* thinking.

## THINKING ABOUT *VINA APERTA*

A focus on a specialized topic need not be inimical to a historically- and processually-oriented sociology. A sociology of wine need not be a fortress, closed off. For an alternative approach, let me draw from Elias’s (1970: 125) recommendation of thinking of humans as “*homines aperti*”: mutually interdependent with, open towards, and connected to others through a myriad of “valencies” (Elias, 1970: 135, 175n) that are reflective of basic human problems of interdependence. With that in mind, I now turn to three, interrelated dimensions of what constitutes thinking about wine as *vina aperta*, and what that foregrounds for a sociology from wine.

### Wine as Processual

The first dimension of what I mean by *vina aperta* has to do with processual thinking. This is about understanding wines as open ‘things’, located within social figurations and webs of associations; as contingent outworkings of socially embedded, contextually conditional processes; as “highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse matters of concern” (Latour, 2004: 237). A processual approach is developmental in orientation. It is a recognition that particular moments in which wine is instantiated—e.g., a drinker, pausing to consider a sip, mid-conversation (Hennion, 2007: 104); a winemaker, explaining how wines ‘speak more’ if respect is given to the soil and *terroir* (Teil, 2012: 483)—are situated within long-term flows of intended actions and unintended consequences across time and space (Elias, 1997).

As an example of how wine is situated within long-term developmental processes, we might think of bud break (which marks the start of a growing season, which in turn may anchor notions of a ‘vintage’), on vines, on rootstocks, in vineyards with histories ranging from a few years and decades to centuries (which may in turn be

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<sup>3</sup> @DrunkSociology is a Twitter account, with associated YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzM8roBT9CvdXx5Hu-UfMkw>), co-created by Dr Matt Rafalow and Dr Sarah Outland.

catalogued in competitive rankings or protected registers of history-as-credibility<sup>4</sup>), which are entangled with knowledge and practices rooted in millennia of interaction between the human and non-human. Similarly, we might think of the wine drinker, who brings long-term processes of socialization and development to bear on experiences of wine, in which personal biography intersects with long-term accretions of social convention: e.g., competence with repertoires of tasting techniques (Schwarz, 2013) or discomfort at lacking such competence (Vannini et al., 2010: 387). A drinker's socialization into the norms and goals associated with different roles (e.g., the making of a winemaker, connoisseur, critic, host, or guest) will also enable and constrain engagement with wine (even the same wine) in different moments, be it as something to drink (for pleasure, thirst, habit, dependence), to taste (to evaluate, discern, decide, perform), and/or otherwise. We can also think of these processes extending forwards in time. To *consume* wine is not, in the original sense of the term, “to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust” (Williams, 1983: 78), but is rather a moment within a longer-term process; wine may be, for example, embodied as memory and sensitivity (e.g., the development of palate), or converted into a memento (e.g., tasting notes, the ‘trophy’ bottle), or fed back into the winemaking process (e.g., tasting tank samples).

It is tempting to think that the long-term development of wine as a field of human knowledge would reduce the impact of unplanned and unintended forces. Approaches to wine growing, making and marketing have become increasingly professionalized and scientized, in efforts to increase control over the quantity, quality, and saleability of what is produced (e.g., Taplin, 2015; Tippetts, 2012). Systematic approaches to tasting, and numerous judgment and trust devices attempt to circumvent the uncertainty and incommensurability associated with the unknowableness of experiential goods (e.g., Karpik, 2010; Teil, 2001). However rigorous such approaches, they only ever offer partial control over wine's production and consumption. The sheer range of intersecting forces—some much more unmanageable than others—that impinge on wine ensures that the ‘best laid plans’ are always open to disruption. As but one example: climate destabilization is disturbing established assumptions about how viticulture is done (and where). Divergences in outcomes from planned actions and intentions of various actors should not be written off as the “mistakes and faults of others” but rather regarded as evidence of the need for a better grasp of “unplanned and unintended social structures and processes” (Elias, 1997: 360).

To that end, Elias (1970: 153-154) argues that a processual orientation is better suited to addressing the task of sociology. That task is

*to make these blind, uncontrolled processes more accessible to human understanding* by explaining them, and to enable people to orientate themselves within the interwoven social web – which, though created by their own needs and actions, is still opaque to them – and so better to control it.

Thinking processually is necessary for developing a more adequate grasp of how the past forms the conditions of the present, how the present is always an outcome of both planned and unplanned consequences. This is a call for a historically-oriented sociology, not a historical sociology *per se* (Inglis, 2014). Such an approach is also crucial for action-oriented research, for sizing up and seizing the space of opportunities between the present and future.

A historical, processual orientation to sociology (be it via a focus on wine or not) does not preclude studying concrete moments in the instantiation of long-term, ongoing, unfolding processes, provided that the snapshot of ‘here and now’ is not mistaken (*à la vinum clausum* approaches) for something that is fixed and finished. Sociological analyses of *vina aperta* may focus on particular *moments* between, say, grape and glass—or between acquisition and disposal, appropriation and divestment, appreciation and devaluation (Evans, 2019)—while remaining mindful of the bigger picture, which stretches back in time and reaches forward in the form of planned and unplanned, intended and unintended actions and consequences.

The second and third dimensions of thinking about *vina aperta* are logical companions to the first. To think processually is to bring into focus the highly complex, flexible “lattice-work of tensions” that are created through the “totality of [humans] dealings in their relationships with each other” (Elias, 1970: 130). Below, I refer to these tensions in terms of interconnections and interdependencies, but this is a matter of perspective as to which processual linkages appear to be more distant or external to the thing under examination, and which are more proximal or internal. I discuss the former as interconnections and the latter as interdependencies but, really, these are two sides of the same ‘connectedness’ coin.

### **Wine as Interconnected**

The second dimension relates to the need to think of wine as interconnected to external fields, institutions, discourses, and practices. To echo Bourdieu's (1990: 159) account of sport, the space of wine

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<sup>4</sup> Such rankings and qualification devices have multiplied far beyond much-cited French examples (e.g., the 1855 Bordeaux Classification and AOC system). For example, Australia's Barossa Old Vine Charter, established in 2009, categorizes vines of 35, 70, 100 and 125 years or older as ‘old’, ‘survivor’, ‘centenarian’ and ‘ancestor’, respectively (<https://www.barossawine.com/vineyards/old-vine-charter/>).

is inserted into a universe of practices and consumptions themselves structured and constituted as a system. We are altogether justified in treating [it] as a relatively autonomous space, but you shouldn't forget that this space is the locus of forces which do not apply only to it.

To study the cultural production and consumption of wine is to take into account (as context, if not specific focus): the production and consumption of food, drink, drugs, leisure, and culture in general; cross-field discourses of legitimacy that bestow and/or withdraw value, mobilize and/or inhibit particular practices, and coordinate and/or disrupt alliances of actors; and the various aesthetic and economic regimes within which wines are situated, making definitions of how wines could or should be made, used, priced, evaluated, experienced, and represented more or less possible.

Attention to interconnections foregrounds the ways in which wine is constituted by and constitutes other figurations. Comparative research, for example, highlights ways in which wine classification systems and prices (Zhao, 2005, 2008), or winemaker orientations to their relationship with nature and ideas of *terroir* (Cappeliez, 2017; Demossier, 2018) are interconnected with, and shaped by, different national, cultural, and climate contexts. We might also think of the ways in which wine is caught up in local and global status contests, such as how wine auctions enable performances of Chinese economic and cultural ascendancy, while Western media representations of Chinese wine buyers and drinkers bestow or withhold legitimacy in defensive response to shifts in geopolitical concentrations of influence (Smith Maguire and Lim, 2015; Smith Maguire, 2019a). More generally, being sensitive to interconnectedness reminds us that wine is shaped by socio-cultural processes that precede and exceed its own space; these include processes of qualification (Dans et al., 2019; Smith Maguire, 2013), consecration (Allen and Germov, 2011), quantification (Phillips, 2016), and social reproduction of group habitus (e.g., in terms of class, generation, nationality) and social stratification (Bourdieu, 1979).

Given such interconnectedness, *vinum clausum* analyses and models for explaining wine prices or preferences risk severe myopia by ignoring exogenous actors and forces. Wine markets are contingent outcomes of product definitions, attributes, relations of use, and definitions of competitors (and thus definitions of what else—wine or otherwise—is considered commensurable (Slater, 2002)). These are consequences of processes, practices, discourses, and institutions that extend beyond the intended actions, devices, and modes of coordination of wine producers and practitioners (Beckert, 2009). Consumers' wine preferences and practices (including interpretations of such signals as price, country of origin, and variety) are shaped by forces that exceed wine *per se*: taste regimes, logics of appreciation, and habitual modes of perception, long-term transformative processes such as democratization and informalization, and trends towards cultural omnivorousness, cosmopolitanism, and ethical-eco-consciousness (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Fishman and Lizardo, 2013; Howland, 2013; Lamont and Aksartova, 2002). Attention to such external interconnections may make for a messy, leaky object of study for a sociology of wine, but ignoring the holes in a colander does not make it a bowl.

Recognizing wine's interconnectedness is not only a reminder to locate it within its larger historical and social context, but also an invitation to examine the linkages between wine and other cultural fields and figurations, and the implications of those linkages. For example, considerable research reveals common components of a practical and aesthetic regime of fine winemaking. While neither global nor uniform (e.g., Negro et al., 2011), there are nevertheless shared conventions, found worldwide, relating to an emphasis on *terroir* and place, heritage, artisanal craft, uniqueness, a disavowal of commercial motives, and authenticity (e.g., Beverland, 2005; Cappeliez, 2017; Demossier, 2018; González and Dans, 2018; Krzywoszynska, 2015; Smith Maguire, 2018a, 2018b; Rössel et al., 2018). Such discourses and properties are far from exclusive to wine and wine actors—as indicated by research on such products as foie gras (DeSoucey, 2016), tequila (Bowen, 2015), cheese (Paxson, 2010), and salt (Singer, 2018), and evident in the efforts in sectors such as fashion and jewellery (and luxury more generally) to hang value propositions on provenance, heritage, and transparency. We might also think of the migration of languages, roles, and practices associated with wine to (as yet) less 'legitimate' cultural fields, as part of strategies for premiumization and respectabilization (ergo, beer, cider, and cannabis sommeliers<sup>5</sup>). Additionally, the wine field is being reshaped through its interconnections with other domains, including: higher education as a driver of professionalization (e.g., the rise of oenology courses), neoliberal capitalism and economic migration policies as drivers of vineyard management (e.g., the use of precarious migrant labour), tourism and hospitality industries as drivers of winery development and diversification (e.g., packaging wine as part of regional destination management), and medical

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<sup>5</sup> For example, would-be beer sommeliers (cicerones) in the US can enrol in the Cicerone Certification Program, which "certifies and educates beer professionals in order to elevate the beer experience for consumers" (<https://www.cicerone.org/us-en>), while would-be cider sommeliers (pommeliers) can be certified by the American Cider Association (<https://ciderassociation.org/certification/>) or the UK's Beer and Cider Academy (<https://www.beerandcideracademy.org/cider-courses>), and would-be cannabis sommeliers (cannasseurs) can enrol in a Professional Interpening Course, which teaches "The Art and Science of the Cannabis Sommelier" (<https://trichomeinstitute.com/interpening/>).

research and health policy as drivers of consumer trends (e.g., WHO recommendations vis-à-vis alcohol and cancer risks, and potential labelling implications).

These interconnections are a two-way traffic. Norms, values, and practices flow between wine and other domains of practice; wine is changed by, and changes other domains through such exchanges and linkages. Wine's interconnectedness underscores the tendency towards "diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties" as a result of inter-group relations, as noted by Elias (1939: 464, *passim*) and in writings on cultural glocalization (e.g., Robertson, 1995). As the gap (e.g., in conduct, prestige, norms) diminishes between established and emergent wine regions, producers, and practices, and between wine and other cultural fields—a logical consequence of wine's heterogenous interconnectedness—there will be an increasing emphasis on grape varieties, vintage variations, and nuances of provenance through which various affiliations of wine actors attempt to maintain or improve their positions. These dynamics are readily apparent in the emphasis on the minutiae of provenance, and on new or (once) marginal regions, varieties and winemaking methods in media discourse as to what counts as 'good taste' in wine today (Smith Maguire, 2018b), in efforts to legitimate new categories of wine, such as 'natural' or 'orange' wine (Smith Maguire, 2018c, 2019b), and in discourses of emergent producers seeking to challenge established positions within a mature market, as in Champagne (Smith Maguire and Charters, 2021).

### Wine as Interdependent

Sociology is the study of "the ways in which people cope with the problems of social interdependence" (Goudsblom, 1977: 127). The third and final dimension of thinking about wine as *vina aperta* thus involves foregrounding interdependence. This is central to understanding wine from a processual perspective and is, at least in part, what is distinctly (but not exclusively<sup>6</sup>) *sociological* in an account of wine. A sociology of wine must grapple (collectively, if not in each instance of research) with how wine is made possible through attempts to address three basic, related problems of interdependence (Elias, 1970: 156; Goudsblom, 1977: 137-38): interdependence with the physical world (e.g., seeking to gain control over 'natural events'); interdependence with others (e.g., a balance of cooperation and subordination between groups seeking to improve their chances in controlling the outcome of interactions); and interdependence with the self (e.g., attempts at mastery of one's own senses, emotions and impulses). Using the example<sup>7</sup> of 'natural' wine (that is, wine made with no or minimal chemical or mechanical interventions in the vineyard and cellar), let me say a bit more about each of these three aspects of interdependence.

Wine is fundamentally constituted through the *interdependence of humans and the physical world*. As an agricultural product, wine is located at a nexus of always-entwined natural and cultural forces, including (to name but a few) the climate, weather, soil, practices of planting, pruning, and harvesting, processes of photosynthesis and respiration, and 'soil management' by microorganisms and earthworms. Consider a hypothetical vineyard of a natural winemaker. To the untrained eye, the vineyard might appear 'wild' and unkempt, and certainly verdant: lush grass grows between the rows of vines, along with what might be categorized in other settings as weeds, such as yarrow, nettles, dandelion; chickens scratch amongst the vines; the ground is slightly springy underfoot. The vineyard, however, is the outcome of conscious human decisions of how to work on and with 'nature' and is teeming with non-human actors involved in co-creating the resultant grape harvest. The grass and 'weeds' are a cover crop to be tilled in to add nitrogen, while additionally benefitting soil structure and suppressing various pests; the chickens' scratching helps control vine weevils and aerates the soil, while their droppings add further nitrogen; the 'springiness' of the soil is further evidence of good soil structure (perhaps assisted by the use of a horse and plough rather than tractor, to minimize soil compaction), and of bountiful earthworms, adding their own beneficial microbes to the soil while churning out vermicompost.

In such a setting, the fallacy of a nature/culture dichotomy comes into focus; here, wine is a sharp rebuke to *vinum clausum* binarism, and the "modernist ontology of agricultural economics and rural sociology" in which "agricultural nature appears simply as an external, inorganic medium, acted upon and manipulated by human artifice" (Goodman, 1999: 20). Wary of exceptionalism, let me underline that this nature/culture nexus of co-creativity (and this same capacity to refute the treatment of nature as a neutral, static resource) is true of *all* wine; indeed, it is true of all agricultural products and more generally of all physical products. Nevertheless, the 'natural' wine approach helps foreground human interdependence with the physical world and non-human actors (while ironically further entrenching a compartmentalization of nature through the very category label of 'natural' that attempts to set it apart from other wines). Non-human agents—including soil, grapevines, worms, and various plants and microorganisms, from the yarrow combatting cutworms, to the 'wild' yeast spores on the grape skins

<sup>6</sup> Sociology has no monopoly on *vina aperta* thinking; there is a wealth of work from multiple disciplines that constitutes, informs and/or is complementary to a *vina aperta* approach to wine. As Douglas (1987: 9) remarks in an exemplary collection of such anthropological work: drinking is constitutive—"as real as the bricks and mortar"—of the social world.

<sup>7</sup> The following examples are drawn from past research on 'natural' wine (e.g. Smith Maguire, 2018a, 2018c, 2019b; Smith Maguire and Charters, 2021). The vineyard scene is an amalgamation from different site visits and interviews (especially, South Africa and Australia) and media analyses.

that will drive fermentation—are explicitly acknowledged as active, vital partners in the creation of wine, and are granted (some) control and credit.

Wine is also constituted through *human interdependence with other humans*. By virtue of its empirical entry point, methodological design, and/or conceptual argument, sociological research on wine often features a multiplicity of actors implicated in the cultural production and consumption of wine. This research often reflects ‘world’ (Becker, 1982) or ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1993) approaches to the study of cultural production. Research in both veins undermines *vinum clausum* myths of the sovereign, rational actor—consumer or producer—whose evaluation of and engagement with wine can be understood in isolation from others. For example: drinkers interact with each other, wine makers and sales representatives at wineries, cellar doors, wine fairs and tasting events (e.g. Vannini et al., 2010); wine makers and marketers rely on professional bodies, critics, consumers, restaurateurs and sommeliers to elaborate, legitimate and circulate their preferred stories and scripts (e.g., Smith Maguire and Charters, 2021; Voronov et al., 2013); journalists and critics (and increasingly amateurs, thanks to social media) shape and reshape conventions of which wines are worthy of attention (e.g., Fitzmaurice, 2017; Rössel et al., 2018). Focusing specifically on interdependence and the cultural production of wine, we can see that wine is constituted through complex, global chains of interdependence (Cook, 2004); these chains have lengthened and grown more opaque (i.e., wine is increasingly from elsewhere, if not also ‘anywhere’). As such, significant work—processes of representation, qualification, and framing—needs to be carried out to communicate credence cues through the circulation of provenance stories of how the wine was made, by whom, where, and when (Fernqvist and Ekelund, 2014; Karpik, 2010; Smith Maguire, 2013).

Let’s consider this communicative interdependence for our hypothetical natural wine, as it travels from vineyard and cellar in, perhaps, South Africa’s Western Cape to distant markets. The wine’s provenance story travels with it on the limited discursive space of its labels (cf. Singer, 2018); it might also be available on an ‘about us’ webpage (Koontz and Chapman, 2019), provided the winery has a website (not always the case with such small producers). Nevertheless, the winemaker/vigneron shares richly detailed stories (e.g., of anxious September days and the threat of frost; the different personalities of the plough horses) with vineyard visitors, including importers (e.g., from Paris, New York, Melbourne, and Hong Kong) who make annual visits in order to be able to personally vouch for all of the producers they list. An importer then further crafts the provenance story (e.g., the first taste of the wine, while standing in the cellar; the winemaker’s tale of September frost; the springiness of the grass while walking the vineyard, and the warm, cabbage-y smell of yarrow), and shares it through their social media (with photos or videos of the chickens among the vines), website, and in-store recommendations. We might follow the storying chain further, as the importer chats with a sommelier, who then selects the wine for their natural wine bar, and whose own rendition of the story (served as an accompaniment to the pouring of a glass) is passed on to the wine bar patron, and so on. This storying work is critical not (only) because ‘stories sell’ (that is, because stories are devices of influence, used to improve the control-chances over the outcomes of interactions with others), but because provenance goods like natural wine require representational work to complete them, rendering provenance as credible, legible, and available to others who were not there with the winemaker, in the vineyard or the cellar (Smith Maguire, 2018c). The global circulation of natural wine thus relies on communicative chains of interdependent storytellers and stories. More generally, in practical terms, ‘doing’ wine (from vineyard to cellar, making to marketing, selling to serving, judging to regulating, tasting to drinking) is contingent on a highly distributed array of interdependent social actions and actors.

Finally, wine is constituted through *humans’ interdependence with themselves*. For Elias (1939), this has to do with the long-term development of forms of self-control (e.g., controlling and channelling impulses, energies, and emotions, deferring gratification, restraining appetites, observing etiquette protocols) that constitute “civilizing processes” (Elias, 1978: 156-157; Goudsblom, 1966: 138, 140). In the case of wine, we might think of this as the manifold ways in which the making, talking, tasting and drinking of wine are contingent on people’s relationships (intentional and unthinking, pleasurable and uncomfortable) to their own embodiment. (If this is often a personal and internal relationship, it is nonetheless intensely social; it is only through interrelationships with others that such interdependencies of self can develop.) For example, learning to drink wine entails (and learning to make wine largely requires) overcoming initial impressions of wine as ‘sour’ or ‘bitter’; focusing and adjusting perceptions and ‘attention’ (Hennion, 2007) to discern particular qualities of wine or inebriation (in comparison with other liquids, other wines, other drugs); mastering techniques (and the selection of techniques appropriate to different situations) through which to parse flavour, recognize pleasantness, or judge quality (Schwarz, 2013); and sorting sensory data into sense-making categories, such as varieties, styles, and groupings of personal preferences or aversions. Sociological accounts of tasting (Hennion, 2007) and tasting techniques (Schwarz, 2013) usefully underline that bodily engagements with wine are the preserve of neither ‘spectacular’ wines nor elite connoisseurs, and are not reducible to cultural conventions of legitimacy that align the taste for particular wines with notions of ‘good taste’ (while Becker’s (1953) account of learning to smoke marijuana underlines that such processes are not the preserve of wine).

In the case of natural wine, we might note the ways in which a newcomer learns to ‘do’ wine differently: to make sense of aromas, flavours, appearance, and structure (e.g., funkiness, yeastiness, cloudiness, spritziness) that do not comply with expectations. Similarly, in the case of the natural wine winemaker and vigneron: they require new or different senses, forms of perception, modes of attuning to the soil, vines, and other forces—in ways that may entail new or resurrected forms of work, alternative orientations to their marketplace, and departures from (if not also arguments with) their predecessors (Smith Maguire and Charters, 2021). Abandoning the use of herbicides and tractors, encouraging and utilizing complementary plants to control pests and improve soil, coming to regard earthworms and soil as active partners in winemaking, learning to see *terroir* as an actor, rather than as a source or a consequence: these are all contingent on a winemaker/vigneron’s interdependence with the physical world (e.g., soil, worms) and with others (e.g., mentors and peers who enable (re)learning how to work without commercial chemical fertilizer). They are also, crucially, forms of self-interdependence: they rely on particular kinds of senses—and engagement with those senses—to be possible (Smith Maguire, 2018a). That is, sociological accounts of wine invite a consideration of senses beyond sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, to consider the

sense of necessity and the sense of duty, the sense of direction and the sense of reality, the sense of balance and the sense of beauty, common sense and the sense of the sacred, tactical sense and the sense of responsibility, business sense and the sense of propriety, the sense of humour and the sense of absurdity, moral sense and the sense of practicality, and so on (Bourdieu, 1977: 123, 124).

The processual acquisition of embodied senses is necessary for particular ways of doing. This is not restricted to natural wine (e.g., intergenerational changes to viticultural approaches are observed across the long history of wine making), nor to wine more generally; however, natural wine helps to bring this dimension into focus. Learning to articulate, defend, and operationalize a sense of duty to one’s *terroir* (and/or to one’s worms, clients, descendants, planet) requires particular modes of paying attention, different palates for detecting uncommon flavours of success, novel tastes of and for market relations that do not comply with contemporary conventions.

## TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY FROM WINE

I have outlined several caveats about pursuing a sociology *of* wine, in terms of the pitfalls of sub-disciplinary specialization in general, and the limitations of *vinum clausum* thinking in particular. In contrast, I have sketched out the dimensions of a *vinum aperta* approach to studying wine and, in so doing, tried to offer an argument for what sociology might gain from thinking about and through wine in this way. To advocate for such a sociology *from* wine, I have touched on wine- and wine research-related examples that foreground wine’s interrelated dimensions as processual, interconnected, and interdependent. Arguing for a sociology from wine is not, however, a claim that wine is exclusively useful in this regard, nor that sociology has a monopoly on *vinum aperta*. Rather, to borrow a phrase, I would suggest that wine is “enormously good to think with” (Jenkins, 1992: 11), offering a route towards a more historically- and processually-oriented sociology.

Wine is an especially apt lens through which to examine interdependencies with the natural world, each other, and ourselves. Wine could not exist but through sustained relationships with ‘nature’, coordination between an immense range of actors (human and non-human), and focused engagement of embodied senses. In this, I think, lies the nub of why wine is such a rich and ready focus for sociological research: *all* things are interdependent, but wine is *manifestly* interdependent. Indeed, if I were to indulge in a little reification and anthropomorphizing, I would say wine both wallows and glories in interdependence. (Having said that, it strikes me that interdependence with others is often decoupled from celebrating interdependence with nature and self, at least in the promotional discourse of natural wine; worms, yarrow, horses and so forth are given more prominent credit than vineyard and winery labourers. The capacity to generate distinctive storytelling content thus overlaps with forms of inclusion and exclusion from the economic value chain.)

Tastes of and for wines are shaped by social relations, between humans and non-humans, others, and themselves. These relations are immediate and interpersonal, as well as extending across time and space through communicative action, techniques, rituals, and conventions that enable and constrain different ways of doing wine. The multiple dimensions, instantiations, human and non-human actors, places, and histories of wines offer routes to better conceptualizing the processual nature of cultural production and consumption. As a research focus, wine offers an invitation to emphasize (if not resurrect) sociologists’ historical and processual senses, and their taste for connectedness.

To return to my critique of specialization, I would also suggest that wine is good for thinking about (and ideally, attempting to overcome) the fragmentation of sociology and social sciences, inviting (re)connections across sub-disciplinary and disciplinary borders. Rather than hiving off sociological analyses of wine into a sub-disciplinary fortress, sociologists studying production, consumption, class, identity, markets, value, the environment, and so forth might profitably use wine as a launchpad for more robust, cumulative advances in knowledge of what it is to be human, and the human condition more broadly, that link up insights from across anthropology, history,

economics, critical market studies, alcohol studies, food studies, and beyond. Such advances are necessary if social science is to be up to the task of addressing the wicked complexity of contemporary social problems (particularly when such problems are repeatedly met by research and policy that hinge on *homo clausus* myths).

Thus, in closing, I raise my glass to a sociology from wine, to a sociology attuned to and better able to contribute to our interdependent future, to studying social life in situ in ways that do justice to who we are, and who we might be, in the company of human and non-human others, ourselves and our planet.

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## A Wine Flight of Gendered Sociology: Vignettes of (Apparent) Trivialities

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the genderedness of wine through a focus on seven illuminative vignettes. Academic studies about wine, women and men have approached the subject by focussing on professional wine worlds, gendered wine consumption, and more general patterns of the genderedness of wine. Here I discuss what sorts of boundaries wine builds and breaks, and what kinds of taboos and threats are connected to wine-gender relations. What emerges from my approach is a cultural gendered sociology of wine, inspired by Mary Douglas. The boundaries discussed are more than symbolic, they are often deeply embodied, too. Yet the symbolic level is where meaning of wine-gender relations is constructed, recognised, and acted upon, in terms of powerful taboos to do with sexuality, gendered bodies, human reproduction, and gender boundaries. I argue that a deep understanding of why and how wine continues to be gendered cannot be gained through only researching forms of industry and social discrimination, and strategies of survival and success. To explain the enormous power of wine and gender and wine's genderedness, a deep cultural sociology is needed.

**Keywords:** wine, gender, gender boundaries, Mary Douglas, women

### GETTING YOUR TASTE BUDS READY

The problem of writing about wine and gender is the vastness of the subject and material to examine on the one hand, and the limitedness of existing information on the other. Which elements of the massive world(s) of wine are *not* gendered, historically and today, and from one geographical and cultural context to another? How to write about these, such that the complex and varied factors would be richly presented and adequately represented? I aim to understand *wine-gender relations*: the fact that wine and gender seem to be fundamentally intertwined wherever and whenever wine is made or drunk. I have chosen to focus on seven illuminative *vignettes*, regarding some, but certainly not all, gendered characteristics of wine. I highlight examples that may seem fairly trivial at first glance, but eventually come to reveal how it is precisely such trivial, seemingly harmless details that in fact illustrate how wine marks, recreates, strengthens, challenges, accommodates, and adjusts gender boundaries.<sup>1</sup>

A better-known expression for such an approach is 'snapshots'. Simmel (2012: 274) used the expression 'Momentbilder' [momentary images] in a collection of three experimental philosophical essays, a term that was later translated into 'snapshots'. Simmel (2012), writes Smith (1989: 24), 'was never afraid to attempt to extract universally valid principles from the most insignificant phenomena'. Although I do not seek universally valid principles, nevertheless I am inspired by Simmel's (2012) ideas: 'Amidst the historical and cultural variability of the contents of social life[,] formal sociology abstracts the structuring principles which provide the order within the flux' (Smith, 1989: 23).

<sup>1</sup> I have elsewhere attempted at a more chronological (if sketchy) approach (Almila and Inglis, 2022).

Using the term ‘vignette’ instead of ‘snapshot’ has obvious etymological benefits for a wine researcher—it derives from ‘vigne’, French for ‘vine’. But the term also balances out what is something of a bias in the word ‘snapshot’, which indicates something that is both visually oriented and frozen in time. Although ‘snapshot’ has the benefit of stressing the agency of the researcher in choosing what to take a picture of, to freeze an object in time (in and through writing), I find the metaphor lacking in recognition of the interconnectedness of the various elements of the structure(s) from which each vignette arises in the case of genderedness of wine. The vignettes I have chosen tell stories through times and places, thereby weaving together unexpected elements and conjoining multiple symbolisms.<sup>2</sup> This method of selection and presentation allows me to make connections between historically, culturally, and geographically diverse wine-gender phenomena that otherwise might not be apparent.

Academic and quasi-academic texts concerned with wine and gender have variously approached the subject by focussing on women working with wine (Almila, 2019; Brenner, 2007; Bryant and Garnham, 2014; Matasar, 2006; Ody-Brasier, 2017), women’s and men’s wine consumption habits (Atkin et al., 2007; Barber et al., 2006, 2010; Dlačić and Kadić-Maglajić, 2013; Johnson and Bastian, 2007; Nicolson, 1990; Ritchie, 2009; Thach, 2012), and historical and contemporary wine-gender relations (Almila and Inglis, 2022; Bianquis-Gasser, 1992; Gefou-Madianou, 1992; Matasar, 2006; Phillips, 2018). I find all these areas fundamentally intertwined, and that is why I do not approach wine and gender primarily through any particular one of them. My examples are mostly drawn from wine consumption and popular culture, with some reference to wine production and wine languages. I am interested in what sorts of gendered boundaries wine builds and breaks, and what kinds of taboos and threats are present in wine-gender relations. In other words, what are the dangers of wine revealed in long-held and contemporary wine beliefs and practices?

In my analysis, I draw upon the classical work of Mary Douglas, especially *Purity and Danger* (Douglas, 1966). Douglas (1966) argues that cultures and societies must be organised around principles of purity—that which holds communities together—and pollution—that which threatens their integrity. Pollution, or dirt, she famously claims is simply ‘matter out of place’, not dirty in any essential sense (Douglas, 1966: 41). Pollution is objected to by community members as it threatens existing categories and classifications that order social and cultural understandings.

Culture, in the sense of the public, standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered. And above all, it has authority, since each [person] is induced to assent because of the assent of others. But its public character makes its categories more rigid. A private person may revise his pattern of assumptions or not. It is a private matter. But cultural categories are public matters. They cannot so easily be subject to revision. Yet they cannot neglect the challenge of aberrant forms. Any given system of classification must give rise to anomalies, and any given culture must confront events which seem to defy its assumptions. (Douglas, 1966: 40)

It is, however, out of my reach here to create an analysis of any ‘full system of classification’ as regards wine and gender (Douglas, 1972: 41). My approach is necessarily limited, but it will hopefully point towards possibilities that this sort of an analysis could offer to a sociologist interested in wine and gender.

A word of clarification may be due—I do not focus much on Douglas’s (1987) famous introduction piece to the edited book she published in the 1980s, *Constructive Drinking*. The reason for this is that, while her account is extremely valuable in pulling research on alcohol away from the exclusive focus on social problems and negative framings that she recognizes especially in medical sociology of the time, I find her suggested approach less fruitful than her older work for the discussion here. However, I quite agree with her claim that ‘[d]rinking is essentially a social act, performed in a recognized social context’ (Douglas, 1987: 4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Simmel (2012: 273) mentions wine in one of his three snapshots: ‘Through ownership, sooner or later we destroy what we must thoroughly possess in order to enjoy: a roast, wine, and anything we relish with the senses’. This comment follows his reflections as to whether men must possess women or whether they can enjoy women’s ‘unspeakable beauty’ without possession. Apparently wine’s beauties cannot be enjoyed without possession, so at least in this sense, women and wine are not equitable for Simmel.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding gender, Douglas’s (1987: 7) reflections concern women in a primarily medical light: ‘in many civilizations women are habitually excluded from taking strong alcohol. One might look for an ancient wisdom which protects the vulnerable foetus by a general rule applied to all females. If that line is followed what could be said about the sources of such rules? Are they explicitly based on gynaecology or do they result from a happy convergence of medical and social ideas? If women for whatever reason tend to be excluded from alcohol, one can be curious about the health value of the other drinks that would, in a carefully partitioned society, be classed as peculiarly appropriate for women. If the classification has purely social functions, thirsty women or women wanting to celebrate might be driven in default to very unhealthy alternatives. Water is often contaminated; tea and coffee are not perfect health drinks. Furthermore, protection of women from dangerous foods is not universally practiced. Do we expect to find women drinking alcohol freely only when the social norms are broken down?’

It is also perhaps necessary to point out how I came to frame a *sociological* wine analysis through the work of a famous anthropologist. First, I do not believe in strict disciplinary boundaries in either methodological or analytical terms. Central for a sociological analysis is some sort of sociological imagination, and in this I have always felt Mary Douglas to have excelled. Second, Douglas was fundamentally influenced by the classical sociology of Émile Durkheim, to the extent that she has been considered a ‘faithful disciple’ of Durkheim (Fardon, 1987). By extending Durkheim’s ideas of social classification systems beyond the sacred/profane dichotomy, towards secular forms of purity and impurity (Duschinsky, 2014), Douglas’s work opens further vistas for the type of wine analysis I am conducting here.

Therefore, what emerges from my Douglas-inspired approach is a gender-oriented cultural sociological way of looking at wine, analytically working with wine, and understanding wine-gender relations. The boundaries discussed here, it seems to me, are more than symbolic, they are often deeply embodied, too. Yet it is at the symbolic level where the meanings of wine-gender relations are constructed, recognised, and acted upon. How we speak about wine, what wines we drink and do not drink, and who makes our wine, are all elements of gendered cultural structures of wine.

## 1<sup>ST</sup> SIP: WINE, WOMEN AND SONG

The 1959 comic music hall song *Have Some Madeira M’Dear*, tells a story of male-female wine-based relations that reflects centuries-old perceptions of supposed female vulnerability to alcohol and wine’s apparent threat to sexual purity (Almila and Inglis, 2022; Dietler, 2006; Phillips, 2018).

The female target of a planned seduction by a disreputable older man is introduced as a fundamentally innocent creature:

She was young, she was pure,  
She was new, she was nice,  
She was fair, she was sweet seventeen.

Whereas the male protagonist is her very opposite:

He was old, he was vile, and no stranger to vice,  
He was base, he was bad, he was mean.

After luring the lady into his flat, the seducer moves on to intoxicate his victim.

And he said as he hastened to put out the cat  
The wine, his cigar and the lamps:  
‘Have some Madeira, m’dear,  
You really have nothing to fear;  
I’m not trying to tempt you, that wouldn’t be right,  
You shouldn’t drink spirits at this time of night.’

The threat to her purity is expressed in terms of a fundamental sexual misbalance between the genders, where the male is the chaser and the violator, threatening to irreversibly spoil the previously ‘untouched’ female.

Unaware of the wiles of the snake in the grass,  
Of the fate of the maiden who topes,  
She lowered her standards by raising her glass,  
Her courage, her eyes, and his hopes.

She sipped it, she drank it,  
She drained it, she did,  
And he quietly refilled it again

The sneakiness (or snakiness<sup>4</sup>) of the male protagonist is apparent in his assurances that the wine he offers to his intended victim is safe, as it is ‘only’ wine and not an alcoholic spirit. But as destruction looms over the thirsty maiden, she is saved by—what else—the final words of her dying mother:

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<sup>4</sup> Snake is of course the long-standing symbol of impure temptation in Judeo-Christian tradition, to whose promises the female of the species is supposed to be particularly defenceless.

Then there flashed through her mind what her mother had said  
With her antepenultimate breath  
'Oh my child, should you look on the wine that is red  
Be prepared for a fate worse than death'

The mother's words bring ambiguity to the role of the snake—is it the man, or the wine? Notwithstanding the question as to whether Madeira is 'wine that is red' (it is not a red wine, nor red in colour), the mother's warning causes the heroine to flee.

She let go her glass with a shrill little cry,  
Crash! Tinkle! it fell to the floor;  
When he asked, 'What in Heaven?' She made no reply,  
Up her mind, and a dash for the door.  
(Michael Flanders and Donald Swann)

I chose this song as the first vignette for two reasons. First, it exemplifies very old cultural assumptions about, and representations of, women's vulnerability to wine in terms of seduction and sexual licentiousness—assumptions expressed already in ancient Greek plays, as well as in medieval European literature, namely *Decameron* (Almila, 2019; Almila and Inglis, 2022). Second, it illustrates a moment in history—the late 1950s and early 1960s—when things were beginning to change. The following decades would witness women's increasing entry in public spaces, including spaces for alcohol consumption, where they previously had often risked being considered as prostitutes or as otherwise sexually available (Langhamer, 2003; Ludington, 2013; Phillips, 2018). The range of acceptable drinks for women grew, and spaces explicitly marketed for female wine consumption increasingly emerged in Europe, North America and East Asia (Ho, 2015).<sup>5</sup>

The types of misogynistic attitudes *Madeira M'Dear* comments upon and uses still survive today. For example, sexism of wine languages and wine labels has been commented upon by female wine professionals and others (Ayscough, 2020; Kavanaugh, 2016), and although 'wine glass ceilings' have been broken by an increasing number of women, their experiences of career disadvantages, discrimination, and outright harassment and abuse have by no means disappeared (Robinson, 2017). Yet, women's opportunities for consuming, producing, and working with wine have significantly changed from the times when wine and women were both considered goods to be consumed (Dolan, 2018).

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SIP: WINESMANSHIP

*One-Upmanship* is a parodical self-help book by English satirist Stephen Potter (1952: 136), featuring a section on 'winesmanship': 'How to talk about wine without knowing a Hock from a Horse's Neck'. The book is a sequel to *The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship (or the Art of Winning Games without Actually Cheating)* (1947). In winesmanship, the aspirational male, seeking to win advantage over other men (and impress women in the process) is given advice for ordering, choosing, and talking about wine. In a restaurant,

look at the wine list before the waiter comes and say, 'Amazing. Nothing here you can be sure of. Yet the food is quite good. But I've got an idea.'

Then, when the waiter comes, say to him, 'Look. You've got a Château Neon '45 somewhere secreted about the place, I know. Can you let us have a bottle?'

(You know he's got it because you have in fact read it off the wine list, cheapest but one.)

When the waiter leaves, you can say, 'They keep a small cache for favoured customers.' (Potter, 1952: 137)

Likewise, when giving a home dinner for guests, the important weapon is self-assurance:

remember that your mainstay is hypnotic suggestion. Suggest that some rubbishy sherry, nine bob<sup>6</sup>, is your special pride, and has a tremendously individual taste. Insist on getting it yourself 'from the cellar.' Take about four minutes uncorking it. Say, 'I think decanting destroys it,' if you have forgotten, or are

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<sup>5</sup> Spaces for specifically female alcohol consumption appeared in the US in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (McClellan, 2017; Remus, 2014), but a wider access to such spaces followed only later.

<sup>6</sup> 'Nine bob' means nine shillings. There were 20 shillings in a pound, so nine shillings would be less than half a pound.

too bored, to decant it. Keep staring at the bottle before you pour it. When you have drawn the cork, look particularly hard at the cork, and, of course, smell it. (...)

[You should] talk in broken sentences and say, 'It has... don't you think?' Or, 'It's a little bit cornery,' or something equally random like 'Too many tramlines.' I use this last phrase because it passes the test of the *boldly meaningless*. (Potter, 1952: 137-139, emphasis in original)

Poking fun at pretentious language used by some wine connoisseurs, Potter also laughs at the aspiring man seeking to establish his status through a variety of means, including wine talk. He also indicates that he assumes the audience (whether male or female) of the aspirational man to be as ignorant as the aspirational man is himself. The book does not explicitly comment on the expected audience, but in the 1960 film adaptation of the novels, *School for Scoundrels*, these lessons are put into action in order to impress a woman and shame a romantic competitor. The protagonist Henry Palfrey (Ian Carmichael) successfully asks out April Smith (Janette Scott), but is then made a fool of in a restaurant by the (overly) confident Raymond Delauney (Terry-Thomas) who shamelessly seeks to woo April in front of Henry. Neither Henry nor April is able to see through Raymond's empty wine talk.

The status brought on by talking the wine-talk is very real indeed. 'Connoisseurship', writes Mary Douglas (2003: 9), 'has its own power for social domination. Who could afford to let the hotel waiter get the upperhand and yet, how much expertise is needed to stop the waiter from forcing a humiliating dependence upon himself?' A man must impress not only his lady, but (perhaps most importantly) other men, too. Douglas (1987: 9) enters into a relevant vignette-type reflection right in middle of her introduction to *Constructive Drinking*, where she comments upon the remarkable wine-tasting abilities of the fictional gentleman detective Lord Peter Wimsey (created in the early 1920s by Dorothy L. Sayers), whose many and varied skills involve the capability of flawlessly blind-naming port vintages, indicating both his high social status and his extreme competence in exclusive class performance. Wine language and talk are not only gendered in multiple ways (Inglis, 2019), they are also deeply classed.<sup>7</sup> Symbolic boundaries can be drawn through symbolic dominance expressed and exercised through expertise in wine language.

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SIP: LADIES' HALVES

'What on earth comes over wine waiters when they take the orders of a woman entertaining another woman in a restaurant?', asked the British food writer Elizabeth David in the early 1960s. She was referring to the difficulty of getting served a whole bottle on such occasions.

There are occasions when a half is what one wants, a half and nothing else, in which case I really don't believe one has to be a master-woman to be capable of specifying one's wishes in the matter. I suppose the assumption on the part of wine waiters that women are too frail to consume or too stingy to pay for a whole bottle must be based on some sort of experience, but instead of having to go back to change the order (...) he could inquire in the first place, in a discreet way. Or even in an indiscreet way, like the steward on the Edinburgh-London express a few years ago who yelled at me across the rattling crockery and two other bemused passengers, 'A bottle madam? A *whole* bottle? Do you know how large a whole bottle is?' (David, 2009: 46)

The idea that women are naturally less able to hold their spirit (or wine) goes back thousands of years (Almila and Inglis, 2022; Dietler, 2006; Matasar, 2006). But rarely today does one meet such treatment as David describes as a woman in restaurants: some things clearly have improved. Indeed, nowadays sommeliers and other restaurant service staff are likely to even enquire who is going to taste the wine, rather than assuming the male member of the party should do so (see Almila, 2019: 196).

Yet female and male wine consumption are perceived differently. In parts of the world, such as the US and UK, women are major wine buyers (Barber et al, 2006; Phillips, 2018; Ritchie, 2009; Thach, 2012), and female wine consumption is increasingly culturally normalised (Kennedy, 2017), but concerns about women drinking *alcohol* remain. In such discourses, the gendered body is often medicalised, and different acceptable alcohol consumption levels for men and women are typically imposed by healthcare bodies and governments.<sup>8</sup> It is not exceptional to see wine marketers claim that women want (or at least prefer) low-alcoholic wines (Almila, 2019). Women and

<sup>7</sup> Wine language has also been accused of being colonialist in the sense that standardised tasting vocabulary draws upon geographically specific culinary traditions, and its expressions thus are often incomprehensible to wine enthusiasts from other world regions (Mobley, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> This is not the case everywhere—the UK and New Zealand, for example, recommend same limits for everyone, whereas the US and most Nordic countries make a distinction between men and women.

alcohol is a deeply conflicted realm: women's alcohol consumption may be both demonised (particularly in the case of pregnant women and the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (Armstrong and Abel, 2000)) and considered automatically less problematic than men's (McDonald, 1994), as happens when the category of alcoholism is primarily reserved for men (McClellan, 2017).

The female body political operates 'between the micropolitics of enhancing the health of individual bodies and the macropolitics of maintaining and re-creating social, political, and often global regimes of power' (Saukko and Reed, 2010: 6), perhaps particularly strongly so when human reproduction is considered. Concerns to do with women, wine and adultery (Phillips, 2018), female alcohol consumption during pregnancy (Armstrong and Abel, 2000), and wine-drinking and motherhood (Killingsworth, 2006) are all concerns to do with human reproduction and the reproducing female body. The most important factor to be monitored in such concerns is typically the amount of alcohol consumed by the woman, even when the woman consumes a more socially acceptable type of drink, such as wine.

Despite wine's normalisation as an admissible drink for (middle-class) women (Kennedy, 2017), and the increasing normalisation of women's wine consumption especially in Western and Northern Europe, North America, and increasingly in East Asia (Zhou, 2018), women's alcohol consumption may still be judged against different standards from that of men.<sup>9</sup> Working class women, in particular, tend to be more harshly judged for public drunkenness (Skeggs, 2005). Today, also online environments function in the construction of one's public image as regards alcohol consumption. Again, working class women face harsher criteria—they may be considered to be 'faking' if posing with wine (or champagne) glasses, when similar display from middle-class women is taken to indicate relaxation and carefree attitude (Lennox et al, 2018: 18). The class (glass) line for women in these cases operates in terms of standards of behaviour, and assumed motivations behind the woman's drinking habits and the display thereof. It seems that while for a man, it is important to *know* about wine and to demonstrate such knowledge, for a woman, it is important to *behave* when drinking wine.

#### 4<sup>TH</sup> SIP: THE RED PERIL

In book VII of his *Natural History*, published in 77 CE, Pliny the Elder warned of severe dangers to do with 'the monthly flux of women. Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seeds in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees fall off' (1942: 540). Almost 2000 years later, a Canadian woman of Italian immigrant background reminisced about her childhood in seasonal wine pressing:

For many Italian immigrants and their families in Toronto, pressing wine is an annual autumnal event in garages and basements around the city.<sup>10</sup> One wine-making season, when I was twelve years old and had just begun to menstruate, my grandmother took me aside and discreetly asked if I was 'on my period'. Sensing that something was amiss, I hesitated for a moment before saying yes. She put her arm around my shoulders and steered me away from the basement stairs, gently telling me that she was sorry, but I would not be able to help with the wine that year—it would be bad luck. I was banished from the basement because my blood was a curse. I tried not to care about being excluded, but to be told that my presence might sour the wine due to a natural process beyond my control was a decidedly odd and unwelcome feeling. (Pietropaolo, 2016: n. p.)

Pliny's claim concerned specifically *young* wine, as well as other young, growing, or potentially growing things. Whether old wine might be spoiled by contact with menstrual blood remains unclear, as does whether mere contact with a menstruating woman would be perilous. Anomalous, out-of-place substances are not automatically polluting, they may be powerful in good and bad (Douglas, 1972). But anthropologists have argued that '[b]ecause menstrual blood and menstruous women are perceived as dangerous, taboos have been devised to contain their energies and keep these from spreading beyond a limited place in the order of things' (Buckley and Gottlieb, 1988: 25).

Wine, too, is magical, powerful, and potentially dangerous (Inglis, 2022). In some folkloric traditions, it is a bringer of good health, 'good blood'. Especially '[r]ed wine, life's blood, was closely associated with manhood and virility' (Del Giudice, 2000). Red wine is also central to Christianity, both symbolising and turning into blood through sacrament. In this sense, wine is deeply spiritual and religious.

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<sup>9</sup> However, in Denmark, wine is considered as an altogether 'safer' form of alcohol than spirits, but it is important for both genders to demonstrate that they are in control of their drinking (Grønkvær et al., 2011).

<sup>10</sup> If the reader is surprised with the idea of wine production in Toronto, what is referred to here is home making of wine in Italian-background immigrant families. Grapes were often imported from more southern locations, such as from the southern US, or grown in backyard gardens, and the winemaking held strong family and homeland connotations. Results were varied and rather unreliable (Del Giudice, 2000).

From the examples above, it seems that wine may have been especially vulnerable to other types of magic when in preparation or still young—a veritable battle of magics.<sup>11</sup> Wine’s vulnerability only in its infancy and youth is supported by another, negative proof. I have not come across any records that would indicate that menstruating women would be automatically banned from serving wine.<sup>12</sup> Rather, bans on female presence (whether menstruating or not) have concerned spaces of making wine, such as wine cellars (Matasar, 2006).

Yet superstitions weaken and disappear over generations. Winemaker Sylvie Courselle’s grandmother was not allowed in the cellar, but the granddaughter now runs the family estate with her sister (McCoy, 2020). Similarly, Pietropaolo’s childhood experiences of being banned from winemaking changed with time:

After that day by the basement stairs, my grandmother never again asked about my period. Her expectation was that I was responsible for policing myself. When I was fifteen, I had terrible menstrual cramps and was late to help harvest the backyard grapes. I was worried that I might curse the grapes, and asked my mother what to do. She brushed it off at first, dismissing the possibility—but then she paused, suggesting that I not mention it to anyone, just in case. (Pietropaolo, 2016: n.p.)

With red wine’s symbolic connection to blood, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that another link to menstruation has more recently emerged. Red wine is apparently capable of helping women with menstrual cramps. Red wine has been medicalised in many ways, declared healthy for the heart, or helpful with diabetes and dementia (Skerrett, 2012). From magical, (red) wine has turned into medical, and this medicalisation has reached out to periods, too.

The language of non-medical online reports offering red wine as a solution to menstrual pain is often a fascinating mixture of (would-be) science and other types of expressions, as is the case with a report by Wine Tasting Bled (n.d.: n.p.), promoting Slovenian wines. Menstrual cramps are described as ‘excruciating’ and ‘agonizing’, and different kinds of statements are mixed. There are claims that resveratrol, found in red wines, can thin blood, therefore reducing blood clots, and that alcohol can prevent the formation of scar-tissue.<sup>13</sup> But there are also dubious deeply sensory claims, such as that red wine is better against menstrual cramps than white wine, as it ‘warms the body’.

Wine has of course been used for medical purposes well before this (Martin, 2001). What is interesting is that wine’s magic seems to have made a full round—not threatened by menstrual blood anymore, but capable of exposing its own power upon the bleeding woman and her womb.

## 5<sup>TH</sup> SIP: WINE FOR WOMEN

When writing this paper, I googled ‘wine for women’. The first hit, to my astonishment, was a list of ‘6 best girly wines’, as follows (Remedy Liquor, 2018):

1. Château d’Esclans Rock Angel, France [rosé wine]
2. Happy Bitch Rosé
3. Bottega Sparkling Moscato
4. Chocolate Shop, The Chocolate Lover’s Wine
5. Cabernet Sauvignon
6. Pinot Noir

This list illustrates some strikingly stereotypic assumptions regarding women’s wine (and other) tastes. First, women like pink, sparkling and sweet (Moscato is a sweet style of sparkling). Second, women love chocolate (sweet!). And third, it does not matter what sorts of characteristics specific red wines have, to pop out a name of a grape is quite enough. Also, one must not forget that the word ‘bitch’ is always a good marketing trick (see also Almila, 2019: 197 on Skinny Prosecco).

To be fair, just as Elizabeth David (cited above) thought, there probably is a lot of experience behind such lists. Marketing researchers have demonstrated that women are typically less interested in, or confident with, discussing wine’s technical characteristics than are men (Thach, 2012). Research has also confirmed the tendency of women and men to prefer different wines, to conduct their wine shopping differently, and to consider their levels of wine

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Picard et al. (2018) argue that wine continues to be magical today, in how it is understood to transform and contain the power of specific *terroir*.

<sup>12</sup> Obviously, menstruating women in different cultures may be completely banned from contact with others (Buckley and Gottlieb, 1988), but this does not seem to be directly the case with wine.

<sup>13</sup> As a sociologist, I am obviously not qualified to evaluate how medically reliable or not these claims are. However, Skerrett (2012) is critical of laypersons’ and journalists’ use of medical research results in an overgeneralising manner, drawing too far-fetched claims from tentative or limited scientific findings. Such, according to him, is often the case with resveratrol mentioned here.

expertise differently (Barber et al., 2006, 2010; Johnson and Bastian, 2007; Ritchie, 2009; Velikova et al., 2015). Women tend to be less self-confident and estimate their wine knowledge as lower than men, even when that would technically not be true (Zhou, 2018). Shopping and consumer practices and experiences, and perceptions of one's own wine expertise level deeply influence individuals' wine choices and preferences, as well as the wine language they are likely to use.

Producers have taken the cue. Thus, sweeter rosés are explicitly marketed to younger women (Gabay, 2018). Women are offered wines with lower alcohol and calorie levels (Almila, 2019). All this is supposed to reflect 'what women want', but at the same time it brings the category of female wine consumer into existence. If gender is, as Judith Butler (1988: 519) insists, 'a stylized repetition of acts (...) instituted through the stylization of the body (...) the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self', then the female wine consumer is what she (is supposed to) consume/s when she lifts her wine glass to her lips.

Yet, taste for food and beverages, when considered in light of a larger body of research, is not radically divided by gender. 'Based on an exhaustive review of the literature that has been published over the last century, the conclusion was reached that while there are indeed a number of marked individual differences in multisensory taste/flavour perception, few if any fall neatly along sex/gender lines' (Spence, 2019: 3). It is also the case that marketing wine (or anything else) too explicitly for women may well backfire, provoking criticism or ridicule rather than commercial success. Often, implicit marketing for women works better than publicly announcing that something is 'for women', especially if the product is generally considered very ungendered in character. But in such subtle marketing lies also the effectiveness of gender performativities—the less openly something is declared to be deeply gendered, the more powerful and world-shaping its genderedness may be (Butler, 1988). The differences in female/male wine consumption habits found by researchers may well be an illustration of this.

## **6<sup>TH</sup> SLURP: THE BATTLE OVER (B)ROSÉ**

In 2012, the food writer Jason Wilson commented on an encounter with a male friend regarding rosé wine:

'What are you, a girl? Is this Girls' Night Out?' That's what a friend, an investment banker, said on a recent evening as the waiter delivered my glass of rosé wine to the table. I considered my manly friend, from his pink tailored shirt to the insipid Coors Light he was drinking. 'At this stage of my life,' I said, 'I'm comfortable enough in my manhood to drink pink wine.' Yeah, that's right. I'm man enough to profess my fondness for rosé wines, especially on a steamy summer evening, before dinner as the sun begins to set. (Gabay, 2018: 283)

Wilson (2015: n.p.) has commented on male angst over rosé wine in other occasions, too.

Like every spurious lifestyle trend, this tendency [of men to drink rosé wine] came with a portmanteau. The bros imbibing pink wine were part of the 'brosé phenomenon', (...) [and] aspirational millennials with creative jobs were wheeled out to assure us that while they once would have felt self-conscious about drinking rosé, in the summer of 2015 they may finally 'drink pink' without blushing.

Often considered a wine for the young and the beginners, rosé wine has nevertheless become increasingly fashionable in the 2000s. Media accounts of both fashionability and sophistication have supported industry efforts to increase rosé's market share (Gabay, 2018). Celebrity involvement—notably so in the case of male celebrities radiating hegemonic masculinity, such as the former *Top Gear* host Jeremy Clarkson—and luxury (fashion) brands, including LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton), Chanel, and Dolce & Gabbana, have pushed rosé wine towards the luxury market (Shaw, 2020). Wine critics have played their part, too, arguing that rosé wine traditions are an integral part of the proud and laudable French wine traditions, and thus merit a higher status for rosé than had previously been the case (Fitzmaurice, 2017). A wide-spread narrative of pale Provençal rosé's superiority over others has globally pushed producers towards producing paler hues of their beverage, whether this has traditionally been the case in the area or not (Gabay, 2018).

The colour pink needs a further clarification here. What some consider 'anxieties about pink's feminizing abilities' have a long history. In 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century art, pink represented 'artificiality, superficiality, seduction, and femininity'. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century fashion marketing reflected similar associations, playing with 'the deeply seductive power attributed to color' (Grisard, 2017: 78, 79). The US fashion industry was a great driver of pink in the 1950s. Pink fashion spread from garments to domestic spaces, and even men were urged to wear pink in the mid-1950s (Błaszczuk, 2012). But most importantly, 'in the 1950s pink became attached to a new feminine beauty ideal'. The beauty ideal was more conservative and less active than before the WWII: 'Whoever fell prey to the allure of color was deemed weak-willed and emotional, personality traits commonly attributed to women' (Grisard, 2017: 79). In

the years to come, pink came to demarcate not only gender boundaries, but also boundaries of sexual orientations, thus making the colour even less appealing to the heterosexual and heteronormative man (Koller, 2008).

This is part of the background in which rosé's danger to heteronormative masculinity is grounded, although the taboo of pink fashion for men had arguably already been broken when the manly wine drinkers were only familiarising themselves with the pink drink—Jason Wilson's friend made his snarky comments about rosé while wearing a pink shirt.<sup>14</sup>

Rosé wine posed *two* threats to the masculine heterosexual male drinker: it was not considered a serious connoisseur beverage; and it had been considered a girls' or women's drink, due to both its colour and associations thereof, and its (assumed) taste and characteristics (supposedly sweeter and less alcoholic).<sup>15</sup> It is indeed the case that rosé's image is often considered 'unsophisticated, seasonal and feminine', although more recent research indicates that its perceived 'femininity' may today not be as strongly felt by consumers as is often assumed (Velikova et al., 2015: 283). In fact, a collective effort has been made to bring rosé wine into the realm of greatness: 'Through explicit and implicit comparisons, rosé was recast [by critics] as a serious wine and stripped of its feminine, low-status associations. Critics then invested the category with new meanings, using elite consumers and lifestyles as the referents for its worth' (Fitzmaurice, 2017: 1).

On the other hand, it has been argued that the French millennial generation's love of rosé exists precisely because the wine is considered not sophisticated, and fundamentally feminine (both in character and in colour). This can be considered as a rejection of the older French generations' taste for 'masculine' and elitist red wines (Lorey, 2021). Thus, while rosé is not necessarily considered a 'serious' wine in France, it can be (and is) consumed by men and women alike (Velikova et al, 2015).

Regarding performances of masculinity, it is particularly interesting that Jason Wilson says he is 'man enough' to drink rosé—thus turning his drinking firmly away from being 'a girl', or effeminate. He could have said he drank rosé to embrace his femininity, but instead chose to frame it as an activity associated with secure self-esteem and thus hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). So, too, did the sommelier Thomas Pastuszak in 2015: 'I like to say that real men drink pink' (Wyma, 2015: n.p.). By such acts, again, are genders and gender boundaries brought into existence and affirmed. Normative masculinities are not challenged through these sorts of statements; just as rosé wine was not accepted by critics 'in its own terms' but needed to be brought into the realm of 'greatness'. Instead, the image of rosé wine (and the image of the colour pink in certain contexts) is changed to fit into the established boundaries of masculinity.

## 7<sup>TH</sup> MOUTHFUL: THE SCENT OF A WOMAN

Sommelier Victoria James opens her autobiography *Wine Girl* (2020) with a vignette that gives name to the whole book. She was only 21, and at the beginning of her career, when an obnoxious male customer decided to humiliate her, for the (presumed) enjoyment of his friends. He claimed that a perfectly good bottle of rare, prestigious, and expensive Burgundy Chardonnay that James was serving him during a Monday lunch was corked:

'I think she has too much perfume in her nose, this girl...' His glare turned upward and at me. 'The bottle is corked, take it back. Bring us another.' (...) 'Listen, *wine girl*, I have bottles in my cellar older than you. I know when a wine is corked.' (James, 2020: 5)

<sup>14</sup> Talking of other manly men, the secret agent James Bond has so far drunk rosé wine once on the screen: in *Thunderbolt* (1965), Sean Connery holds a glass of rosé wine when visiting a swimming pool (Ross, 2021). It must be noted that he also wears a pink shirt on the occasion, so perhaps the wine was simply chosen to match his attire—the wine's hue is certainly darker than any 'respectable' Côte de Provence would be. Mr Bond has recently inspired rosé wine marketing, too. Rosé's marketing-into-fashion has often drawn upon associations with summer and glamour (Gabay, 2018)—such glamour marketing having been used successfully for a long time by Champagne houses and brands (Almila, 2021; Harding, 2021; Rokka, 2017). The marketing imagery of the UK-based but Provence-producing *Brosé* wine brand does not radically differ from these traditions. One of the brand's 'inspiration' images in October 2021, just when his last Bond film *No Time to Die* had premiered, was the actor Daniel Craig in a pink velvet jacket. The *Brosé* brand goes for well-established markers of masculinity—sports cars, speed boats, and bikini-glad women at swimming pools (potentially to be seduced, of course). It is all summer and relaxation, presented as something that men 'want to be associated with' (Brosé Wine, n.d.).

<sup>15</sup> Colour affects how we experience and taste wines (as do other elements, such as sound, according to the idea of 'multisensory flavour perception') (Spence, 2015, see also Ross, 2014). Packaging colour, too, 'affects (...) expected and perceived taste and flavour (...) of beverage products' (Spence and Velasco, 2018: 226). The colour pink has been associated with sweetness across many locations (Spence and Levitan, 2021). Their dryness may well be part of the 'credibility' and desirability of the pale coloured rosés, while global middle-class tastes have increasingly turned towards drier wines altogether, irrespective of gender (Howland, 2019).

The general manager agreed with James that the wine was in perfect order and told her to serve it. The expensive wine would otherwise have been wasted. Between a rock and a hard place, James decided to serve the same bottle to the customer, pretending that it was a new bottle. This time the man was perfectly happy with the wine, but had more to say about James's persona:

'A woman, a *young* woman... probably too much perfume in her nose... could there be anything worse in a sommelier?' (James, 2020: 7)

*Wine Girl* is not solely a story of misogyny and belittling, but it does lay out many struggles a woman, and a young woman especially, may encounter when embarking on a wine career. It also reflects interestingly on decades-long commentaries on women's presumed perfume-usage.

Nothing changed as wine drinking spread to the New World. Private gentlemen's clubs and all-male dinner parties were the direct descendants of the earlier symposia and convivias. The collegiality, intellectual sophistication, and learning long associated with wine consumption remained identified with male-only environments. Additional, more 'modern' biases were added to the longstanding concerns regarding female wine consumption. The ability to appreciate wine's nuances became associated with masculinity. Some assumed that women would spoil tastings by wearing perfume that detracted from the wine's bouquet. (Matasar, 2006: 7)

A professional woman (other than a prostitute—see Phillips, 2018) may thus spoil the exclusively male space that some men feel entitled to. She is matter out of place (Douglas, 2001 [1966]), a threat expressed in a fear of an imagined scent.

The myth of perfumed women spoiling gentlemanly fun seems persistent indeed. Decades earlier, Britain's first serious female wine writer, Pamela Vandyke Price (1923-2014), had experienced something very similar—although at the time she was able to challenge the man accusing her of wearing perfume, as she was not working in the service sector:

Once, (...) I remember, I was summoned from the office to the tasting-room where a loudly-spoken man greeted me with 'Ah—the ladies have come! Now we shall not be able to taste anything!' (...) I then asked this person why? 'Oh—you know—all your scents and smells.' 'I can smell the preparation you use on your hair,' I said[,] 'the cleaning fluid that has been used for your suit, your boot polish—and you have a pipe in your pocket!'

Of course I took great care never to introduce a scent into the tasting-room. (...) Nothing scented was used on a tasting day and I brushed through my hair with water as a precaution. (Price, 1990: 120)

Operating in very much a man's world, Vandyke Price's wine experiences were nevertheless more privileged than James's. Vandyke Price was a protegee of powerful men, and from a fairly privileged background herself. She became a professional wine writer somewhat by a chance, and partly due to her husband's early death.<sup>16</sup> Yet the prejudices, forms of misogyny, and insults that professional wine women encounter seem to have changed little in character. Women's presumed perfume-wearing is seen as a sign of weakness, whereas male perfumes and cosmetics are considered 'neutral'.<sup>17</sup> And perfume or not, some men see it fit to altogether doubt a woman's ability to taste wine, and, indeed, recognise a corked wine (Almila, 2019: 205-206; MacLean, 2007: 243).

It is worth mentioning here that some female wine professionals (and I have myself interviewed some—see Almila, 2019) argue that men and women smell and experience wine differently because of hormones. Some argue that women are naturally better tasters, due to an averagely higher number of taste receptors on their tongues (Robinson, 2017). While hormones obviously influence the workings of the body, this can also be understood as another instance of magic turned into medicalised (or biologicised) terminology. Wine's magical capacities intertwine with the magical capacities of the gendered body, thus carrying beliefs and expectations into the future of wine, too.

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<sup>16</sup> Vandyke Price (1990) recognised herself as a sort of a 'wine widow', referring to a long line of women (most famously Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin Clicquot) who became powerful in wine through their widowhood (see Matasar, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Female perfume is, indeed, often considered dangerous, indicating threatening, active female sexuality (Dugan, 2011; Stewart, 2020).

## THE (SHORT BUT LINGERING) FINISH

Wine reflects wider gender relations. It reveals gender norms, and constructs and establishes gender boundaries. But wine affords resistance too, which has often been considered threatening to social patriarchal order (Almila and Inglis, 2022). Therefore, wine has historically been restricted and regulated, or even banned from female drinkers. As wine has become a more socially acceptable drink for women, capitalist and consumerist advances have consequently followed. Capitalist wine markets have normalised female wine consumption, in order to enhance profit to be accrued from this vast market sector. But as part of the process, the female wine market has been essentialised as less sophisticated, less knowledgeable, and less confident than the male market. Arguably, few gender boundaries have been radically changed when doing this—it is easier to rebrand a type of wine using established hegemonic gender norms, than to question the norms underpinning gender boundaries.

But wine has other characteristics as well, which might be called magical. According to Alexander and Smith (2020: 263), '[c]ultural sociology emerges from the paradox that societies today are not nearly as rational as they would like to think they are'. So, too, with wine: it remains magical at a deep, often unacknowledged level. Not all wine is magical, though. '[W]ine without recognized and authenticated place of provenance and vintage year would be stripped of most of its magic. It becomes cheap booze ('plonk') or cooking wine' (Picard et al, 2018: 527). Wine is magical because it is seen to carry the characteristics and power of a specific place (and often time), which is the case with the more prestigious and more 'special' wines, favoured by connoisseurs and enthusiasts. Another manner in which wine is magical today is in terms of health: especially red wine is considered healthy in numerous ways. Red wine is also the wine usually considered the most 'masculine' of wines. While the belief that women are capable of polluting wine has more or less died out, it seems that wine's magic today still reflects patriarchal structures in that the most magical of wines are associated with masculinity either through connoisseurship, or through their red character.

Gender is not the only boundary that wine builds and establishes. I have already mentioned that wine drinking, wine talk, and behavioural standards when consuming alcohol are all classed as well as gendered. Further reflections might be made regarding the intersectionality of wine boundaries, most importantly as regards race, ethnicity, and racialisation (Inglis and Ho, 2022).<sup>18</sup> Non-binary genders and gender neutral wine languages would certainly merit more attention, too (Pariseau, 2021). Also in these kinds of reflections I believe that a Douglasian approach would be helpful, as it has the potential to reveal very deep levels of cultural structures, thereby bringing to light the most fundamental of socio-cultural borders and boundaries.

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<sup>18</sup> At the risk of leaving a very nasty aftertaste indeed, I must mention that the story of James (2020) discussed above ended with the unpalatable customer deciding that there was one thing potentially worse in a sommelier than being young and female, namely being of ethnic minority. He obviously did not use as nice language in his expressions as I am using here.

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## Twenty-first Century Wine Consumption Trends in East Asia: History, Luxury, and Transformation

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### ABSTRACT

Since the early 2000s, East Asia has witnessed a significant increase in the consumption of luxury wines. Both Hong Kong and Singapore have become two of the most valuable wine trading hubs in the world, while surrounding regions such as South Korea and Japan have also experienced increases in the wine trade. In particular, mainland China has become the most important market that many wine makers and traders now focus on. Nevertheless, how East Asia has been transformed into a region of fine and luxury wine consumption remains a fascinating topic to explore further. This exploratory article aims to unpack this phenomenon and construct a sociology of wine in East Asia in four fundamental ways. First, wine itself is an alcoholic drink and has potential public health implications. Second, wine is a luxury good that can be consumed while simultaneously traded as a financial investment product. Third, East Asia as a region has a rich history of alcohol production and consumption, but its drinking practices may sometimes clash with Western wine etiquette. Fourth, the creation of the wine industry in East Asia largely came from the withdrawal of wine duty in Hong Kong in 2008. The article explores how drinking cultures and the wine industry in various East Asian regions have been transformed by economic development, changing gender norms, and the influence of Western culture.

**Keywords:** alcohol consumption, China, East Asia, Hong Kong, Japan, luxury industry, sociology of wine, South Korea, trends, wine

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of wine consumption in East Asia in general, and China specifically, has generated many academic debates and social conversations in the last two decades. Since about 2009 there has been increased media coverage of the growing demand for fine and rare wine in East Asia. However, the initial Western portrayal of East Asian drinkers was not particularly positive. For example, it was suggested that East Asian consumers did not know how to drink French wine in the 'correct' way, or indeed that they drank the most expensive wine only in order to flaunt their wealth (Booth, 2010).

As wine became more popular, an emerging group of wealthy East Asian investors went beyond buying wine futures and fine and rare wines in auction houses, and instead began to move into production by buying chateaux and vineyards in countries such as Australia, France, and Italy. Meanwhile, the consumption of, and demand for, wine in East Asia continues to grow. Most recently, with the help of French and other wine-making experts, China

has begun to produce high quality French-style wines. For example, *Château Lafite Rothschild* have started to produce luxury wine in the Shandong Province in China and each bottle is sold at around US\$300.

Scholars and commentators dealing with the increased consumption of wine in China have focused on the perspectives of business development and marketing (Bobik, 2014; Cohen and Lockshin, 2017); production (Howson and Ly, 2020; Smith Maguire, 2018), consumption (Ho, 2021; Wang, 2020), global trade (Mustacich, 2015), logistics (Lau et al., 2017), and tourism (Gu et al., 2018; Qiu et al., 2013). The key idea behind all these approaches is that China has become a major wine market because of the demand from both the rising numbers of the middle-class and also the super-rich who aspire to consume imported products (Ho, 2021).

Indeed, the Chinese wine market is significant because around 400 million of the population of 1.4 billion are regarded as middle-class (Ji, 2020). However, it is equally important to look at how the surrounding regions such as South Korea and Japan have developed their own wine markets, because they also have an impact on consumption trends and the global wine trade. For example, Japanese consumers had already created a sophisticated taste for imported wine towards the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 1990s many Japanese participated in wine tourism in countries such as Canada (Teller and Hashimoto, 2000). More recently, Japan has witnessed a reintroduction of traditional *Koshu*<sup>1</sup> wine which has proven to be increasingly popular. In South Korea, there has been a well-established conversation going on for decades about how red wine can be matched with the Korean barbecue food known as *gogigui* (고기구이) (Stephens, 2003).

Nevertheless, there are subtle regional and cultural similarities and differences regarding wine consumption in East Asia. Regarding similarities, while some of these regions have their own distinct types of alcohol which they have been producing and consuming for centuries (e.g. *baijiu* in mainland China and *sake* in Japan), they are also open to consuming alcohol from Europe and learning about Western wine etiquette. As for differences, low tax global financial city-states like Hong Kong and Singapore have become amongst the most influential wine trading hubs in the world (Ho, 2019). Indeed, there has been a high demand in such locations for luxury wine, both for collecting, investment, and consumption. This is particularly so in the case of Hong Kong, as wine duty was completely withdrawn in 2008. Much of the fine and rare wine is now first imported to the city, then re-exported to mainland China as well as other destinations in East Asia. Similarly, Macau, another wealthy city-state with a large gambling industry, and which is known as the Las Vegas of the East, also saw wine duty abolished in 2008. This has allowed the continuous growth of the hospitality and tourism industry.

In order to provide a broad understanding of wine drinking and the wine trade in East Asia, the article draws on existing academic literature, ethnographic research, and the analysis of marketing materials. One aspect of this research is informed by qualitative data collected in Hong Kong between 2009 and 2015. Fieldwork by the current author included visits to wine shops, wine bars, trade events, exhibitions, and restaurants, yielding around 100 hours of observation. Moreover, 30 interviews (including consumers, traders, government officials, restaurant managers, and wine connoisseurs), four focus groups, and ten informal follow-up interviews were also conducted, in which participants were asked about a range of issues relating to drinking habits and changing alcohol trends (see Ho (2021: 256) for detailed information on participants and focus groups).

However, as Cohen and Lockshin (2017) have demonstrated, there are methodological challenges such as researchers' own cultural blindness and Western-centric views when conducting research on wine in mainland China. Although these challenges can be country specific, the more fundamental issues are twofold. First, much of the social science research on the non-Western world has been carried out by Western academics with limited knowledge of local communities. Problematically, despite recent calls for the decolonialisation of academia in the Western world, research continues to be carried out by Western researchers going into the so-called 'Developing World', making observations and reporting back to Western audiences about their 'new findings'. At times, the 'new findings' already exist in the local language. In some cases, researchers have misunderstood and misinterpreted the data collected, resulting in incorrect research outcomes being written up and published.

Second, being an outsider observing the field is likely to change the outcome of the results, and this is known as the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). For example, it is extremely challenging for Caucasian researchers to blend into the sites of research in East Asia, and the participants may put on a different act when they are aware that they are being observed. More importantly, although some of the non-local researchers could be knowledgeable of the local language and customs, the fact that they do not belong in a certain ethnic group or to a cultural background may put them in disadvantageous positions. For example, in the context of conducting research with groups of Cantonese speaking property investors (even though they were fluent in English), it would be almost impossible for those who are not from Hong Kong to be granted access to those networks (Ho, 2020).

Ultimately, this article constructs a sociology of wine analysis concerning the ways in which wine consumption has over time become more popular in East Asia, focussing on four key arguments. First, wine itself is an alcoholic drink which some East Asians are medically allergic to, and this fundamentally changes the way they drink wine.

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<sup>1</sup> *Koshu* wine is made from *Koshu* grape. It is a rose/pink-skinned variety which first appeared in Japan in the eighth century.

This also leads to discussions on how the increase of wine consumption may have an impact on public health. Second, wine consumption in East Asia has long been about high-end investment and luxury consumption (Veblen, 1899), that then come to influence more ordinary consumption practices. Third, East Asia as a region has a rich of history of alcohol production and consumption, some of which is nationally and culturally specific. However, the popularisation of wine in East Asia has created new forms of globalised cultural consumption. Some consumers are keen to learn about Western, primarily originally French wine etiquette. We will see how wine consumption in East Asia is a complex set of processes that encompass multiple contradictions and negotiations. Fourth, the creation of the wine industry in East Asia largely stems from the withdrawal of wine duty in Hong Kong in February 2008. Hence, the world centres of wine consumption and production will likely shift towards East Asia in the decades to come.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, it will go into a brief history of alcohol consumption in several East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea, in order to set the scene for what follows. This will allow us to see what was traditionally consumed, and how it was consumed. Then, it will move to alcohol consumption in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, where we will see the ways in which East Asian drinking practices have been influenced by Western ideas. For example, in Hong Kong, we will identify how traditional rice wine consumption was shifted to Cognac in the 1960, then to wine in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Much of this was the result of the rising numbers of middle-class and super-rich who showed an interest in fine and rare wine investment and consumption. Significantly, the withdrawal of wine duty in Hong Kong in 2008 witnessed a significant historical landmark for the global wine trade, and a multibillion-dollar wine industry was created. While the increased consumption of wine has subsequently created a trend whereby consumers aspire to learn about wine tasting, others do not pay so much attention to how wine ought to be consumed according to Western standards. Since China has also become a major player in the global wine trade, the article will also explore how consumers and the wine industry have reacted to recent changes in drinking cultures. Using ethnographic research conducted in Hong Kong, the last part of this article will look at how wine drinking is essentially about clashes and performance between local tastes and global practices. For example, we will see how local sommeliers use their cultural capital to create a smooth five-star experience for their customers.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN EAST ASIA

For thousands of years, alcohol consumption has played an important part in various East Asian societies. Many East Asian drinking practices originated from China. One way to think about traditional drinking practices in the East Asian context is through considering the significance of Taoism. The Three Treasures of Taoist ethics are humility, moderation, and compassion.<sup>2</sup> Taoism can be perceived as a belief system or a philosophy built on being in harmony with nature, involving balancing forces between the principles of yin and yang. These beliefs have been practised by the Han Chinese for over 2,000 years. The balancing of natural forces extends to health and the body, and the over-consumption of alcohol is understood to have a damaging effect on the liver. On the other hand, alcoholic drinks were often perceived as a male preserve in traditional Chinese society, and many trusting friendships were established through drinking, while alcohol would also be drunk before battles against enemies and after victories. These portrayals are well documented in Chinese classical texts, poems, and paintings, for example, in classical Chinese literature. Folk heroes are often portrayed as being able to consume large amounts of alcohol, this being taken as a sign of their masculinity (see e.g. *Water Margin* (水滸傳) and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三國演義)). Alcohol has been an important element of traditional Chinese culture. For over 3,000 years, Chinese poets have used alcohol as a theme to express their feelings about friendships, relationships, and patriotism. As depicted in a number of old poems and texts, wine was often consumed with food as well as singing and music. In modern China, where many emasculated migrant men of lower socioeconomic background cannot find a romantic partner, they visit bars where female sex workers are present (Tsang, 2020). In general, alcohol consumption amongst women in China today is not a major public health issue, but research suggests that daily social pressure and unfriendly interactions with people can cause women to consume more alcohol and participate in risk drinking (Gu and Ming, 2021).

The specific types of alcohol consumed also play an important part in East Asian drinking cultures. Although various kinds of rice wine are still consumed today, they have an additional use in ritual terms. However, the everyday drinking of rice wine has declined recently. For many years, rice wine, fresh fruits, cooked meat, and burning incense sticks have been served to ancestors in major Chinese festivals as a form of respect. While some may prepare a ceremony during these festivals in front of a public altar inside a temple, others may do this at a

<sup>2</sup> The Three Treasures (三寶) are basic virtues in Taoism (see *Tao Te Ching* (道德經) by Laozi, chapter 67, written at around 4 BC). These ideas were later adopted as the Three Jewels by Chinese Buddhism.

smaller altar in the home. Indeed, one of the reasons why some East Asians, especially Chinese, tend not to consume rice wine is due to its strong association with death (Ho, 2015b).

Eating habits also determine how alcohol ought to be consumed. In many East Asian cultures, alcohol is often drunk with food. Just as bread is an important staple in many Western societies, rice is also a vital food in the East Asian dining culture. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) documented his extensive ethnographical and anthropological research about the social representation and modes of social behaviour in France in the post-war period. When exploring the importance of bread and wine in French dining culture, it is argued that 'without these two elements, a meal becomes not only inconsistent, but even unthinkable' (de Certeau, 1984: 85). Similarly, in East Asian dining culture, a meal simply cannot exist without rice, which has been an important food for the Chinese for thousands of years. For example, there is an old Chinese saying from a poem from the Song Dynasty (960-1279): 「巧婦難為無米之炊」: 'even a clever woman cannot make a rice-less meal', emphasising the importance of rice as an everyday food.

More importantly, while the colour white is associated with the dead, red is a symbol of good luck. Therefore, some drinkers consciously avoid drinking white wine, or wearing white at celebrations, especially weddings and birthdays. Nonetheless, for the Chinese, alcohol is a form of familial blessing and often consumed in celebration of births, marriages, and deaths (Ho, 2015b, 2021).

South Korea also has a rich history of traditional alcohol: for example, *nuruk*, produced from fermented malt, can be traced back to the Goguryeo (Koguryeo) kingdom which was located in ancient central and northern Korea (Corfield, 2015b). Like the Chinese, Koreans also used alcoholic drinks for religious events to mark special occasions. Some historical artefacts such as decorated wine ewers illustrate that in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Goryeo ruling class consumed expensive *sul*, which was thought to be made of rice wine, yeast and cereal buds or ginseng (Corfield, 2015b).

Alcohol also has other uses in the East Asian context. Because red wine loses its taste after the bottle has been opened for a few days, leftover wine can be used to make medicinal drinks. For example, there is a folk recipe for putting chopped onions into a bottle of red wine and leaving it for some days, which transforms the wine into a 'magical drink' with many supposed health benefits. This is similar to Hungarian Rom (gypsy), who drink whisky with paprika or black pepper, believing that it has medicinal properties for curing stomach ailments (Stewart, 1992). Chinese rice wine is also used with Chinese herbs, along with animal parts, to make medicines. While some types of 'medical' wine is drunk, others can only be applied externally to the skin. Nonetheless, recent medical research on 500,000 men and women in China illustrates that the increased consumption of alcohol 'uniformly increases blood pressure and stroke incidence' (Millwood et al., 2019: 1831), which is in contradiction to the popular belief that a small amount of alcohol intake is beneficial to health.

## DRINKING CULTURE IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Because many parts of East Asia were colonised by Western powers and then later decolonised, local and traditional culinary and drinking practices have been transformed in various complex ways in different parts of the region. For example, because of its colonial history, wine was introduced to Vietnam by the French. More importantly, Vietnamese consumers perceive wine to be 'modern' as well as being 'traditional', and that 'wine-drinking motivations are characterised by utilitarian and symbolic aspects rather than experiential ones' (Do et al., 2009: 253).

Both Singapore and Hong Kong were British colonies and occupied by Japan during the World War II. During the Japanese occupation of Singapore, alcoholic drinks, including *sake*, were imported from Japan (Corfield, 2015a). In Hong Kong, as a former British colony, many drinking practices and alcoholic drinks were imported from Britain. For example, the senior positions in the then Royal Hong Kong Police Force were mostly dominated by the British, who brought their drinking culture with them, and used drinking as a means of creating social bonds with junior colleagues (Ho, 2015b).

During the rapid economic development of the 1960s and 1970s in Hong Kong, many wealthy industrialists began to drink Cognac at business meetings and private gatherings, partly to communicate a sense of significant wealth and high social status. One of the ways to think about why Cognac became popular is through the idea of conspicuous consumption; the behaviour of wealth-flaunting through luxury consumption, which was first observed by Veblen (1899). In the past, the *nouveau riche* (new rich) class in industrialising America and Europe emulated the upper class by using their newly acquired wealth to purchase luxury goods and to flaunt them publicly. Similarly, the consumption of European luxury goods in Hong Kong, as well as other parts of East Asia, has been adopted to signal rising and high social status and significant wealth.

The period of the 1980s and 1990s is considered the most prosperous era of Hong Kong's post-World War II development, during which significant numbers of ordinary citizens became wealthy. Cognac brands such as Hennessy and Martell aimed to capture these new consumers. They hired Hong Kong celebrities to feature in a

number of highly influential print and TV commercials, featured in primetime shows and lifestyle magazines. Some of the TV commercials for Cognac portrayed successful Hong Kong businessmen entertaining showgirls in local nightclubs. At the time Cognac was a symbol of masculinity, wealth, and high social status, and was not only consumed in Hong Kong, but also in other so-called 'Tiger' economies - Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore. Although the Chinese Open Door Policy began in 1978, mainland China remained closed to the outside world and Hong Kong was the only gateway to it. In the 1980s China required much financial investment and know-how which Hong Kong industrialists and financiers played an important role in supplying (Chen et al., 1995). The early consumption of non-Chinese produced alcohol in China such as Cognac was introduced by Hong Kong business investors when they brought the drink from Hong Kong to the mainland.

Moving onto Japan, it already had a sophisticated grape wine consumption culture by the 1970s. For example, some of the first seminars on French wines were held in Japan in 1977, and by 1980, the first Japan-based competition for French wines and spirits was organised by Sopexa (an international PR agency) for sommeliers in Japan (OECD, 2012). Moreover, many Japanese tourists travelled to the Niagara region on the US/Canada border for ice wine; it was expected of them to buy some bottles for their friends and family members back home as souvenirs, in order to fulfil the social obligations of the Japanese gift culture (Teller and Hashimoto, 2000). Furthermore, other research shows that for Japanese wine consumers, the top 5 factors when choosing wine are: taste, style, colour, price, and recommendations from friends. The same research also suggests that when choosing Old World wines, country-of-origin (COO) is important. Furthermore, women prefer wines from the New World (Bruwer and Buller, 2013).

### Wine Consumption Trends

There are parallels between the drinking cultures of Hong Kong, mainland China, and South Korea, in all of which the presence of food together with alcohol is extremely important. This differs from many Western drinking cultures in which alcohol is the focus, while food is secondary. In East Asian cultures, being able to consume large amounts of food and alcohol shows that one respects the kindness of the host, and alcohol consumption in East Asian regions also carries significance when conducting business deals. For example, in Japan the consumption of *sake* is essential when it comes to conducting business (Moeran, 2005). It is believed that people who are intoxicated tell the truth, and that social barriers are thereby broken down, thus establishing trust between associates, and this is particularly important when business transactions are conducted during dining occasions.

It is also important to recognise that people in East Asia in general do not consume large amounts of alcohol (Kim et al., 2008). It is not uncommon for an entire family to completely refrain from drinking alcohol due to its negative health and social connotations. For example, in Singapore, the prevalence of binge drinking remains significantly lower at 13.7% than the global average at 18.2%, and even binge drinkers in Singapore binge drink infrequently (Lee et al., 2020). Furthermore, given how accessible wine has become in Hong Kong, it might have been thought that the removal of the wine (and beer) tax would cause excessive alcohol consumption, but research points in the opposite direction (Chung et al., 2013). For example, more educated consumers did begin to drink at a younger age, and that more people have started drinking wine, but overall binge drinking reduced from a baseline level of 9% in 2006 to 7.1% in 2011 and 7.3% in 2012 (Chung et al., 2013). However, while the level of alcohol dependence and abuse decreased, unemployed people and individuals with lower levels of education were more at risk of engaging in binge drinking (Chung et al., 2013). Overall, the researchers caution that the general increase consumption of wine (and beer) may cause health and social issues in the future, especially to some disadvantaged groups. Indeed, some scientists have demonstrated that as a result of biology, certain ethnic groups (e.g. Han Chinese) cannot consume large quantities of alcohol due to an inherent sensitivity to alcohol. This is because they tend to lack the ALDH2 enzyme which breaks down alcohol molecules in the body (Thomasson et al., 1991). These biological and genetic differences are thought to cause drinkers to suffer allergic reactions to alcohol, such as their skin, and in particular the face, turning extremely red due to increased blood flow, a phenomenon known as the 'Asian glow'.

On a societal level, it has been shown in countries such as the UK that alcohol consumption has had various negative social and economic impacts (Burton et al., 2016). Those who drink excessively are likely to need care from the state-funded health system. Workers who take alcohol-related sick leave affect productivity levels, which has subsequent impacts on the economy. In contrast, levels of alcoholism in most of East Asia remains low in comparison to Western countries (Garvey, 2005; Marcus, 2005).

Despite the negative connotations associated with alcohol in East Asian societies, it remains an important part of the local culture for men. For example, Western-style beers like Heineken and Carlsberg have been popular in Hong Kong for decades, especially amongst the working class (Ma, 2001). Beer is often seen as a masculine drink associated with male construction site workers, lorry drivers or others who undertake manual labour. It can be purchased quite easily from supermarkets and convenience stores. Local Chinese restaurants and side-street food stalls also sell beer at affordable prices, and this is also the case in other places like Singapore and Taiwan. Like

beer, in East Asia brandy is often perceived as a male drink, highlighting the gendered nature of alcohol consumption (Almila, 2021). However, this situation is already changing. For example, alcohol was once mostly consumed by male customers in bars in Japan. However, drinking places are now frequented by women who wish to learn more about wine, and wine consumption has come to be regarded as a form of sophisticated high culture which attracts Japanese women (S.-L. Ho, 2015). Increasing numbers of Japanese women business executives hope to project a cosmopolitan image in the corporate world, and they take wine tours of Europe and Australia to learn more about wine and cuisine. With changing gender norms, bars in Japan now employ female sommeliers to attract career women and housewives towards drinking wine (S.-L. Ho, 2015). Moreover, in Hong Kong, the change in alcohol duty as well as the increase in alcohol marketing in recent years has also increased the societal acceptance of alcohol consumption amongst women, especially the middle-aged (Wong et al., 2018). However, from the public health perspective, health surveillance and targeted messages may be required to ensure women do not suffer from harmful drinking behaviour and alcohol related diseases (Wong et al., 2018).

## WINE CONSUMPTION AND THE WINE INDUSTRY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

It is important to understand how the French system of wine classification is put to use by East Asian consumers when evaluating wine, because much of the current wine drinking culture in East Asia is modelled on French wine drinking and gastronomic traditions. Much of the current categorisation of wine is based on systems of wine appellation, classification, and *terroir* developed in France over the centuries, and the system of *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) is still important and influential internationally (Moran, 1993; Unwin, 1991).

Another system, well-recognised by many East Asian investors, used to judge the value of French wine, is the 1855 Bordeaux wine classification. Upon the request of Emperor Napoleon III for the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, this classification system was created to showcase what were defined as the very best Bordeaux wines. Five classes were created to judge the quality level: *Premières Grands Crus* (First Growth), *Deuxièmes Crus* (Second Growth), *Troisièmes Crus* (Third Growth), *Quatrièmes Crus* (Fourth Growth), and *Cinquièmes Crus* (Fifth Growth). The five best First Growths (*Premières Grands Crus*) - *Château Lafite Rothschild*, *Château Margaux*, *Château Latour*, *Château Haut-Brion*, and *Château Mouton-Rothschild* - are known to many East Asian wine collectors and consumers, and are amongst the most sought-after wines amongst them.

The most complex concept relating to the quality of wine is the notion of *terroir*. *Terroir* is a powerful concept because it brings together the spatial elements of the natural environment and synthesises them with socioeconomic and cultural factors (Dougherty, 2012: 22). Moreover, although the physical attributes of *terroir* are directly linked to the quality of the wine produced, 'the mechanisms that connect the two are not established in either the official definitions of the appellation territory or in most commentaries on the industry. The territory becomes the explanation' (Moran, 1993: 715). Although there is no exact translation of *terroir* in the Chinese context, it can still be understood as *fengtu* (風土), a concept made up of two Chinese characters that translate into 'wind' and 'soil', and this can be interpreted as 'the mystical relationship between the atmosphere and the earth' (Zheng, 2019: 283).

Classification systems, appellations, and *terroir* have influenced many East Asian investors, and they have been seeking out the highest quality wines according to these criteria. Over the last decade they have invested heavily in French vineyards and chateaux, and for this have been the subject of criticism by some observers for interfering with traditional French culture (Curran, 2021).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, of all the East Asian cultures of consumption, the Japanese one has often been regarded, in the region and in the West, as the most sophisticated. Japanese consumers have long shown their preferences for wines from the Old World, especially from France and Italy, and this is significant because 70% of the wine consumed in Japan is imported (Bruwer and Buller, 2013). However, in the 2010s, Japan also revived interest in traditional *Koshu* wine, which had become unfashionable and unpopular in the 1980s. It is now highly admired because of its reflection of Japanese identity, localness and heritage (Kingsbury, 2014). *Koshu* wine is thought to capture the idea of 'Japaneseness' and to express the distinctiveness of Japanese cuisine and culture (Kingsbury, 2014).

The South Korean wine market was already well-developed by the early 2000s, with research demonstrating that young people aged between 19 and 29 preferred sparkling wine significantly more than older consumers (Stephens, 2003). The same research points out that flavour and taste of the wine were the two of the most important factors when choosing wine, and the main purpose of drinking wine was to match it with the right food. For example, a full-bodied red wine such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot matches well with Korean barbecue food (*gogigui*). Yet many South Korean wine drinkers believed that Western wine should only be drunk with Western cuisines (Stephens, 2003). Consumers also tended to ask their friends and relatives for wine recommendations. Older South Korean consumers believed that drinking red wine in moderation could reduce heart diseases. Wine now plays an even more important role in South Korean's drinking culture and more recent

research illustrates this. For example, wine purchasing decisions are made by five types of lifestyle consumers. These are: those oriented to well-being; those who are fashion seeking; those driven by criteria of rational decision-making; those who are socially aspirational; and those who are pleasure and enjoyment oriented (Oh and Hwang, 2018). For example, wine marketers ought to pay attention to the well-being consumers who may want to consume low alcohol wine and see wine drinking more positively in general. Nonetheless, while consumers who had little wine knowledge tend to prioritise price and type, those who are more knowledgeable tend to focus on information communicated by professionals and media (Oh and Hwang, 2018). Other research also suggests an important link between women and wine consumption in South Korea. For example, not only can wine act as a means to emancipate women from traditional gender roles, such as those demanding that they sacrifice their own interests to those of their families, it can also be consumed in order to pursue Western culture and lifestyle (Lee et al., 2019).

While Cognac remained popular in Hong Kong in the early 2000s, there was a rapid growth in wine consumption during this period, for two reasons. First, consumers became wealthier and increasingly sophisticated: for example, holidays in France exposed Hong Kong tourists to French food and wine culture. Second, they aspired to consume European products which would give them the appearance of being more 'cultured'. In 2002, it was reported in Hong Kong that nearly 50% of adults drank wine, with an almost 50-50 split between men and women (Dewald, 2003). Moreover, the same research showed that consumers preferred red wine over white and sparkling, and that such consumers were likely to be more educated and of a higher socioeconomic status. There are, of course, many wine producing countries in Europe, but Hong Kong consumers were particularly keen on drinking French wine, because France has traditionally been perceived as a country with various forms of prestigious culture.

The increasing number of women entering the workforce in the last few decades has also influenced consumption trends. For example, while Cognac was previously regarded as a drink primarily for older, successful businessmen, a Cognac TV commercial featured in Taiwan in 2018 expressed a wider reframing of the drink. It portrayed Cognac being consumed by young and trendy women which a young barman serves them. Rising numbers of young people in East Asia have begun to pursue wine connoisseurship as both a career path and as a serious hobby. Those who aim to pursue wine professionally tend to be women. For example, in 2019 in Hong Kong, the only four Masters of Wine (MW) in Hong Kong were all women (Dwyer, 2020), and this has changed the gender stereotype that wine was traditionally perceived as a male dominated industry.

Until the 2000s, the expense of imported wine in Hong Kong made it unaffordable for any but the wealthiest groups. It was expensive because of the high import tax, set at 80%, and since demand was low, the availability of wine was also limited. In addition, it was mainly only served in luxury hotel restaurants, while imported beer, whisky and Cognac remained popular in other locales (Ho, 2019, 2021). Following the reduction of wine duty to 40% in 2007, this situation changed dramatically and changed further with the complete withdrawal of all duty on wine in 2008. This was largely the result of years of lobbying by business groups (Yoon and Lam, 2012). Since then, there has been a significant increase in demand for wine in Hong Kong: wine related topics can now be found in newspapers (e.g. South China Morning Post), magazines (e.g. Tatler), and films (e.g. *Wine War* (2017)). Wine is now widely available, and not only has this created a whole new wine industry in Hong Kong, it has also driven the wine trade and wine consumption in mainland China too. Around 90% of the wine imported to Hong Kong is then re-exported to the mainland.

Other parts of East Asia like South Korea, Japan, and Singapore also experienced a significant increase of wine consumption during the early 2000s (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2008; OECD, 2012; Stephens, 2003). In the early 2000s, Japan was the largest wine importer in Asia, at around US\$780m (HK\$6.0tn, £483.6m) in imports (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2008), but the Japanese wine market had matured and was considered by wine industry professionals unlikely to grow further. Hong Kong has since overtaken Japan as the largest wine importer in East Asia. Prior to the abolition of Hong Kong's wine duty, Singapore played an important role in the import and re-export of wine, with a growth of 22.5% during 2005 alone. The two major re-exporting destinations were Indonesia and Malaysia. In addition, Singapore witnessed a 10% growth in sales and a 13% growth in volume between 2000 and 2006, however, Hong Kong has since overtaken Singapore as the biggest wine trading hub in the world (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2008; Meiburg, 2018).

Trading in *en primeur*<sup>3</sup> wine (traded in barrels), has become a favoured form of wine investment in Hong Kong, but it remains mostly restricted to hedge funds and investment banks, and is usually traded through London via the Fine Wine Exchange (Liv-ex). Indeed, the luxury wine market operates differently to the rest of the market. Fine and rare wines such as the First Growth Bordeaux are usually purchased *en primeur*. Such wines are required to go through years of maturing process before they are suitable for consumption.

Hong Kong has a number of advantages as a wine trading hub (Hong Kong Trade Development Council, 2008). First, Hong Kong's geographical location allows wines to be easily imported and re-exported to mainland China via well-established and existing infrastructure, including motorway routes and shipping lanes. Historically,

<sup>3</sup> A vintage wine is sold or traded while it is in barrels, still going through the aging process. *En primeur* is also known as wine futures.

New World wines were first shipped to Hong Kong via England then redistributed to other destinations. The emergence of Hong Kong as one of Asia's main wine trading hubs has allowed New World wine to be shipped directly to Hong Kong, significantly reducing the overall cost of transportation and storage. Second, Hong Kong's status as a free port – it does not impose import tariffs – encourages the trading of luxury goods, further facilitating trade in expensive and rare fine wines. Hong Kong's robust financial system has further driven the trade in fine wines, and wine futures are now traded in large quantities. Third, the abolition of the wine tax has had a domino effect. The cost of administration, storage, distribution, and re-export has decreased, and as a result, there has been a surge in fine wine auctions and domestic wine consumption (Poon, 2021).

When the wine industry took off in Hong Kong in around 2008, it seemed that that the city-state would face three challenges to establishing itself as a wine-trading hub. First, Hong Kong's wine trading history was relatively young, in comparison with London's, for example, which can be traced back several centuries. In addition, there were few recognised wine experts in Hong Kong, which made it difficult to find knowledgeable traders, educate the consumers, and create demand. Furthermore, Singapore was already established as an important wine distribution hub. However, the removal of wine duty in Hong Kong was only one of the factors that has accelerated the wine trade. Most importantly, the three government agencies, InvestHK (the foreign direct investment (FDI) agency), the Hong Kong Trade and Development Council (HKTDC), and the Hong Kong Tourism Board, worked together to develop mechanisms, strategies, and events which have enabled the promotion of the wine trade (Ho, 2019).

Wealth creation and inter-generational wealth accumulation has allowed the younger generation to engage in lifestyle consumption and within a few years, a significant number of Hong Kong consumers had developed a sophisticated taste for wine. For example, the current author introduces three types of wine drinkers; established, aspiring, and creative (Ho, 2021). While established drinkers are wealthy connoisseurs and already have a great deal of knowledge about traditional Western drinking etiquette, aspiring drinkers aim to learn about wine drinking with the aspiration to become established drinkers. In contrast, creative drinkers do not to practise wine consumption based on the previous two groups; they invent their own ways of drinking wine in order to suit their palette. Other research illustrates that the wine attributes most listed in online searches are wine origin, grape variety, and food and wine matching (Tang et al., 2015), while wine labels with traditional designs are preferred over modern and contemporary ones, with yellow being the most favoured colour. At the same time, local consumers are also in favour of red label design with 'elegant contemporary' characteristics (Tang et al., 2015: 15).

Moreover, as consumer goods continue to circulate around the world at an even more rapid speed, the ways in which these goods are consumed have also evolved. The notion of 'third indigenization' (Ho, 2021) captures how products of two or more of places of origin are combined when a new product is created in a third place. For instance, wine marketers are able to respond quickly to local trends. For instance, my ethnographic work found that one exhibitor at a wine fair in Hong Kong was selling Italian wine labelled with the cartoon character 'Hello Kitty', which is hugely popular across the East Asian region, especially with younger women (Figure 1). In this case, an Italian wine is labelled with a Japanese cartoon which is then sold in Hong Kong. Furthermore, anime and cartoon-branded products are highly popular in East Asia as they convey the Japanese idea of *kawaii* (可愛), or 'cuteness' (Ho, 2015a).

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WINE MARKET IN MAINLAND CHINA

The exponential growth of wealth in mainland China since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century created many millionaires and billionaires who are now participating in the luxury market of consumer goods largely produced in, and imported from, countries such as France, Italy, Switzerland, and the UK. Nonetheless, the modes of wine consumption, production, and logistics have witnessed some changes over the years.

Regarding wine consumption in mainland China, early research suggests that in 2006, Chinese people drank Chinese spirits during mundane occasions, but they only consumed red wine on special occasions, such as Chinese New Year (Liu and Murphy, 2007). The same research also shows that Chinese consumers believed that all wine was red, and demonstrated little wine knowledge at the time. Similarly, other researchers such as Jenster and Cheng (2008) point out that China lacked a wine drinking culture. Wealthy Chinese consumers sometimes like to flaunt their wealth, but do not have sufficient wine knowledge to do this except by buying the rarest wines and most expensive wines, such as *Château Lafite Rothschild*, which are conventionally understood to be the best possible. However, such purchasing behaviour could be deemed 'vulgar' by some Western observers (Smith Maguire and Lim, 2014), because those consumers have substantial amounts of money to buy expensive wines, but are without the necessary cultural capital to express and perform the kinds of taste that Western wine norms dictate. Furthermore, as income has significantly increased in China, wine consumption can be seen as a positive trend, but wine should not be regarded as a placement product over beer (García-Cortijo et al., 2019). Overall, wine is



**Figure 1.** An exhibitor promoting ‘Made in Italy’ Hello Kitty wine at a wine fair in Hong Kong (photo by author).

perceived by both Chinese consumers and those who sell to them as a luxury product which promotes a Western lifestyle (Capitello et al., 2015).

The widespread Western stereotype is that these newly rich consumers do not have the relevant knowledge to consume sophisticated products from the West in ways defined as appropriate by Western drinking and wine cultures. Chinese drinkers are thought to mix the most expensive wine with soft drinks, or to have Cognac with ice cubes, or to add to wine dried plums coated in salt and sugar (Ho, 2021). While such remarks made by Westerners may be racist in nature, nonetheless the scale of wealth being generated in East Asia at an unprecedented level is welcomed by Western luxury brands for creating high sales volumes and profit margins (Abboud, 2021).

Some research indicates that the most important factor of Chinese consumers’ selection of wine is based on price (Xu et al., 2014). For example, to buy a bottle of red wine as a gift, consumers would be willing to pay US\$20 more for a French wine than an American one, but for personal consumption, a purchaser would be likely to pay a lower additional cost – about US\$13 to \$20 more for a bottle of French wine over a bottle of Chinese or American wine (Xu et al., 2014: 265). Moreover, the most important factor in determining how elite restaurants in Beijing curate their wine lists is how the pricing of the wine matches the range of the food offered. The second most important factor is the wider popularity of the particular wine (Lockshin et al., 2011). For Chinese consumers, country-of-origin (COO) is generally more important than price in judging wine quality (Balestrini and Gamble (2006). Most importantly, the notion of ‘face’ (面子, which loosely translates as honour or respect in social relations), which is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, influences Chinese consumers in spending more money on wine drinking in public places, and on others rather than on oneself. Specifically, fine wine as well as other luxury products are used by the Chinese as gifts to signal wealth and power, and this gesture acts as a function to maintain and improve ‘face’ (Seidemann et al., 2017).

As for wine production, the creation in China of French-style wine began to emerge when the Chinese government encouraged French wine makers to start producing in China. Initially there were obstacles, such as local counterfeiters registering French brand names in China, which resulted in many vexed legal issues. Nonetheless, there were examples of highly successful collaborations in which excellent quality wine has been produced (Mustacich, 2015), and farmers can earn between two to eight times more by growing wine grapes rather than table grapes (Ma, 2013). However, there are constraints on production, such as irrigation challenges and costs of labour, which limit the large-scale production of high-quality wine.

Like many luxury products, wine forgery is also a severe problem. The production of counterfeited and fake wine may include the use of old bottles, fake labels and spoiled grapes (Shen, 2018). In 2013, around 50,000 bottles of *Château Lafite Rothschild* were imported to China, but two million bottles were sold, and it has been reported that one in two bottles of French wine sold in China in 2015 was fake (Shen, 2018). Since then, new technologies such as blockchain, NFC (near-field communication), and RFID (radio-frequency identification) have been introduced in order to tackle counterfeited products. For example, *Château Le Pin* has intergraded NFC chips which contain encrypted digital certificates into their wine labels. As a result, the authenticity of the wine can be verified by using NFC-enabled devices such as mobile phones.

Lau et al. (2017) argue that the wine trade in China has driven the development of logistics services, and this is likely to significantly influence the 'Belt Road Initiative' (BRI) trade routes. The introduction of 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) by the Chinese government in 2013, later rebranded as the BRI in 2016, has allowed the rapid economic and geopolitical expansion towards Europe through Central Asian countries. This has been achieved by China investing in massive infrastructure projects (e.g. hospitals, roads, railways and schools) and institutions (e.g. the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)). Indeed, under the BRI, the 'New Silk Road' and 'Maritime Silk Road' will rebalance China's relationships with Africa, Asia, Europe, and the US (Callahan, 2016). Nonetheless, the Chinese wine trade would not have been able to thrive so rapidly without the well-developed logistics hubs in cities such as Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Tianjin having similar delivery costs (Lau et al., 2017). In contrast, cities like Beijing and Chongqing have less efficient distribution networks, access to ports is more difficult, and therefore, higher delivery charges are incurred. It is more cost effective to transport bulk wine to the logistics-hub cities and then redistribute to other locations (Lau et al., 2017).

## WINE AS LUXURY: A HONG KONG CASE STUDY

So far, this article has examined the historical context of drinking and wine consumption in various East Asian regions. These places have long histories of rich and varied gastronomic cultures and practices, but the domination of Western culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a shift towards the consumption of imported goods from the West. The final section of this article will take Hong Kong as an empirical example and explore how wine research can be carried out methodologically. It will also investigate how wine consumption on the luxury scale can be understood as a complex process encompassing transformations of tradition, rising wealth, and the interplay of Western wine norms with local cultural assumptions, as well as the handling by wine professionals of the conflicts and contradictions which arise as a result of the interpenetration of the various factors. Wine-related workers like sommeliers have to negotiate micro-level paths through challenges induced by long-term and large-scale social change. The analysis offered below was achieved through ethnography and interviews conducted at a five-star hotel and a wedding.

While wine has begun to appeal to those who did not consume it before, the luxury consumer market has become more vibrant. According to an interview carried out with two highly experienced ethnic Chinese employees of a five-star hotel in Hong Kong - a sommelier and a manager of an Italian-styled restaurant - both red and white wine (餐酒, which literally translates as 'meal alcohol') began to become popular from the mid-1990s onwards. Prior to this, customers would not order wine at all, or as the sommelier put it, 'even if they did, they wouldn't know how to drink it'. The lack of knowledge of Western wine consumption's norms meant that customers would usually drink brandy or other spirits.

During the interview, the sommelier discreetly answered several calls on his mobile phone. After one particular call, two cases of *Château Margaux* stored in wooden crates arrived. He unlocked the wine cellar, which was located by the entrance of the Italian restaurant and put the wine inside. These cases of wine belonged to a regular customer - one of a group of wealthy local customers with an appreciation for fine wine and dining. In the 1990s and the early 2000s, some East Asian buyers travelled to wine auctions in Europe and New York to bid for wines, although in the last few decades, such buyers may also bid by telephone and online, and some of these auctions are now taking place in Hong Kong. Once they have won the bid, they arrange for the wines to be shipped, which may also be taken care of by the auction houses. Different jurisdictions assume different levels of import tax, but if the final destination of the shipment is Hong Kong or Macau, import tax will not be imposed. Consumers' choice of wine

can vary according to their social and cultural backgrounds, and the sommelier offered an example, as follows (extract from interview transcript; translated from Cantonese):

With European customers, they may want a bottle of dry white wine, and this is what they want, such as Chablis, bone dry, crisp. However, this may not be what local customers want, they may ask you for something quite dry, but they are actually looking for something else.

The restaurant manager then added that local customers are actually perhaps looking ‘for something more medium dry, maybe Chardonnay’.

Chardonnay from some other regions typically suits sweeter palates than the very crisp wines from the Chablis region which are made from the same grape. The staff also pointed out that some customers possessed more knowledge about Western wine consumption practices, and these were likely to be of the wealthy upper middle-class. The amount of wining and dining knowledge that one possesses is a reflection of one’s sociocultural status, and wine has the capacity to express forms of social differentiation (as Demossier (2005) points out for Western contexts).

According to the interviewees, customers were usually aware, at least to some extent, of food and wine matching matters. But when customers ‘got it wrong’ in terms of matching wine to food, the staff had to do some careful repair work. The descriptions on wine labels and menus of specific wines could be misleading, especially for those lacking in Western-style knowledge, and this might cause confusion and choices that were less than optimal, according to the Western norms the staff were working with. However, the staff noted that a more experienced drinker is more likely to be able to read the wine labels ‘correctly’. The staff members said they could also tell if their customers were experienced drinkers by considering the food and wine choices, and how they would consume these. Sometimes they came across customers who would like to order a bottle of aged red wine that needed to breathe (or required the use of a decanter), a fact which the customers were not aware of. On these occasions, the staff members needed to do some deft negotiation of the situation, to mediate the contradiction between customer choice and the qualities of the wine which their Western training had imparted to them. They could, for example, buy time for the wine to breathe by politely suggesting that the customer might like to order oysters with a glass of white wine as a starter. By the time they finished this, the red wine would then be ready to drink. The restaurant manager said, because they are paying customers who should not be offended by staff members, that ‘we don’t directly tell them what to order and how to consume it’. He went on to elaborate, the trick is to strike a balance between enhancing the customers’ feelings of satisfaction and correcting their mis-steps, but without pointing out their lack of knowledge on wine.

Both the sommelier and restaurant manager - and others playing similar roles across the Hong Kong dining scene - play an important role vis-a-vis their wealthy clients. Their role is to help wealthy customers who may not know a great deal about food and wine pairing to slowly increase their stock of wine capital - that is, Western knowledge and etiquette concerning wine. The interviewees claimed that this has indeed happened, with many returning customers clearly demonstrating increased wine capital on each successive visit. Some customers who had started dining at this particular restaurant were aspiring entrepreneurs, with limited wine capital. But later they became extremely wealthy, and as their stocks of economic capital went up, so did their wine capital. In this way, fewer mis-steps in terms of wine choices were made, and fewer rectifications by the staff were needed. In fact, some of these customers became regular diners at the restaurant over more than two decades and they built a strong relationship with the permanent staff members. These customers stored their personal wine collections at the hotel for easy access when dining there. Any initial encounters of awkwardness in wine selection and food matching were overcome in favour of smoother calibrations between customers’ tastes on the one side, and those of the staff - and the Western wine norms they work with - on the other.

Moving from fine dining occasions to celebratory events, the increasing popularity of wine consumption in Hong Kong has also transformed the way that alcohol is consumed at weddings. For example, in the 1980s Cognac was perceived as a high-class beverage, while wine was expensive and not widely available. Sometimes, the host of the wedding would line up multiple bottles of Cognac on a table, in order to display their great wealth and praiseworthy generosity. At a particular wedding banquet I attended, only red wine was made available to guests. Although seafood dishes were included in the menu, white wine was not available, despite the Western wine norm that it is white wine that usually goes with fish and seafood. It was evident that the wedding host consciously avoided serving white wine. White is the colour associated with the dead in traditional Chinese culture, and drinking white wine may signify bad luck in the context of weddings.

Weddings in Hong Kong, as well as other parts of East Asia, tend to focus on the observance and performance of traditions, the enacting of rituals, and the display of wealth. Alcohol consumption has long been associated with rituals, and some Chinese people today are quite superstitious. As white is the colour related to the dead, one should accordingly avoid wearing white clothes, or drinking white wine, in traditional Chinese celebrations such as weddings and birthdays. In contrast, Chinese people who have been deeply exposed to Western cultural norms, or

those who grew up outside of East Asia, tend to be less superstitious. Therefore, their ways of consumption in general may place a lesser focus on the observance of customs and rituals, with consequent effects on their readiness to drink white wine in social contexts where the more superstitious might shun such a possibility.

During the wedding I attended, toasts were made with Cognac, where the couple and their family members would go around each table to greet the guests with a glass in hand. However, on this occasion, the 'Cognac' served was in fact Chinese tea, the colour of which was exactly the same as Cognac. Using real Cognac would greatly increase the cost of the wedding banquet, and it could also make the hosts and guests extremely drunk. Here we can observe another kind of negotiation between competing factors: the prestige value of a Western grape-derived spirit is deemed to be necessary for the wedding to be carried out appropriately, but a substitute is deployed, in order to avoid costs, both financial and social. Those who planned the wedding are engaged in grape-based negotiations that bear similarities to the mediations afforded by their wine professional counterparts, and both sets of negotiations should be seen as part of, and partly constituting, the wider drinks and alcohol culture of contemporary Hong Kong, which is delicately - and sometimes contradictorily and conflictually - placed between Western and East Asian norms of appropriate behaviour.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This article has offered a brief overview of the history of alcohol consumption in East Asia and it has examined the transformation from a culture of consuming domestically-produced alcohol to drinking some of the most exclusive wines from France and other major wine-producing countries. It has constructed a sociology of wine analysis regarding how wine consumption has developed over the years in four ways.

First, wine is an alcoholic drink that some East Asians are allergic to, and this is because of the lack of ALDH2 enzyme which helps to break down alcohol molecules in the body. Moreover, alcohol abuse in East Asia has not generally been regarded as a major public health issue, but some health authorities as well as medical researchers have been monitoring the situation closely since the East Asian region has witnessed an overall increase in wine consumption in the last decade or so.

Second, many luxury consumption trends which have been taking place in East Asia in the last few decades have already been observed in North America and Western Europe. Nonetheless, there are three reasons behind why fine and rare wine remain as popular luxury goods for elites. Their economic value goes up over time, which makes them an attractive investment vehicle. They signify high-class and social prestige, and the possession of valued Western knowledge forms. They communicate wealth, both because of their rarity and the costs with associated specialist storage. Knowing about luxury wine and having the financial capital to purchase it puts elite persons in a higher social and cultural position than everyone else. However, as luxury products have become more affordable and also are increasingly widely counterfeited, their high symbolic value has decreased somewhat. Within the luxury products sector across East Asia, it is widely acknowledged that some of the well-known brands such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton have become the victim of their own success, and they are no longer perceived as being as exclusive as they once were (Halzack, 2015).

Third, it is evident that traditionally Western wine drinking practices have been transformed and localised. For example, 'creative drinkers' may introduce new consumption drinking practices to alter and, according to their norms of taste, 'improve' the taste of wine by adding dried plums, ice cubes, and soft drinks (Ho, 2021).

Western observers may believe that these consumers do not have the relevant knowledge to consume wine the 'correct' - that is, Western - way. However, as the current author argued elsewhere (Ho, 2021), in Hong Kong and elsewhere, while 'aspiring drinkers' aim to learn about French drinking etiquette in the way that 'traditional drinkers' have done in the past, 'creative drinkers' pay little attention to 'established' consumption practices and wine etiquette. Still, wine professionals continue to steer some customers to what they perceive as 'correct' practices.

Fourth, consumers in Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea had already begun to consume imported alcohol from Europe such as Cognac and wine in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the removal of wine duty in Hong Kong in 2008 marked the beginnings of the creation of a regional wine industry. Mainland Chinese consumers have also driven up demand for rare and luxury wine. While the consumption of inexpensive wine continues to increase, the fundamental driver of the wine industry in East Asia is grounded on its appeal as a key component of luxury consumption.

The popularisation of wine in East Asia involves both the ways in which the global(ised) wine industry has responded to the increased demand for luxury wine consumption, and also how consumers have created new ways of drinking wine. From the perspective of the wine industry, winemakers in many countries, both in the so-called Old and New Worlds, have shifted their marketing strategies increasingly towards East Asian consumers. This is partly because the overall consumer spending in North America and Europe has declined significantly due to the global financial crisis of 2007-9. While inexpensive imported wine is nowadays widely accessible in East Asia, fine and rare wine continues to gain in popularity amongst the wealthier social strata and demand remains high. In

general, East Asian consumers tend to consume less wine in terms of volume but at higher quality levels than do their European counterparts, obviously because wine consumption in Asia is more of an elite phenomenon. Some European winemakers have already expanded their production networks to East Asia - e.g. *Château Lafite Rothschild* setting up in the Shandong Province in China - in order to mark the importance of the growing Chinese market and to capitalise on its expansion accordingly. At the same time, wealthy wine enthusiasts from East Asia have acquired vineyards in Europe. Some observers view this positively because of the capital needed to rejuvenate the industry (Curran, 2021).

Methodologically speaking, my empirical research in Hong Kong was carried out through the analysis of interviews, focus groups, marketing materials, and ethnography - all standard tools of Western social science. However, as Cohen and Lockshin (2017) have argued, there are a number of challenges academic researchers may face in looking into wine phenomena in East Asian societies, including their own cultural assumptions and unthinking ethnocentrism, as well as the potentially high financial costs of conducting this kind of research. Cohen and Lockshin (2017) also suggest other reasons why brands operating in East Asia, and especially in the politically charged social environment of China, may not be willing to engage with researchers. For example, most companies tend to focus on developing their own businesses, and have no time for, or interest in, dealing with outsiders, especially those who may be regarded with some suspicion as possibly writing critical accounts of their operations. To deal effectively with these and other challenges, the researcher's abilities to effectively communicate with research participants, to understand the field 'from within', and to decode the relevant sources and materials in their original languages, are all vital in this respect. Parachuting into a wine-related context for a short period will only give superficial, and possibly misleading, forms of knowledge. More generally, I would argue that understanding the wider context of wine consumption across East Asia requires deeper analysis than has been carried out until now of the long-term history of the alcohol and food cultures of the region, and the cosmology and philosophy animating these. Only then can we understand in a deep way what is happening when Western wine norms, which also have long histories, combine and clash with East Asian attitudes and practices. This is my specific, East Asia-focused contribution to Inglis's (this volume) call for the sociology of wine to be deeply rooted in awareness of long-term trends and dynamics, including accounting for the long-standing legacies of colonialism. As East Asia continues to become wealthier, this region will increasingly drive the development of the global wine industry and globalised markets. Significant elements of the wine-related innovations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will come from this region, and be due to the multiplying numbers of both customers and wine professionals to be found there. Western wine norms and established forms of etiquette will continue to be transformed, in complex and possibly unpredictable forms of localisation and indigenisation (Ho, 2021). Well-trained and historically-informed wine researchers, including sociological ones, will find plenty to interest them in the coming decades.

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## Wine Diversity: Paradox or Economic Innovation?

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the extreme differentiation within the wine market, which economists view as an aberration. Drawing on empirical material from previous studies and historical texts, it argues that the wine market's organization has evolved over the 20th century towards a split between two different economic regimes: one 'standard', which conforms to and is conformed by economics, and one alternative, which is more akin to the art market. Their differences pertain to processes of qualification (Callon) or materialization (Slater, 2002), with the former leading to a stabilization of quality and the latter to its unstabilization. The peculiarity of this unstabilized-quality market affords insights into the continued growth of the number of wine references on the market, despite its economic oddity.

**Keywords:** economicization, economic regimes, quality certification, geographic indications, wine exploration

### INTRODUCTION: THE DANGER OF EXTREME DIFFERENTIATION ON THE WINE MARKET

France's wine consumption has been declining since the 1960s. In 2000, French wine exports also started slowing down, while varietal wines from new producing countries were making their way onto the French market with a promising future ahead of them. At the time, many critics pointed to the excessive number of French wine appellations—of which there were over 450—and raised the question of how consumers were supposed to make sense of them. With '35% of surveyed consumers unaware of the meaning of the three letters AOC' (César, 2002), how could a Chinese or Californian consumer find their way through the 'jungle' of French wine names? Although determining the socially optimal degree of differentiation, or even how far or close a market is to it, appears to be a daunting task, economists assert that excessive diversity is detrimental to the proper functioning of the market (Dixit and Stiglitz, 1977; Lancaster, 1975; Spence, 1976). The wine market, with its hundreds of thousands of brands, types and vintages, seemed to have exceeded all reasonable limits. It had to be simplified! The five or six main grape varieties that structure the world's supply had to bring their visibility back to French wines and facilitate exports.

#### The Diversity of Wines: A Blindspot in Research on the Wine Economy

Twenty years later, these arguments no longer seem quite as self-evident, as the main grape varieties have become less fashionable, and the number of appellations continues to grow. Is the French wine offer's diversification disease flaring up again? Or is wine fuelling a particular kind of market, characterized by a plethora of products? What do studies on the economics of wine say? Wine has generated an exceptional amount of research in economics, aptly summed up by Chaikind (2012):

No other good can come close to the diverse range of applications as wine can, whether as an agricultural commodity, an investment good, a cornerstone of international trade, a contributor to price theory, or even as a form of investment in human capital.

Yet, surprisingly, Chaikind (2012) fails to mention a longstanding feature of the wine market: its extreme differentiation. Karl Storchmann, founder and managing editor of the *Journal of Wine Economics*, provides a concise list of the questions to which the wine economy has given rise: '(1) the value of wine as an alternative financial asset, (2) wine and climate change, and (3) wine and expert opinion' (Storchmann, 2012). The wine market's diversity is not among them.

One may assume that these researchers see this particularity as both artificial and illusory, merely a plethora of different labels on very similar products which can, moreover, be held responsible for this market's specific dysfunctions: The considerable dispersion of wine prices (Combris et al., 1997; Costanigro et al., 2007), and the existence of wine critics and quality signs which, instead of informing consumers on the quality of wines, only parasitize the adjustment of prices and qualities (Ashenfelter, 1992; Ashenfelter and Jones, 2013; Cardebat et al., 2014; Friberg and Grönqvist, 2012; Rössel and Beckert, 2013). The multitude of labels, an economic aberration, may thus result from wine's particular 'symbolic charge' stemming from a dense layer of socio-cultural history that is assumed to weigh down on the market's proper functioning. Studies of wine consumption have sought to decipher this layer. In line with the work of Warde (1994), Demossier (2005) studied recent changes in wine consumption and in attention to the quality, naturalness, origin, or authenticity of wines, in search of the underlying processes of identity and distinction to which they bear witness. Here, wine is seen as the clay in a social modelling process that is deemed to tamper with economic exchanges. Wine diversity should henceforth be a matter of sociology rather than economics.

Karpik (2007) finds it surprising that economics had not taken more interest in this peculiarity of the wine market. His explanation for this is that, because neoclassical economics assumes goods of the same denomination to be homogeneous, it overlooks vast ranges of products and services which, on the contrary, are 'incommensurable'. In the rest of his book, he proceeds to explain the particular workings of this market of heterogeneous goods that are 'marked by uncertainty about quality', yet which all share the same broad denomination: wine, lawyers, doctors and psychoanalysts, cultural productions such as novels, films, records, plays, paintings, and so on. However, Karpik's (2007) interpretation relies on the assumption that these products cannot be compared—which in itself is as questionable as the homogeneity of the goods, the notion against which he argues. Absolutely heterogeneous singularities cannot have a degree of quality; they can only be themselves. Whenever quality, however uncertain it may be, is among the attributes of things, they are comparable. Irrespective of their differences, two goods can always be compared, if only from the point of view of their usefulness or their general quality; whatever their particularities, two wines can always be compared as wines. This is the whole purpose of blind tasting tests; by concealing any other form of difference, they subject different wines to comparison *as wines*.

### Quality as a Process of Qualification and 'Materialization'

Whether they belong to the field of economics or sociology, all the aforementioned works have one thing in common: they take taste and quality as a given, and thus fail to understand how quality results from economic action and, in turn, structures this very action.

Slater (2002) took a decisive step in this direction. He took up Lancaster's (1971) analysis of any economic good as a 'bundle of characteristics', but interpreted it in an original way. The elements that characterize a good, he argued, do not 'spring out' of its essential nature, but instead stem from a process of 'materialization' within economic activity. With this notion, Slater refuses not only the division between natural and symbolic properties—which is always opportunistic and arbitrary—along with the idea that an object's qualities are given *a priori*, but also the division between what is social and what is economic:

[W]e do not live in a 'more cultural' economy, or a society of the sign, or an enculturated economy but we do live in a world that has opened up the black box of the social object, institutionalising and rendering reflexive processes which were always incipient. Hence, we live in a world of increasing instability at the level of material culture, and one which is driven by strategies of stabilization and destabilization, by contests over the materiality of the social world itself (Slater, 2002: 107).

Quality, be it stabilized or destabilized, is never the pre-existing 'given' that economic or sociological studies take it to be. A good's quality is always the result of a process of producing this quality—a process that is framed to varying degrees and is never predetermined or performative. Slater takes up the work of Callon (1998a, 1998b), who ponders the strange duplicity of the French word '*économie*', which makes no distinction between economic activity and the science of economics, whereas the latter models the former to better discipline it. Callon et al.

(2002) emphasize the importance of product qualification and requalification, which result in a process of constant ‘economicization’ (Caliskan and Callon, 2009, 2010) and give rise to the emergence of economic ‘goods’, the qualitative existence of which economics hastily freezes.

The shift in viewpoint that these authors introduce allows us to re-examine the question of wine differentiation. Perhaps the diversity of wines appears to be a sort of aberration from the point of view of economics because the (re-)qualification or materialization process does not bring about the expected stabilization of quality. This calls for a closer look at this materialization process, to understand wine’s resistance to offer ‘qualculations’ (Cochoy, 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2003), materializations and categorizations, and, ultimately, to articulate the alternative that results from it.

To this end, this article leaves aside social interpretations of wine differentiation (Demossier, 2001, 2010; Rössel et al., 2018) that rest upon a state of affairs—the vast differentiation of the wine offers—but which do not provide an account of, or an explanation for, its emergence or persistence. Instead, I adopt a pragmatist posture, as laid out by James (1996) in which the focus is on accounting for the process through which the world as we know it emerges, rather than on searching for the causes from which it might result. To pinpoint the processes of construction of wine diversity, I will pull the thread of winegrowers’ increasing criticism, that is gather and analyze their increasing complaints regarding the ‘standardization’ and ‘uniformization’ of wines since the 1970s. These grievances were a leitmotif in interviews held with wine producers during two series of field surveys: one on the quality of wines in France, run mainly in the Pays de Loire and the South of France from 1998 to 2008; and the other on the notion of *terroir* in the face of climate change, run from 2014 to 2017 in Alsace and the Pays de Loire. Hundreds of interviews were held over the course of these surveys, in which various stakeholders in the wine industry, most of whom were winegrowers, described their wine production and marketing activities and commented on them. Using the concept of ‘materialization’ as Slater so aptly defined it, the present analysis focuses on these complaints and criticisms, to understand what alternative mode of materialization these producers aspire to when they denounce the standardization of wines.

The article opens with a brief historical overview of the birth of *Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée* in France. Producers’ grievances are rooted in diverging interpretations of the ‘guarantee’ and ‘spirit’ of appellations of origin, with economists’ criticisms focusing on the former and appellation winemakers on the latter. The first part of this article therefore provides a brief historical overview of the birth of appellations of origin in France. The second part presents a reinterpretation of divergences regarding the qualification of wines as the emergence of two market regimes with opposite processes of materialization. In the conclusion, I discuss a possible ‘artification’ of wine in one of these market regimes.

## RECOVERING THE PAST QUALITY OF WINES

Variety in wines is nothing new. Since ancient times, the offer has been structured according to wine’s colour, origin, grape variety, vinification technique, or vintage, and the quality of wines has long drawn attention in places of power.<sup>1</sup> The wine industry underwent a serious crisis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when phylloxera gradually invaded all European vineyards and halted the production of fresh grapes for several years. This had a profound effect on the organization of the market, as winegrowers had to resort to radical innovations to make up for the lack of grapes. They used grapes from the French colonies, notably Algeria, and from countries like Australia and South Africa, or from new hybrid varieties of American vines that were resistant to the disease, or even rehydrated raisins, musts, or recomposed wines based on mixtures of their main ingredients: tartaric acid, sugar, alcohol, tannins, and a panoply of adjuvants and colorants intended to emulate the usual appearance and taste of wine. Once the crisis was over, these innovations, which had profoundly diversified production methods, were deemed to be a threat, not only to the identity and quality of wines, but also to the relevance of the categories that structured the market.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the French wine industry was thus struck with a succession of laws that were passed at an unprecedented rate in an effort to regulate the production and denominations of wines (Stanziani, 2003a, 2003b). This legislative endeavour spawned a series of texts on appellations of origin that led to the famous 1935 law on appellations of controlled origin<sup>2</sup> (AOC), the success of which would be matched only by the hostility and conflicts it generated.

AOC regulations stipulate the conditions to which all producers wishing to identify their wine by the name of their geographical origin must adhere. They list production constraints pertaining to viticulture: ‘local, fair, and

<sup>1</sup> Besides the famous 1395 edict by Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, prohibiting the cultivation of Gamay, numerous other royal edicts and regulations were aimed at preserving the reputation and quality of wines in France and elsewhere, including Spain (Universidad de Valladolid, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> République Française (1935). Décret-loi du 30 juillet 1935 Défense du marché des vins et régime économique de l’alcool. JORF du 31 juillet 1935 8314-8319.

consistent practices<sup>3</sup> in the choice of grape varieties, vine size, yields, vinification techniques, and above all the place where the grapes are grown. Appellation regulations also set out standards for the final product: thresholds concerning the acetic acid, alcohol, and sugar content of the wines, which can be associated with consensual defects, such as acetic tainting (vinegar acid spoilage), or can compromise wine conservation, such as a lack of alcohol.

As names of origins are exclusively associated with a place of production, these appellations of origin—‘Châteauneuf du Pape’ or ‘Alsace’, for instance—establish a monopoly on the production of wines in these geographic areas and thus introduce a ‘wart’ in trademark law, which is a source of acute tension within international trade regulation bodies. Yet a growing number of countries that use appellations of origin are adopting this regulation to protect their emblematic local products (Porto, Madeira, Rioja, etc.). More surprisingly, from the 1970s onwards, appellations became the focus of intense tensions among the very people who use them to differentiate their production: winegrowers whose products bear these appellations.

### **AOCs’ Guarantee of Means**

Appellations of origin guarantee that a product has been manufactured according to a certain process, rather than the actual result of the process, that is, the final taste of the wine. Around 1900, Joseph Capus and the Baron Le Roy justified their crusade for the defence of appellations of origin by claiming that the quality of French wines, which had made their reputation throughout the world, was collapsing. They therefore wanted to provide impetus for a movement to ‘seek quality’ (Capus, 1906) which required a specific long-term vision of production and marketing:

I wanted to show that once you have adopted the movement towards quality, you cannot stop. Quality is always perfectible because it is essentially a human endeavour. It demands momentary sacrifices, but the payoff is ample in the future. (Baron Le Roy, quoted in Cofradep, 1974a: 411).

The guarantee of quality therefore relies on a strong guarantee of means. The innovations that had adulterated wines had to be swept away and quality had to be worked on again, starting from the bases that had made its reputation, those ‘local, fair and consistent practices’ mentioned in the law. Yet as the result of this work was not anticipated in any precise way, the constraints regarding the end result were limited to rejecting a few consensual defects.

### **Economic Research’s Critique of AOCs: The Failure of Materialization Stabilization**

This guarantee of means, which also exists in the medical profession, for example, has been criticized by many economists. In the 1970s, quality became a central concern in economics (Leontief, 1959; Nelson, 1970; Stiglitz, 1987). Market goods no longer only had an identity allowing them to be grouped into broad categories (milk, wine, cars, etc.), but also had different qualities among goods of the same denomination. If the name no longer suffices to know what one is buying, consumers depend on the information they can acquire or can be given about a good. Delays or costs in the acquisition of quality information by the consumer are seen as a source of market failures, or even as a threat of market collapse (Akerlof, 1970). To counter this, producers or states can create signs conveying ‘information’ on quality, such as AOCs, for instance.

Due to market imperfections, the interests of producers, processors, regions and states in protecting geographical indications for their high-quality products may be well justified. Regulation at the national or international level may be necessary if intellectual property is ignored or if consumers face quality uncertainty and high search costs. On the other hand, however, it is possible that geographical indications are being used as a new instrument of agricultural protectionism and, thus, reduce economic welfare. (Herrmann and Maruhn, 2009a: 13).

But can a guarantee of means that does not require precise qualitative outcomes constitute a true guarantee of quality? If not, AOCs may only be instruments of disguised protectionism. This is why the measures contained in these regulations are strongly criticized. Not only are appellations of origin suspected of being at odds with the rules of international trade, but some argue that yield caps and the monopolization of a production area are a way to raise prices by artificially maintaining scarcity (Bramley and Kirsten, 2007; Herrmann and Maruhn, 2009; Kerr, 2006; Marette et al., 1999; Teuber, 2010; Thomas et al., 2013). Some have described them as a way to build ‘clubs’ of producers who control their membership rules (Buchanan, 1965; Thiedig and Sylvander, 2000; Torre, 2002); others see them as illustrations of the complexity of identity construction processes (Gade, 2004). In short, all these studies consider whether appellations of origin, a sign that does not guarantee the emergence of a stabilized

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<sup>3</sup> Article 1 of the 5 August 1908 law, amending Article 11 of the 1 August 1905 law on the control of fraud in the sale of goods and of foodstuffs and the falsification of agricultural products.

quality of the products it protects, can really stand for true quality. Yet, despite this harsh and increasingly strong economic criticism of the guarantee they provide, AOCs are successful in the field. Their numbers have grown steadily over the years, as has the list of countries that have adopted them.

### Diverging Opinions Among Winegrowers about AOC Approval Tastings

There is no doubt in AOC winegrowers' minds that AOCs guarantee the quality of wines. However, tensions arose in 1970 when, in an attempt to bolster AOCs' guarantee of results, the European administration required that approval tastings be generalized in AOCs (Cee, 1970). These consist of a taste test to validate the quality of wines applying for the AOC, conducted by a panel of producers of the appellation.

A committee of producers for the defence and promotion of the quality of AOC wines and spirits, COFRADEP, claimed that this initiative ruined "the very substance and foundation of the legal doctrine of AOCs, which are being called into question against an eminently subjective, inconsistent and imprecise criterion" (Cofradep, 1974c: 370).

Compulsory tasting, as it is designed, cannot be considered as a measure of sufficient selectiveness. It can only give a label to wines that have no significant organoleptic defects, but they may also have no true personality. It therefore has the characteristics of mass selection, which inevitably leads to mass production (Cofradep, 1974b: 473).

COFRADEP challenges the approval jury's ability and legitimacy to evaluate and discriminate between producers' various products. This is supported by the fact that, in the appellations that have adopted this practice, juries refuse only those products that are unanimously deemed to be defective—and do so only very seldomly—while pointing their producers towards technical avenues for eliminating these defects. This liberal interpretation of the concept of approval tasting supports the idea that AOCs' guarantee is an illusion. How could one claim to certify quality while simultaneously accepting everyone—or almost everyone?

In the late 1990s, the search for quality intensified around the notion of *terroir* (Teil, 2012). Producers sought to limit their intervention in the wine-making process, to leave more room for vine and *terroir* expression. The resulting technical change, and especially the use of more environmentally friendly techniques, introduced a new gustatory variety upheld by the producers behind it; this in turn intensified the conflict around approval tastings. Producers of recognized wines are turned down by AOC tasting panels on the grounds of a lack of typicality. When they refuse to correct their wines, they have to market them as table wines, but they do so with labels that ridicule appellations, as well as very high prices that differentiate them from 'other' table wines (Teil et al., 2011). These producers thus contribute to destabilizing the hierarchies and categorizations that structure the market.

In 2008, a European reform of the appellations of origin re-ignited the debate on the definition of typicality. It required producers to objectify better their link to their *terroir*, which included explicitly articulating the typicality of their wines, that is, the few 'objective' taste criteria proving that wines from one appellation are different from those of the next appellation. However, objectifying the quality of wines in this way leads to a standardization of their taste, thus precluding any pursuit of gustative quality. This makes some heads of the appellation watchdog committees very uncomfortable:

I've steered the accreditation document towards something that's practically void. There's nothing. There are really just the big flaws and that's it. I felt very bad about ... I felt like, you know, like I was betraying my winegrowers. And, honestly, if I'd put in things that were too specific—because there are strong personalities and I find their interpretation wonderful and so, to jam them into a form—it made me sick. So, rightly or wrongly, I chose the option of having a very, very standard form. [...] for me, the more detailed the grid is, the more it standardizes the wines." (AOP Chairman, 2012).

In line with economists and the European administration, other appellation executives are in favour of a stricter definition of typicality to limit the variability of wines. But when they advocate for tighter framing of wines' gustatory quality—as they did in Alsace, with a more assertive 'dry, bright and fresh' typicality—they are accused of 'standardizing', 'normalizing', and 'homogenizing' the quality of the appellation's wines. Conversely, their opponents call for 'opening up the range of diversity within each appellation even further because the personalities of each winemaker would shine through even more' (Winemaker BP<sup>4</sup>, Pays de Loire, 2012). They reject the idea of typicality and prefer the more open idea of wine 'style':

<sup>4</sup> The two letters "BP", and further on "RG", "BC", and so on, are identification codes for the winegrowers I quote.

Type, typicality, is the best way to become linear, single-minded. And thus, to abolish creativity. For a start, specification charters are the first step towards abolishing creativity. Go ask an artist to follow imposed specifications! (Winemaker RG, Pays de Loire, 2012).

### **The Interplay Between Toughening and Relaxing Means or Results Obligations**

The world is changing, especially in agriculture, where the weather has a determining impact on production. Promises to stabilize taste quality require a set of resources allowing producers to correct deviations: in particular, those due to unstable climatic conditions, but also regulatory or even geopolitical variations. Producers in favour of more explicit typicality are therefore simultaneously demanding greater flexibility in the constraints that appellation regulations impose on means. Their detractors, on the other hand, advocate for the exact opposite: tightening constraints to better control the quest for quality and prevent it from going down certain slippery technical and commercial slopes. It is not for the consumer to say what the quality of the *terroir* is, but for the *terroir* and the winegrower's work to bring it out. They oppose the subjugation of 'industrial' quality to 'commercial demand', and call for the prohibition of all the adjuvants or corrective practices their opponents depend on to erase gustatory deviations from their model of typicality. They deem intolerable the ways in which winegrowers are allowed to intervene upon the expression of the *terroir*.

In an effort to mediate this conflict, scientists are studying the notion of *terroir*, a combination of agro-geoclimatology and human know-how, and its gustatory correlate, typicality (Bohmrich, 1996; Salette, 1997). They are looking for determinants of the typical quality of AOCs, or a way to characterize it. While this research effort is causing the list of *terroir* determinants to grow, controversy persists regardless (Teil, 2012). The rift between two interpretations of *terroir* and typicality is widening, with, on the one hand, the idea of a predefined gustatory quality, attested by the past or present reputation of the appellation's wines, and, on the other hand, that of a quality that is also attested by their past reputation, but is to be sought or found again. The main bone of contention is the question of who should define gustatory quality, and what the acceptable level of variability in quality should be:

We just have a choice to make: either you're an industrial producer [and] what interests you is to have a production ratio compared to a raw material investment ratio. And then, you try to optimize that by making sure that customers get what they want and [...] upstream, [you think] 'what are they expecting and how do I get that?' [...]. Either that's your thing, or you're in an approach where you think: what I'm interested in is not so much the ratio of production to what I put in so that I can earn more money, as the fact that what I'm going to produce can tell a story to the person who's going to consume it. After that, it's up to me to find a way to add value that will justify the price I can put on the table so that the consumer will want to buy it, so that I can also make it work financially. (BC winegrower, Pays de Loire, 2012).

Of course, winemakers who criticize the 'industrial' mode are not uninterested in their sales. But, as the winemaker quoted above points out, they arrange the commercial agreement between their wines and consumers in other ways, which result in two contrasting views of production and in different distribution channels.

### **ENCOURAGING ENTHUSIAST CONSUMERS TO EXPLORE WINE**

Economists often analyse wine as an experience good (Darby and Karni, 1973; Nelson, 1970), that is, a commodity that cannot be known before purchase. Although it may seem obvious, since wine is housed in a sealed bottle, this assumption is actually quite paradoxical. As an agricultural product with an annual harvest, the supply of wine is largely renewed with each vintage. But, short of the occasional accident, two bottles of the same batch can be considered as being as similar as two cans of the same food, two pencils or two leeks. While the first bottle of a given wine that one enjoys can be considered as an experience good, the second one cannot. The idea that wine is an experience good therefore relies on the assumption that knowledge of wine does not inform consumers, and that they do not buy wines whose quality they know from experience. Yet wine can nevertheless also rightly be seen as an experience good, because consumers very regularly repeat this experience by buying wines they do not know. This is not the case of all wine buyers; the idea of wine as an 'experience good' points to an essential characteristic of those of them who readily call themselves 'curious': the enthusiasts.

A previous analysis of these enthusiasts' activity over the long term Teil (2021) examines the transformations it brings about. Enthusiasts, whom (Demossier, 2005, 2010) describes as disloyal, vagabond customers, are different from other consumers insofar as they are embarked upon an exploration of wine that is fuelled by the new wines they find. Yet despite their exploratory tasting activity, they do not develop a more precise knowledge of good quality and of their tastes, which would restrict the range of their purchases once they had done the rounds. Instead, after a somewhat normative period of learning about good quality or tasting skills, it leads to a sort of

gradual dissolution, both of tastes and of qualities, understood as specific characteristics of tasters and wines, and of the rules and practices of proper perception. To maintain their exploratory passion, enthusiasts progressively discard, eliminate, and overcome all the obstacles that could limit its deployment, starting with their ‘tastes’ and the results of past experiences, and including ‘fashions’ and any imposed ‘norms’. Thus liberated, tasting becomes an experience: with each new tasting, the symmetrical emergence of the enthusiast’s tastes and of the taste of things is renewed. Unrestrained, it also becomes more imponderable and surprising. Alongside discoveries and novelties, exploration is also progressively supported and stimulated by variations between tasting contexts and conditions; it is nourished by the very renewal of experiences. Unlike a standard drinker, a negative experience does not lead the enthusiast to reject a wine, as a bad impression can always be due to bad tasting conditions. Passion is not extinguished by bad wines, but rather by the weariness that comes with routine and predictable tastings: the world to be explored then shows its limits and boredom lurks.

In the course of an enthusiast’s practice, tastes and qualities become a result that is always provisional, pending the next tasting. Their consumption activity thus contrasts sharply with sociological or economic interpretations of tastes as characteristics of the subjects and objects of taste. Enthusiasts’ curiosity is not a psychological characteristic; it points to their exploratory activity, which is all the more active as it is fuelled by a wide variety of products that maintain a perpetual renewal of qualities and tastes. These are the core customers of winemakers who refuse ‘standardization’, that is, the stabilization of their wines’ qualities.

### **A ‘Materialization’ with Maintained Instability**

To adjust to consumer-enthusiasts, winegrowers cannot rely on tastes since—due to the exploratory process in which consumers are engaged—these are neither stabilized by habitual practice nor stabilizable through sophisticated marketing processes. While these consumers are reluctant to follow their tastes, which restrict discovery, they are, on the other hand, particularly open to new products as they keep expanding their field of exploration. They are also avid readers of the wine press, wine guides, and books that publicize ‘up-and-coming wineries’ and all the neglected treasures of the wine world. While they do not disdain supermarkets, they have little faith that their retailers’ purchasing managers will find wines of interest to them. They therefore tend to visit supermarkets as opportunists, to find ‘bargains’ and sometimes ‘surprises’, especially during seasonal wine fairs. Becoming connoisseurs does not mean that they trust only their own experience. Taste is a matter of sharing, because the experience of others is also an effective way to renew and enrich one’s own tasting experience. They therefore prefer ‘contact’ with selected retailers, known for their passion for wine, or with winegrowers themselves, as shown by the rise of ‘wine tourism’.

The ‘market ageing’ (Callon, 2013) underlying this alternative mode is based on an original process of materialization that in a sense defies both Slater’s term ‘materialization’ and Callon’s term ‘qualification’. Instead of stabilizing the attachment between products and consumers, it fuels the renewal of tastes and qualities, thus also sustaining the renewal of attachments. While ‘materialization’, the realization of a particular attachment between a wine and a wine lover, does indeed happen, it is always temporary, because it contains the seed of its own evolution. It is therefore not only diverse depending on the person and the wine, but also never stabilized.

### **The Emergence of an ‘Exploratory’ Market Regime**

The encounter between these wines and the enthusiasts who buy them—and who are as inclined towards exploration as the winegrowers are—contributes to the emergence of a very particular market regime. Enthusiasts’ exploration of tastes relies on the experience of multiple tasters: winegrowers as well as people in intermediary businesses that specialize in this regime—specialized retailers, critic journalists, sommeliers—and other connoisseur enthusiasts. Their purchases are underpinned by a very large number of tasting reports, be they written, in guidebooks, wine magazines, and tasting notes from enthusiasts, or oral, in conversations with sellers, producers, and other enthusiasts. All these tastings mostly provide strongly divergent reports. Yet this divergence is a sign not of dysfunctions but, on the contrary, of intense gustatory activity.

Enthusiasts’ exploration of wine is above all gustatory; what drives them is discovering the tastes of wines. It is often said that wine enthusiasts drink up more stories than they do wine, but these ‘stories’ are very different from the constructions marketers come up with *ad hoc* to suggest a style or boost an impression. The exploration of wine’s tastes contributes to a movement to constantly open up new areas in, for instance, wine-making techniques, the geography of production, ampelography, or winegrowers’ work with their *terroir*.

Finally, when a producer-driven quest for quality fuels buyers’ exploratory practice, a particular market is established. It allows wines and their qualities to proliferate, while simultaneously giving rise to a particular kind of competition between producers, where the goal is to produce wines likely to feed the passion of enthusiasts. This regime is based on an original framing and organization of the commercial agreement between the product and its buyer, although in both cases sales remain the ultimate test of success. As it takes place in the ‘standard’, regular economic regime, ‘materialization’ leads to a stabilized, and therefore constantly re-stabilized, adjustment between

the taste of wine and consumer expectations. In this other, ‘exploratory’, regime, ‘materialization’ is based on the renewal of qualities and tastes. It must sustain the passion of wine enthusiasts by encouraging them to explore products, spaces, and techniques which, by renewing the taste of wines, keeps stimulating their appetite for discovery and surprises. It is therefore not surprising that, contrary to the requirements of the standard commercial agreement, controlled stabilization is foreign to the techniques, commercial intermediaries, and overall marketing channels that this system uses.

## TWO ANTINOMIC REGIMES

The growing divergence reveals two groups that are subject to the same regulations on appellations of origin, but whose coexistence is constantly fuelling conflict, since the two production and marketing systems that are emerging are structured around opposing and increasingly incompatible interpretations of regulations and principles.

The first regime can be termed ‘standard’ and is focused on the ‘materialization’ of a stabilized quality. This quality reaches far beyond taste, to the presentation of the whole bottle, which marketing techniques lock in to a ‘demand’, that is, a set of buyers with sufficiently stabilized behaviours, attachments, habits, tastes, and qualitative expectations (Harvey et al., 2014). The very fact of articulating a quality allows these consumers to ‘know what they want’; it objectifies and supports the structuring and performative nature of these tastes and expectations. Consumers’ tastes are no more definitively stabilized than is the weather, and marketers scrutinize their evolution with the utmost attention, to adjust products to them. If consumers are shown to be developing a sweeter tooth, a tiny increase in the residual sugar levels of wines will give them that slightly softer character that will be pleasant without even being noticed. Quality is constantly being redefined, yet these changes are kept discreet, to avoid arousing drinkers’ reflexivity; if they were to start questioning their tastes, they might change. Throughout the transformations it undergoes, the wine must keep its identity. Product communication remains tightly restrained and controlled. The main medium is the bottle label, which articulates the wine’s gustatory quality to a product presentation, some legal information, a brand name and, above all, an appellation of origin which positions the wine within a competitive environment. This ‘materialization’, which stabilizes tastes and qualities, goes hand-in-hand with the emergence of what Callon et al. (2002) call ‘a good’. It supports work upstream from it on planning and financially optimizing the use of resources and the production process. It also allows vine yields to be monitored in relation to forecasted production volumes and price thresholds which ensure the company’s longevity.

As they are not engaged in the same pursuit of quality as those who have chosen the opposite path, these producers are commonly accused of supplying low-quality products, supposedly evidenced by their generally rather contained prices. Yet, quite to the contrary, this ‘standard’ regime does not entail low-cost, low-quality volume production, but rather a stabilized and expected quality that serves as groundwork for steering production and sales.

The second, ‘exploratory’, regime presents a very different framework, as quality is never a predefined and stabilized given here. The search for quality leads winegrowers to work with those resources that are left unrestricted by appellation regulations: viticulture techniques, grape varieties that appellation regulations treat as ‘secondary’, and, more incidentally, yeasts.<sup>5</sup> They are constantly revisiting and reinterpreting old methods, or identifying new techniques to experiment with and areas to explore: grassing, pruning or not pruning, sunlight on the grapes, access to water, depth of rooting, acid structure of the wines, and so on. This exploratory activity, by the winegrowers this time, preserves variety and maintains renewal of the tastes of the wines offered to those consumers who tend to be enthusiasts.

### Reinterpreting Misleading Oppositions

Here and there, discussions between stakeholders have highlighted differences in product quality, innovation ability, or company size and production volume, in an attempt to discriminate between groups of winegrowers. None of these propositions have ever been maintained. Much like wines produced and sold under the exploratory regime, wines of the standard regime have a quality and a qualitative hierarchy. In the 1990s and 2000s, approval tastings, a source of conflict within AOCs, were compulsory for *Vins de Pays*, the lowest grade on the quality ladder. They also were compulsory for *Vins Délimités de Qualité Supérieure*, a category of wines from the old non-controlled appellations of origin of the 1919 law which, despite being intended to be a path towards AOCs (César, 2002), had made approval tastings compulsory from their creation. The difference between the two regimes does not come from quality itself but from its stabilized or unstabilized mode of existence. It is also sometimes drawn along a line

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<sup>5</sup> In cheese or cider, microbial ecosystems are the subject of considerable attention, as they produce significant differences in taste.

between a rather conservative commercial mode of production, and innovative artist producers. Yet both resort to innovation, albeit according to different principles. While the standard regime's ongoing process of optimizing production organization relies on a constant flow of innovations, the use of those innovations must remain relatively opaque so as not to risk upsetting the way the offer is structured, with its categories informing the commercial agreement. Unless there is an aggressive commercial strategy aimed at destabilizing the market, 'incremental' product innovations, as economists call them, such as 'grapefruit rosé', 'rosé piscine', or 'ice champagne', must slip into the fabric of those categories without tearing it apart.<sup>6</sup> The exploratory regime is not so cautious, as it never ceases to test and challenge all established categories. Yet far from leading to the kind of confusion the standard regime dreads, this permanent revolution fosters the tasting and appreciation activity of enthusiasts and critics alike. It is structured into 'schools' which delimit a particular field of research: natural wines, *terroir* wines, quality wines, and so on. Focusing on company size to compare small producers to large industrial units also swiftly leads to a dead end. Quality stabilization and unstabilization is not a matter of production scale, though economies of scale are a very common tool in the pursuit of productivity gains in the standard regime, which takes decisive advantage of the homogenization and stabilization of production categories. Although this is far less common, similar economies of scale can be, and sometimes are, sought in the exploratory regime. Further studies on the subject would certainly yield useful information on the exploratory regime's specific constraints.

### Separation or Coexistence

As antinomic as they may be in their principles and organization, the two regimes we have just described nevertheless share the same product names and regulations, the interpretation of which is a constant source of discord. The radicalization of the differentiation between the standard and the exploratory regimes now raises questions about their coexistence and interaction. How do they interact? What kind of balance between them would be a desirable goal? How can market regulations support the development of both regimes, while respecting their differences? Should the two regimes be separated, and each be provided with legislation better suited to its particular form of marketing?

The latter question arose in the 2000s, at the height of the conflict over the role of approval juries. Should the Indication Géographique Protégée (Geographical Indication of Provenance) (IGP) label (Berthomeau, 2001), which is more lenient, especially when it comes to yield requirements, not be reserved for wines under the standard regime? Conversely, the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) category could then harden its line on wine correction practices, especially chaptalization and the use of sulphur as an antioxidant and antibacterial agent to protect wines. Being largely centred on the question of means, this debate left aside results obligations, and therefore approval tastings. The two options, IGP or AOC, then became signs of 'bad wine', wine that is not submitted to production constraints, or 'good wine', submitted to strong constraints—and, obviously, nobody would readily claim the former.

One solution might be to allow the two interpretations, standard or exploratory, to coexist under the same quality signs, but to adjust the regulatory conditions separately for each case, making them more result-oriented for the former and more means-oriented for the latter—and maybe displaying these options on the label. The merit of this solution would lie in keeping the line between the two regimes somewhat blurred, and not compelling producers to choose between two mutually exclusive options, as not all producers espouse a hard and exclusive interpretation of one of the two regimes. Many of the winemakers with exploratory practices view the standard regime as a way to guarantee some income; to ensure their operation's sustainability, they sometimes back up more personal interpretations of quality with a series of 'cash cow' bottles, more closely aligned with market expectations. Wine marketing channels are not strictly exclusive either; be it on supermarket shelves, in very selective winegrowers' shows, or in varyingly specialized and committed wine shops, marketing structures the difference between the two regimes while maintaining a certain hybridity in their customer base. At the same wine shop, people looking for a good wine for a friend's birthday will be presented with 'a bottle from a recognized appellation and a good vintage', while the enthusiast will leave with 'a very well-rounded vintage from an inventive young man who has recently planted a vineyard in an area that, surprisingly, was ignored by the AOC'. Conversely, not all wine drinkers are either radical enthusiasts chasing after new discoveries or unshakably attached to their preferences. Between these two extremes lies a vast space of consumption choices that hybridize those two consumption behaviours, or even alternate between them.

Nevertheless, these hybridizations and the fact of sharing the same supply categorization framework should not, by default, preclude better separation between different production regimes' regulations—provided the conditions for the cumulative or exclusive use of the two quality signs are carefully examined. The success of the controlled designations of origin's regulation, itself a hybrid effort to guarantee both results and means, should also raise questions as to whether or not this success is due, at least in part, to this hybridity.

<sup>6</sup> Unless a company explicitly wishes to transform categorization to its advantage, as pointed out in Slater (2002).

Whichever path is pursued, the interactions between these two systems cannot be ignored. Each contributes differently and complementarily to the market's sustainability, with one facilitating the evolution and transformation of production, and the other contributing to the durability of wines' identity. The two regimes also share a common categorization of supply, although this is used in different ways and is very unevenly rigid in both cases. Appellations delimit families of products, such as Bordeaux or Burgundy, which delimit the offer for standard regime consumers. For enthusiasts, they each open onto a domain to be discovered at first, and all eventually become arbitrarily determined categories of wavering interest. This dual use, with questioning on the one hand and stabilization on the other, is perhaps one of the keys to this market's longevity. It allows the very complex categorization of wine names to continue to stand for qualitative differences while also adapting to a constantly evolving world.

## CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN 'ARTIFICATION' OF WINE?

Studies of the conflicts that have stirred the internal life of the *appellations d'origine contrôlées* in France over the last few decades show the gradual emergence of two production and marketing regimes with strongly antinomic guidelines. They are very clearly opposed when it comes to the process that Slater (2002) refers to as the 'materialization' of goods. In the first case, which is described as 'standard', and is in keeping with the hypotheses of standard economics, materialization covers multiple procedures for objectifying and stabilizing 'quality' and consumers' 'expectations' and 'tastes' around a selection of key criteria. In the second case, quality, expectations, and tastes are constantly being invented and revised. Here, the process of 'materialization' does not lead to the stabilization or even the existence of economic 'goods'. It thus defies economics' framing of market activity and its interpretations of 'well-being' as it keeps products and qualities of the same name proliferating.

While the exploratory regime is particularly well developed in the wine sector, it also concerns many other market products, albeit very unevenly. It is undoubtedly supported by all the categories that are committed to organizing, and thus cultivating, variety. Alongside producer brands, designations of origin are a valuable resource in this respect, and they are applied to many food products such as cheeses, olive oils, coffees, and teas. While restrictions on differentiation—such as legislation prohibiting any mention of the origin of milk on labels—are always an obstacle to the exploration of a product's tastes, they are never insurmountable as such. It is, however, always easier to explore an already organized and structured world than a jungle of heterogeneous products.

Finally, while wine—and more generally food products—of specific origin in general tend to be subject to a qualitative differentiation based on taste, any kind of good can be explored in this respect. Examples are shops specializing in soap or fabrics, and the vast production of handicrafts.

It is quite tempting to draw a parallel between wine's exploratory regime and the art market. Both put the same effort into differentiating a 'commercial' version, similarly seen as the result of a social process of distinction, from its exploratory alternative. The latter is a source of constant experimentation and innovation, with its regularly outdated critiques and aesthetic theories, and its unusual proliferation of objects or products that singularly differs from the common consumer goods markets. They also draw the same unusual kinds of consumers: enthusiasts and collectors, who play a decisive role in both diversifying and structuring the world to be explored (Pomian, 1987).

This begs the question: are we looking at an 'artification' of the wine market (Heinich and Shapiro, 2012)? And if so, to what extent is it peculiar to wine, with the rise of the new figure of the artist winegrower (Demossier, 2010)? Or is it, on the contrary, the wine avatar of the aestheticization movement born in the 1950s (Baudrillard, 1970; Featherstone, 2007)?

Aesthetic differentiation and hierarchization in the qualities of wines is nothing new; it has been practised for more than two millennia, especially by the Romans. This makes the idea of a recent 'aestheticization' of wine's standard production and marketing regime sound rather unlikely. Nevertheless, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has undoubtedly brought about an important evolution, with a clearer differentiation between the two market regimes. This has led to the dual emergence of the exploratory regime and of a standard regime that is bound to a kind of 'democratization' of quality wine. Focusing on aesthetics may be misguided. There has not been a recent wave of aestheticization affecting consumers' cultural matrix, thus transforming the wine market, sweeping it along in its wake, together with technology and eventually the social construction of reality (Welsch, 1996). In their analysis of the contemporary evolution of wine consumption, and specifically of wine evaluation, Rössel et al. (2018) point to a threefold movement towards greater aestheticization, cosmopolitanism and hierarchization. Cosmopolitanism is one of the determining features in the development of enthusiasts' exploratory activity. They push to widen the range of products to be discovered beyond the limits of local or more immediately accessible productions, and constantly re-subject evaluations and hierarchies to tasting, while giving rise to multiple marketable or non-marketable 'fashion trends' (Liberson, 2000). While wine has not actually become an *objet d'art*, the increasing differentiation of regimes over the 20<sup>th</sup> century has strengthened similarities between its market and the art market.

However, unlike the art market, the current market legislation for wines, and even more so for appellation wines, sets limits to the exploration of quality and taste; hybrid or American grape varieties are forbidden, as are wines with insufficient alcohol content. Although these limits could hypothetically be reformed, they do help to ensure that products are marketed with a specific identity. Yet, for the emergence of an exploratory market to be possible, regulations must leave sufficient space and resources for producers to work on quality and thus deploy a sufficiently varied offer to interest enthusiasts in the appreciation and proliferation of qualities.

While it will most often be constrained by market legislation, the kind of regime that results both from producers and curious enthusiasts' commitment, and from a product's ability to be diversified, is probably not rare. Other markets that also offer a relatively diverse supply are probably home to different versions of it. On the other hand, modes of coexistence, interweaving, hybridization, or juxtaposition between the standard and exploratory regimes in sectors as diverse as apparel, gastronomy, or narcotics could conceal an unexpected complexity—which should be explored.

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## Interview

# A Sociology of Wine – Reflections from my Kitchen Table

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper Dr. Peter J. Howland—former bureaucrat, concrete block maker, journo (investigative and sports), publican, apple picker, bank clerk (for one week), gas station attendant (for two weeks), horse-racing results editor and now, wine scholar and practicing neo-Marxist Sociologist—reflexively interviews himself on the current situations in the ‘Sociology of Wine’ while sitting at his kitchen table nursing a newly inserted ‘bionic’ elbow and arm, drinking a local Pinot Noir, and ‘floating’ along on a concoction of painkillers and anti-inflammatories.

Given his somewhat physically and socially unsettled circumstances, Howland is unsurprisingly drawn to discussing one of his grumpy old man ‘pet peeves’—that is how in the sociological study of wine the foundational and enduring materialities of commercial winemaking—and especially its botanical and economic affordances—are often under-analysed at best or at worst, are demonised as reductive and outmoded. Consequently, Howland argues with himself that these factors are also often overwhelmed by the bling of ‘flashy cultural turns’ in analysis and theorizing. He calls on sociologists far abler than himself to ensure the foundational and the obvious are an integral part of all wine scholarship—much like the laws of motion are always accounted for in physics research. Howland points to a number of studies that successfully (or at least, that commendably attempt to) combine both the foundational and the cultural turning—ideally highlighting their mutual constitutions and contradictions.

**Keywords:** wine, sociology, economic affordances, botanical affordances, elbows

## INTRODUCTION

*Peter/Peter:* Kia ora koutou katoa and welcome to our conversational essay, our text-based podcast, our dictated article, on the Sociology of Wine for this special edition. We/I am generating this article using the dictate function on Word as I recently fell off an extension ladder while undertaking house renovations and shattered my left elbow and arm. I now find myself sitting with myself at my kitchen table in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, recuperating with a recently inserted ‘bionic’ arm and elbow among other injuries, still immersed in a lingering fog of meds—anaesthetics, painkillers, anti-inflammatories and strong antibiotics—finding myself up against a pressing deadline (albeit with very understanding and patient editors—thanks David and co), and about to take up the editors’ and the journal’s call for innovativeness by indulging in a bit of hubristic reflexive sociology in interviewing my good self on my take on the Sociology of Wine (my less than good self will remain of course a matter for counsellors, loved ones and judicial authorities, while my ruminations on the sociology of other alcohols and beverages will be saved for another time).

So, unable to type effectively and wholly incapable of dictating an academic article (there is a huge disjuncture between my academic writing and talking—the former attempts to be performatively erudite, while the latter frequently betrays my working-class, mildly dyslexic background), I thought I could simply ‘rant’ as I often do in lectures—mostly free-form, though in this case guided by six questions (six being the number of wine bottles in a case) and suitably fortified by the lubrications of a bottle of locally produced Martinborough Pinot.<sup>1</sup> Of course, whether this will constructively *in vino veritas* my kitchen table reflections or rather will inebriatedly inhibit the same remains to be seen—indeed, much like the taste and experience of a bottle of wine this interview will be primarily an ‘experienced good’.

Although to be honest, I have a feeling that my material circumstances such as they are—nursing a shattered arm along with a thoroughly bruised ego and all the while increasingly ‘feeling the effects’ of mixing red wine and Tramadol—will result in a rant focused on one of my clearly related, but definitely pet, peeves. In this I am frequently concerned by how the structural and material fundaments (and I mean this in every sense of the word) of capitalist production—and its default operational exploitations, stratifications, territorialities and schizophrenic constructive destructiveness (Harvey, 2014)<sup>2</sup>—are frequently under-analyzed by social science scholars. Scholars who do know better, but whom in their frenetic rush for tenure, promotions, and to also demonstrate their intellectual smarts, strategically exclude the obvious and especially the economic and botanical obvious in terms of wine manufacture.

Of course, I recognize the intersecting provocations that many social scientists face. On one Adam Smithian hand, capitalism dictates that the vast majority sell their labour in order to simply eat. While on the other Medicis-slash-Platonic hand, academia craves commodity novelty in the form of analytical and theoretical originality—ergo to sell your academic labour you need to produce originalities that go way beyond merely re-stating the obvious. Then on a third Doreian hand many academics still crave the A-grades and teacher’s admiring smiles they have received throughout their often unbroken schooling careers. Add a fourth hand clapping, that is an industry that is all sensual products, seductive high cultural capitals, charming middle-class artisans, conviviality and hospitality (if not down-right good times), all bewitchingly wrapped up by incredibly slick marketing departments, and the clarion calls toward generating equally sophisticated, nuanced and erudite ‘cultural turns’ in the sociology of wine are amplified to the point of being deafening.

Furthermore, most scholars do know better. But this only adds to the general malaise. Indeed, why include the obvious when everyone around you is already in the know. The upshot is that many wine scholars, sociologists, anthropologists, and especially the sociological-esque,<sup>3</sup> risk essentializing capitalism by either forgetting its historical constructedness and then absencing its diagnostic import by uncritically assuming its presence, by framing its operations as normative rather than normal or habitual, and by failing to explicitly integrate its fundamentals into their critical analysis. Ideally, we should all—my good self included—be consistently highlighting both winemaking’s fundamentals and its cultural constructedness in mutually constitutive, non-reductive, analytically insightful, terms.

Fortunately, I have always lacked the smarts, came to academia after another lifetime of an odds and sods mix of blue and white (pale blue?) collar jobs, and lucked into tenure at an agricultural university where the most expected of the social scientists is that they don’t spook the horses when driving around campus (I jest of course—honk, honk!). As such I don’t particularly aspire to lofty academic or intellectual heights—I mean look what happens when I climb a ladder in the real world! Though of course this could also mean that I’m missing the point entirely or that my argument only applies to reservations about my own work. In either case readers should take this one piece of advice—stop reading now... or is that forthwith?

In fact, talking of elbows and wine first reminded me of Benjamin Franklin—one of the founding fathers of the United States, philosopher, scientist, inventor, polymath, first United States Ambassador to France (thanks Wikipedia), and most importantly for the purposes of this article, a great lover of French wine. Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to a French friend of his, humorously demonstrated God’s divine Providence in the affairs of humankind by sketching a series of drawings that demonstrated how the ‘correct’ positioning of the human elbow enabled a wine glass to be bought directly to the lips, while the ‘incorrect’ positioning resulted in disaster.<sup>4</sup> My elbow was up

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<sup>1</sup> Martinborough is a small rural service town and boutique wine village situated in the South Wairarapa and approximately one hour’s drive from the capital city of Wellington. It is my primary site of my PhD research. Most of Martinborough’s twenty plus vineyards are classified as Category I wineries producing less than 200,000 litres annually and are noted for their Pinot Noirs.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the in-text citations were of course added after the article had been dictated, as was some of the content in response to the reviewers’ feedback—thanks people for your positive appraisals and constructive change suggestions. Any omissions, errors or outright lies remain of course the responsibility of at least one of the authors.

<sup>3</sup> For example, marketing, management and business studies that use (and abuse) sociological theories and analyses.

<sup>4</sup> See - <http://theobligatescientist.blogspot.com/2010/08/benjamin-franklin-on-wine-god-and.html>

near my shoulder a few weeks ago and as such providential wine drinking and academic contemplations were both off the table... But I digress, pray tell me Peter what is our first question and answer to ourselves?

## VINO-MONOLOGUES ‘ACROSS’ A KITCHEN TABLE

*Peter: What initially sparked your interest in researching wine?*

Peter: I first thought about studying the production of wine when an undergraduate student at Victoria University in Wellington, the capital city of Aotearoa New Zealand. I was majoring in anthropology, and I was very interested in turning the discipline’s ethnographic, cross-cultural, relativistic lens on to the Western middle-classes and especially on to their normative, habitual actions and interactions with a view to constructively disrupting their existence by empathetically detailing, interrogating, and deconstructing. My ultimate goal was to research when and how the middle-classes are firstly constructed, disciplined and affirmed by current economic and political systems, and then how they are beneficially enabled and/or detrimentally limited, duped, and disenfranchised at the same time. Indeed, as a mature student (I entered university aged 29-30 years old) who, had been employed in everything from concrete block making in Dickensian factory conditions to tea-drinking, glide-time paper shuffling in Government bureaucracies to rabid tabloid journalism, I was painfully aware that the greatest economic and political power—capitalistic and faux democratic—lay in the unexamined everyday. Besides I had read Marx’s *Das Capital* in a bath above a pub in Chingford, England, while on my OE (overseas experience) and in between cleaning the cellar and opening the bar for the morning drunks.

At first, I had romantic visions of undertaking ethnographic research on a French vineyard—who hasn’t and Marx would have surely approved—even though I knew my second language acquisition skills were paltry (my first language skills are often a bit wanting also!). I had observed, but not visited, French vineyards while travelling and my wine experience before university was very limited to simply visiting wine shops and off-licences in England. Indeed, as a working class lad my only notable wine experiences before nervously visiting a Martinborough vineyard as an aspiring middle-class university student-slash-adjunct academic (I was literally sweating through my shirt as I sat down with the wholly intimidating winemaker), were drinking an amazing first growth Alsace gewurztraminer with a more mature, wine cellar-keeping, journalism student some years before departing on my OE (I can still taste the passionfruit and lychee flavours near 40 years later); then a few years later I equally enjoyed a memorable, summer-burst, red Zinfandel in a small Italian restaurant on a cold winter’s night in Welwyn Garden City, just down the road from George Bernard Shaw’s Hertfordshire residence with its octagonal rotating writing hut, while unsuccessfully flirting with an attractive young individual from Persia. I don’t recall their name, but then again I don’t remember the wine label either. The wine, however, was delicious.

Anyway, the reflexive sociological upshot was that I eventually researched boutique wine production and wine tourism in Martinborough and their role in generating various middle-class identities, status, values and practices for my PhD, which I submitted in 2008. In many respects for me the study of wine has always represented a modality, a research vehicle, in which the various ideas, beliefs, discourses, silences, interactions and practices of the middle-classes can be robustly engaged and interrogated. Indeed, whatever rocks your intersecting analytical boat—gender, ethnicity, age, place, time, production, consumption, social distinction, agriculture, industrialization, globalization and speciesism (if that’s a word)—can all be robustly researched through the study of wine. Not as a Durkheimian ‘total social fact’ (Durkheim, 1895: 50)—that would be alcohol or beverages per se—but rather as a delineated, yet wholly socially immersed and constituted, ‘total social field’. Moreover, a field that encompasses the Ritzerian ‘solids’ or nature capital<sup>5</sup> of botany, chemistry and geography as it applies to grape growing and wine making respectively, along with the solidish economics pertaining to commercial winemaking at the minimal level of financial sustainability across primary, secondary and tertiary levels of production—however achieved. And on through to the arbitrary and fluid, and yet wholly historically contingent, constructs of identity, status, desire, imagination and every other practice in-between.

Interestingly many of the classical economists such as Smith, Ricardo, and Marx referenced wine growing as case studies (Chaikind, 2012), particularly with regard to the imposition of regional and country-based taxes, tariffs,

<sup>5</sup> Nature capital necessarily predates, and also ultimately transcends, all ecological, economic, cultural, scientific and any other ‘interpreting’ and ‘translating’ mediations of humanity that attempt to define and articulate its existence. As such, nature capital essentially has two registers—one unknown, the other known (which is also a subset of cultural capital). In the latter register it is mediated (that is articulated, classified, deployed, etc) through Bourdieu’s other capitals—economic, social, symbolic and cultural. However, we must always assume there is a ‘green box’ of natural capacities that remain unrecognised yet operational and significant. Key nature capitals of wine grapes that science with its probabilistic limits has recognised include grape vines’ environmental and seasonal adaptability, sweet fruits, naturally occurring yeasts on grape skins that spontaneously provoke fermentation of embodied sugars into alcohol, and a highly complex amalgamation of sugars, acids, tannins, etc., that produce juices with an unrivalled sensitivity to variations in weather, climate, topography, soil conditions (particularly water availability) and to viticultural and vinicultural interventions (Howland, 2019).

value generation, and in Marx's case—poverty also. Indeed, Marx's first published works—newspaper articles written after completing his dissertation—dealt with the lot of the perennially poor in relation to the Law of the Theft of Wood in the first instance, and the economic distress of Mosel winemakers caused by Prussian taxes, tariffs and administrative incompetence in the second. Marx's lawyer father had owned vineyards in Trier, Germany for 30 years or so, which Marx inherited and briefly owned following his father's death. It has been argued that these articles mark the origin of Marx's interest in economics (Lubasz, 1976) and according to some “Wine ultimately made Marx a communist” (Reichert, 2018) ... not to mention the fact that Marx greatly enjoyed drinking fine wine and especially when his great friend Engels was footing the bill.

As such I have found Bourdieu's essentially neo-expansive Marxian/Weberian/Durkheimian theory of generative, evolving habitus, fields, distinctions and practice (Bourdieu, 1979, 1980), which manifest via both the unconscious or reflexive, institutionalized and ‘objective’ deployment of varied configurations of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals—and I would, of course, also add the influence of nature capital—within and between various intersecting, mutually constitutive fields of action and power that results in position, taste and status differentiations as a particularly good starting point to comprehend the ‘total social field’ of wine. More specifically, a lot of contemporary wine hype is focused on the individual—especially on the figures of the consummate middle-class artisan winemaker and the increasingly globalized, middle-class, sovereign consumer (Howland, 2008, 2013). Thus, mythologies of reflexive agency, cultivated tastes, invented histories, rituals and traditions, dispositional social distinctions, and place and product authenticities abound within the wine industry, an industry which—somewhat in contradiction to its imaginings—marches, or is marched, along to the enduring structural beats of commodity-based production and the market-based sale of an alcoholic beverage made from the juice of a seasonal, botanical entity. Thus, the wine industry in all its fundamentals and variations is a great platform to consider how individuals, institutions and structures—especially economic, social, cultural, political and moral—generatively intersect in both deeply conservative and evolutionary dynamic ways. It is also a great opportunity to mimic or channel Bourdieu (exaggerated deep breath), and if not to ultimately consider the ‘meanings of life’, at least to critically interrogate its collective and varied ‘modes of being’.

Actually, did you know that Bourdieu was apparently a fan of rugby (Grenfell, 2015), which is another reason to like his theorizing—perhaps the main one for a former rugby journo-turned-Aotearoa New Zealand-based sociologist.

*Peter: Well yes, perhaps... but more to the point how does the Sociology of Wine specifically fit into all of this?*

Peter: There is no sociology of wine per se. Arguably there is a sociology of economics under which wine studies should mostly nestle, but rather what we have is the sociological and sociological-esque research of wine. The former is nascent and emergent, with a few, albeit growing number of sociology practitioners on the ground bringing their sociological imaginations and optics, methods, theorizing, analysis and modes of communication to bear on questions of wine; while the latter—the sociological-esque—potentially encompasses everything from economics (including marketing and management studies) to geography to history, with a little bit of botany, genetics, chemistry and climatology thrown into the mix. All of which is of course of interest to any social scientists taking a holistic, all-encompassing approach to the study of wine in its industry specifics and social entreties. Indeed, the discipline boundaries in wine scholarship are highly permeable, which is to be expected for a relatively new field of study.

There are however some general sociology trends evident in the study of wine—these are adroitly outlined by Prof. Jennifer Smith Maguire in the Routledge Handbook of Wine Culture (Charters, 2022) and similarly by Prof. David Inglis and Drs Anna-Mari Almila and Hang Kei Ho in this volume. In the Handbook, Prof. Smith Maguire cogently argues that recent sociology-based research is marked by the ‘cultural turn’ of doing wine in three main areas or fields; firstly, how multiple social actors play roles in the cultural construction of the meaning and value of wine and its legitimate social uses. These actors include an array of cultural producers and intermediaries, certifying bodies, market organisations and more specifically wine makers, winery staff, journalists, critics, sommeliers, restaurateurs, consumers, and of course, wine scholars. Second, is the exploration of how discourses and processes legitimise what is (and is not) ‘good’ about wine and its consumption—especially the cultural, social and symbolic capitals associated with fine wine, it's connections to the reportedly non-replicable aspects of terroir, and consumption primarily for aesthetic and sociability purposes. While the third concerns question of taste and the reproduction of legitimate wine cultures and associated social stratifications and hierarchies.

I would add that this research exists on a continuum from the industry-facing and socially conservative that seeks to enhance the status quo by increasing markets or market shares and by also seeking out ever-increasing profits, reduced costs, by placating shareholders, and so on. In the mid-range research is still industry-facing but is linked to and highlights broader social modalities such as the rise of middle-class omnivorism, the construction of taste, value and luxury, globalization, industrialization, place of origin discourses, and so on. This research is often light on the critical analysis of the capitalistic and ecological exploitations, stratifications, inequities, and unsustainabilities that one finds at the polar opposite end of the continuum in terms of studies that are both

industry and society critical. At this end of the continuum is where the moral obligation of sociologists to pursue the betterment of humankind through the critical application of the sociological imagination is arguably in full flight... or is that in full ferment?

So at one end of the continuum we find economists who are staunch in their industry-facing outlooks and in what amounts to cost/benefit analyses, and while some management and marketing scholars claim a modicum of sociological insights, these also are typically limited in terms of critical analysis and as such remain essentially industry-facing—ditto sociologists working in or toward the mid-range of the continuum—for example, focusing on consumer behaviour, where they state what is normative and/or peripheral, and then critically assess how these insights could be manipulated to increase sales, develop market segments, and so on.

Now I'm not going to name who I think is situated where on the continuum as all research has some merit and even simply identifying status quo patterns and trends is sociologically informative. Indeed, I certainly use a lot of industry-facing research in developing my own analyses which at least gestures toward the industry and society-critical end of the continuum. Besides overall there is a small pool—or is that a small vat—of wine scholars overall, so fulsome collaboration is still the most constructive research strategy at this point. Moreover, I have never personally subscribed to the theoretical and ideological genealogies—the almost consanguineal inclusions and exclusions—that marks and inhibits so much sociology (and philosophy and economics for that matter), and instead I retain Anthropology-inspired magpie-ship and am attracted to a wide variety of shiny things in creating my own analysis.

In addition, however, I would also note that there are problems with the 'cultural turn' identified by Prof. Smith Maguire for both sociologists and others studying wine. No doubt the 'cultural turn' is good for detailing the symbolic, the discourse driven, the passionate, creative, imaginative, and even the mythological or fabricated in winemaking, and in wine promotions and consumption especially. It can also, at times, critically highlight the social distinctions, stratifications, inclusions and exclusions of wine, along with the different logics, beliefs and values at play way beyond the vulgar Marxism of economic determinism. Yet without a robust grounding in foundational economic concerns such as surplus value production, of labour use and abuse, in monopoly rents based on the terroir-based exclusivities of land use and seasonal vintages, and in the Machiavellian machinations of large transnational investors and industrial wine-making enterprises, a lot of wine scholarship remains effectively industry-facing, if not industry-led or complicit. And this is without considering the concerns of wine frauds or the potential health issues of consumption—and here I am thinking especially of the wine inebriation issues faced by consumers.<sup>6</sup> Indeed it is also without critical consideration of ecological concerns caused by monocropping, pesticide/insecticide use, water use, waste issues and sustainability per se. In other words, without a solid grounding in the default exploitations, contrived limited good, intrinsic stratifications, exclusions and inequities of capitalist production and distribution, a lot of sociological research demonstrates a marked tentativeness, even timidity.

Obviously, I am being intentionally OTT and provocative. Nevertheless, all of us need to be vigilant to the fact that the wine industry is a very good news, good narrative, industry. I'm not saying there are not good practices—indeed many of the native tree planting initiatives of typically small-scale winemakers in Aotearoa New Zealand are highly laudable, as well as being conscience-assuaging and yeast-promoting for what are a cultivated bunch of mono-croppers. However, in being industry-facing scholars run the very real risk of unwittingly reproducing the biases and vested interests of methodological capitalism, methodological nationalism (Beck, 2007; Chernilo, 2017), even methodological genetic-ism (if that's a word). As such capitalist regimes of production, exchange, consumption etc, are essentialized, framed as a priori, sometimes as wholly innate and certainly as the apex of human endeavour and therefore not necessary to subject to critical interrogation and comparison—historical, cross-cultural, utopian or idealistic. While nation-states, countries, and even regions of origin are regarded as the most appropriate meta-units of analysis in spite of the globalised mobility and networking of labour, capital, products, discourses and ideas. Thus, what are in fact dynamic assemblages consisting of different, competitive, often divisive, entities and enterprises that are founded on structural exploitation and stratification, are flattened into undifferentiated, seemingly collective, productively constructive and benign, nationally-situated masses. At the same time the foundational, indeed truth-full, affordances, thresholds, enablements, limitations and opportunities of the genetic, biological, botanical, chemical of grape-growing and wine-making—and even of the slightly less foundational and truth-fullness of commercially viable, ideally profitable, commodity and market-based wine-making—are often significantly overlooked. Although admittedly there are very understandable reasons for this timidity which affect all wine scholars...

Would you like a top up? Your glass is nearly empty.

*Peter: Ah... yes please—this wine is delightful, thanks... now umm, so what are these reasons for this apparent tentativeness or timidity?*

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/parenting/113911596/the-myths-behind-the-wine-mum-hidden-drinking-culture-in-new-zealand>

Peter: Well, several come immediately to mind, although as a way of premising my remarks on this issue I would note the following: As all sociology undergrads are taught, sociological studies of anything and everything, including wine, need to be firmly and foundationally situated in the sociological imagination (Mills, 1959). Thus, one must be always cognizant that the private is always public, the individual is always social, the micro is always macro, the evolving is always structural, and vice-versa; that social action and interactions are always historically contingent and constantly evolving—albeit some phenomena are more enduring than others; and that all human endeavour involves the various manifestations and negotiations of power from the command regimes of Kim Jong-un and the duplicities of Bill Gates through to the influential seductions of pouting social media influencers. Thus, the sociological study of wine needs to be firstly situated in a broader, holistic, all-encompassing sociology of economics—commodity and market-based or otherwise (there is a lot of gifting and giving away in wine—see Howland, n.d.)—with constant reference also to all other associated social variables, from politics to religion to place and time to the imagined to discourse to dispositional praxis, and so on. No stone unturned, no vine unpruned, no bottle uncorked, so to speak.

Now there will be many readers rolling their eyes and groaning about me somewhat pretentiously, and somewhat naively, stating the obvious, let alone the broad brush—some would say crude finger-painting—that I have used to characterize wine scholarship as a continuum. Although I make no apologies for this, as the obvious, the foundational, the fixed and the solid, even the solidish, are often overlooked by wine scholars of various social science varietals. For example, where are the studies that explain why grape wine, and especially *Vitis vinifera* grape wine, is so ubiquitous? And why, and how come, parsnip wine isn't? I've tried parsnip wine and it was very delicate and elegant in its one-note flavour. I've also had a beetroot wine that was mildly hallucinogenic. So why aren't natural beetroot wines currently flooding the market man? And once you've ascertained why grape wine, you need to then explore what attributes they are accorded. What attributes are muted or ameliorated? How does this both create and interpellate wine connoisseurs, discerning amateurs and the great mass of uninformed middle-class imbibers? Let alone how is it used to justify, even celebrate monocropping, bourgeoisie profiteering and opportunism, let alone the performative liberations of reflexive artisanship. Indeed, where do greater and lesser profits lie (as in reside as well as deceive) in all these discourses and practices of taste, value and social distinction? As Marx (1867), Harvey (2014), and many others have noted capitalist, market-based commodity production has a number of dominant and enduring logics (not to mention contradictions), some of which I have already mentioned. And so do grapes—botanical, seasonal and evolutionary. Not to mention the thresholds and potential adaptations that climate change is 'occasioning'. Will pinot noir come to be called by any other name? Many certainly will have different taste configurations if my recent introduction to the flavour outcomes occasioned by climate change and amplified by shifts to organic production are any indication of a different future. They will also have newly rendered justificatory discourses. One winemaker told me that his newly bottled, highly perfumed, almost honeyed Pinot will "probably be promoted as a pinot to be drunk early" ("Maybe at breakfast instead of honey on toast" was my immediate thought response). Portents of a very different palate future indeed.

Now again many will be rolling their eyes as any sociologist worth their salt knows all of this and more fundamentals besides. More importantly, restating the fundamentals repeatedly to demonstrate how they are often conservatively, as opposed to dynamically, reproduced—at least in terms of maintaining their structural logics and principles—will not win you many originality points. And therein lies the rub. Sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, indeed social scientists of any hue are richly rewarded—if not compelled—to undertake original research, to generate original analysis and insights, to develop original methodologies. PhD regs demand it, publishers slavishly crave it, and academic promotions and reputations depend on it. Moreover, combine this with limited publishing opportunities compared to the hard sciences, and originality clearly rules. Not surprisingly then pursuing the many and varied 'cultural turns' in wine without factoring in or even explicitly linking to the fundamentals is clearly the expedient strategy. Although again compare this to the hard sciences—woe betide any physicist who doesn't factor in Newton's laws of motion, biologist who overlooks DNA, or chemist who overlooks the law of conservation of mass. Hard scientists can, and ideally should, contest these fundamentals whenever they can demonstrate what was previously thought solid is in fact shifting ground, but they can never, ever, ignore them. Yet in sociology and elsewhere the frenetic pursuit of originality clearly wins out and while the resulting 'cultural turns' are often very dynamic, very clever and a lot of intellectual fun to produce, the resulting analyses are often partial, tentative, and even timid in ignoring the fundamental, and especially so when industry-facing. I would argue that without taking into account the fundamentals of winemaking, I'm not sure if it is even good or robust social science.

Of course, the research that sociologists and others undertake is significantly—though obviously not exclusively—dependent on the 'face' or 'faces' that agents of the wine industry choose to show. In this respect the industry—aside from being a relentlessly a good news industry—is globally dominated by large, industrial wine manufacturers, many of whom are large transnational conglomerations with very slick marketing departments. Even many small, family-based, artisan winemakers are very skilled and practiced narrators of their own fortunes

(again—in both senses of the word). Indeed, whenever, wherever, winemakers plant a vine, up pops a triumphal, justificatory, story! Like all powerful entities and successful enterprises in capitalism, good winemakers dedicate significant resources to controlling their public-facing narratives and as such they typically do not want, nor need to, accommodate the research aspirations of critical scholars. Indeed, even industry-facing scholars such as economists have to worked very hard to get beyond annual report embellishments and good news stories.

As a result, most sociological wine researchers only have access to small to medium-scale, boutique, artisan winemakers, along with ordinary, everyday wine drinkers. The artisan winemakers are the ‘face’ of the industry, even though they typically produce much less wine than industrial scale manufacturers.<sup>7</sup> In wine-based promotions and the wine media, the artisan winemaker fulsomely represents much of which is contemporaneously celebrated in wine-making—passion, creativity, sociability, hospitality, urbane tastes, relentless work ethics, scientific acuity, and eternal, utopian-esque quests to make ever better wines. As such it is almost impossible not to admire most small-scale winemakers, nor to be incredibly grateful for the time and effort they give in being interviewed and even more so in accommodating ethnographic fieldwork. Nevertheless, they are just as unlikely to ‘open their books’ having neither the time nor inclination. Besides many artisan winemakers I know have little or no idea of what it costs them to produce a bottle of wine nor how to systematically retail price their own bottles—which is sort of admirable in its own right.

However, in spite of all of this small-scale winemakers are nevertheless necessarily duplicitous in all the default exploitations, stratifications, injustices, exclusions and inclusions of capitalist production—albeit admittedly in ways and degrees not as obvious as large-scale, shareholder beholden, industrial producers. Yet they also make wines in ways that are complicated and potentially contradictory to the dominant logics of capitalist production. Not knowing the costs of their labour for example, and not knowing how to price a bottle of wine with anything approaching economic acuity. Moreover, many are at least partially aware—like many of us—of their duplicity and are committed to ameliorating the situation best they can. Although they too are up against powerful structures and institutions that are equally committed to entrenching, if not enhancing, the status-quo. Indeed, many are committed to leaving the world a little better than they found it and the numbers committed to native-tree planting in Aotearoa New Zealand—both privately and publicly—to overcome the ecological negatives of mono-cropping is impressive. While some are even interested in critical analysis of their practice, though they do tend to mine this for that which they believe will constructively benefit their businesses.

*Peter: So where would you situate your own sociological study of wine?*

Peter: Actually, at this point I'd rather address a question about whether there is anything within these circumstances that constructively points a way ahead for critical sociological studies of wine?

*Peter: Fair enough ... I'm assuming there is?*

Peter: I'm glad you asked, yes, indeed there is. Although highlighting exploitations, inequities and so on might appear as low-hanging fruit especially in terms of analytical obviousness and lack of originality, this does not mean these fruits are not sweet. Moreover, when it comes to structural processes and the associated practices of large scale, economically and politically powerful players such as transnational wine manufacturers and collective promotional/ lobbying groups such as NZ Wine, this fruit should be picked with gusto and vigor.

At a theoretical baseline I would point to the materiality theories of Miller (2005), Ingold's (2018) affordances and Latour's (1987) black boxes of science and technology, to which I would add Marx's red box of economics, Darwin's green box of botany and biology, and Mendeleev's transparent bell jar of chemistry. Not sure about Schrödinger's cat box—it might or it might not be helpful. Anyway, all of the above at one level or another seek to foreground the influences and consequences of the fundamental, foundational, and the-should-be-obvious to one degree or another, and as such are excellent theoretical starting points.

More specifically, there is some excellent sociological or sociological-esque, industry-critical work out there which is—if not always explicitly, then certainly very strongly implicitly—also society-critical. For example—and this is by no means exhaustive—the geographer John Overton and company's papers on the comparative GI desires and motivations of large vs. small wine-makers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Overton and Murray, 2017) and also on the use of ‘fictive capital’ and the status associated with vineyard ownership to enhance—even launder—individuals' reputations (Overton and Banks, 2015); the work of their doctoral student—now Dr Kelle Howson—on the validity of South African wines' ethical branding initiatives against a backdrop of the ‘dop’ system and other labour concerns (Howson et al., 2014); while another Aotearoa New Zealand based geographer—Nick Lewis—wrote an excellent piece on the assemblage of the local wine industry and the responses of different scale players to the fall in grape prices after a record 2008 vintage (Lewis, 2014). These geographers definitely err toward highlighting the links between the places of wine and the economics of capitalism. While the anthropologist (and

<sup>7</sup> The wine industry in New Zealand, for example, is dominated by twenty large, Category 3, winemakers (each producing more than 2million litres annually), but who represent less than 3% of all registered winemakers and whom themselves are dominated by transnationals such as Constellation and Pernod Ricard. These winemakers account for anywhere between 60-80% of all wine produced—of which approximately 30-35% is exported as cheap bulk wine (NZ Wine, 2021).

my PhD examiner, now collaborator) Demossier's (2010) de-mythologisation of the French wine drinking culture, and more latterly of Burgundian (2018) terrior constructs, are similarly praiseworthy; as is Jennifer Smith Maguire's (2013, 2018) work on the strategic creation of taste and added value through the practices and deployment of constructs such as familiness, authenticity, and the work of cultural intermediaries. And of course, the early work of Ulin (1995) on the political economy of wine cooperatives was ground breaking, as was Unwin's (1991) exacting study of the development of the global wine industry and trade. While I especially like the overt industry-critical work of Matthews (2016) in debunking myths of the wine industry—particularly his dismantling of the minerality/flavour claims of terrior—an argument supported by hard science (Meinert, 2018). While there is also the sophisticated industry-society critical research of Hannickel (2010, 2013) in exploring the complicity of the wine trade in the colonialization of America and Australia. And on this note the work of historians like Guy (2003), Ludington (2013), Harding (2019), and McIntyre (2012)—while ostensibly 'neutral'—is so detailed and subtle, it not only lays down secure foundations from which to critique developments and contemporary forms in wine industries everywhere, but also provides exemplars of exacting scholarship.

Of course, in part, the 'cultural turn' in Sociology—and especially when viewed in its disciplinary entirety—resonates with similar exacting scholarship, which reveals a rich cornucopia of enduring, dominating (or at least attempting to), contradictory, peripheral and episodic praxis from the foundational to the highly dynamic. Again the low-hanging fruit of status-quo duplicity—either agentic or unwitting—must be picked but with important caveats; first, there should be an empathetic rendering of interlocutors' beliefs, values, moralities, ideals and experiences—alongside, of course, a critical outlining of their silences, inactions, absences and unknowings; second, these should be analysed in the light of nature, economic, social and other 'solids', 'fluids' and capitals; third, all evidence of the contradictory within or associated with the winemakers' normative praxis and conservative status quo should be wholeheartedly revealed and constructively critiqued before it is; fourthly critically assessed as potential pathways to alternate futures—both in winemaking specifically and in society more generally. Of course, if anything similar is discovered in large-scale, transnational wine endeavours and processes, this also needs to be brought to the fore, although perhaps through gritted teeth... I jest of course... Or do I?

I might part company with some wine scholars at the first point and especially those who believe in the inviolability or infallibility of the subject's perspectives—although these should be respected and faithfully reported, like all academics, research subjects, respondents and interlocutors are not all knowing, are also partial in experience and are intuitively biased in perspective, if not wholly vested in their own particular interests. While I will definitely diverge at the third and fourth points from those academics who believe in some form of research 'neutrality' or God forbid, analytical 'objectivity'. It is incumbent on any social scientist worth their metal to bring to bear their interpretations and learnings in full—and especially whenever those are different to those of their subjects, as long of course this is done transparently and not under the ruse of expert detachment. Being an academic is a privilege that must be fully engaged or as Marx famously said, and I paraphrase, 'Wine scholars have only interpreted the world, the point, is however, to uncork it.' And the first step toward constructive change is thinking and speaking differently, and especially when out of turn. Although I think I might be preaching to the converted when it comes to the readers of, and contributors to, this journal.

Now this fourfold approach to researching small-scale winemakers is something I significantly arrived at while working on a co-edited book on wine, terrior and utopia (Dutton and Howland, 2019) with Assoc. Prof. Jacqueline Dutton from the University of Melbourne—a noted French literature and utopian scholar, and an amazing font of wine knowledge. In researching, discussing and reading about the utopian, that is the forever striving for the better—which in wine encompasses everything from questing for ever better wines to ever better cellaring and drinking conditions, through to the seeming contradictions of commercial winemakers who defy economic rationalities to indulge in creativity, passion, art, hospitality, gifting, community care, land—product—people empathy, and so on—I came to finally realise the full import of Marx's dialectics and his associated extortions to free humankind to fully explore their creativeness and sociabilities. Indeed, the work of two other Australian-based scholars was also formative in this regard—Swinburn (2019) and his astute insights on winemaker affect and how Aboriginal notions of 'country' can practically and morally frame a vernacular notion of terrior in Australia, while Skinner (n. d.), whose research on sensory winemaking and hobbyist winemakers is likewise highly insightful and affirming. Although their work is distinctly in the cultural turn camp, by focusing on stark alternatives to contemporary commercial winemaking—potential in the case of 'country' as a vernacular terrior and current in regards to hobbyist, sensory and affect winemaking—it nevertheless serves to robustly highlight the botanical and economic foundational by inference alone. The work of both these scholars routinely has caused me to stop and take stock of my own analyses and cynical biases. In fact, I am currently editing a volume on wine and the gift, the contributions to which adroitly analyse the entangled conservativeness and contradictoriness of making wine as commodities for market sale and as gifts to give away. This volume is going to be a doozy—you should watch out for it.

*Peter: Obviously I will ... however... to return to my earlier question, where would you situate your own sociological study of wine?*

Peter: Well, unsurprisingly my research has always attempted to be interlocutor-empathetic, industry-critical, and society-critical. However, in saying this I am quite frustrated by the timidity of much of my published research especially in terms of both linking the industry critical to the society critical and in outlining the latter per se. Indeed, I think I was far braver or more adroit at this in my PhD thesis than I have been in subsequent publications. Although having said this the sheer scope and space of a PhD thesis allows for more unoriginal or obvious society-critical outlining and linking. Indeed, a PhD in Sociology or Anthropology almost demands the obvious society-critical, political-critical, historical-critical, and so on as a means to demonstrate the foundational sociological understandings of the submitting candidate. Then by contrast, post-PhD one is compelled to write within the word limit restrictions of journal articles and book chapters so that originality is again significantly foregrounded, moreover these scribblings are further disciplined by peer reviewers skewed toward the originalities and dynamisms of the ‘cultural turn’.

So, I suppose we could say that my research and publications are a work in progress. With this in mind I would note that I am currently working on three publications that fulfill the fourfold brief I outlined before. The first considers the legal fictions of Geographical Indicators and their role in providing moral validation for the construction of fictitious vineyard and place-of-origin wine brands by large supermarket retailers—essentially how legal codifications and capitalist marketing collude in telling big fat porkies to the benefit of the economic elite. While the other two consider the entangled roles of wine as commodity and as gift—both from a structural perspective focusing on the solidish botanical and production affordances and then from the specific economic and social habitus of boutique winemakers in Aotearoa New Zealand. But as I say, it is all very much a work in progress.

*Peter: Interesting—clearly as you say you have a lot to work on. In this respect are there also gaps in the overall sociological study of wine that you think should be addressed?*

Peter: For sure, with the sociological study of wine being a relatively new and emergent field there is plenty of scope for original research. However, first and foremost there is a desperate ‘need to follow the money’. That is unpacking the investments and influences of large investors—especially transnational, global and regionally dominant—in the wine industry. There is great work from Anderson and co emanating out of Adelaide in terms of identifying global trends in production and consumption—both historical and contemporary (Anderson and Pinilla, 2017; Neglen et al., 2017)—but they are restricted by the nationally-based collection of statistics and thus fall prey to the biases and limitations of methodological nationalism we discussed earlier. Rather what is needed is a robust interrogation of global, transnational, large-medium and small-scale investments in wine production, along with critical analysis of how this impacts on labour practices, wine tastes and quality valuations from bulk to fine wines, on terroir-based discourses, environmental degradations, sustainability initiatives, collusive nationalisms, and so on—a sort of Mondovino<sup>8</sup> meets forensic accounting collaboration. As such this would ideally consist of analyses of annual and other financial reports, along with other less-public facing forms of financial considerations including access to boardroom deliberations and to corporate and shareholder water-cooler (or is that whiskey cabinet?) discussions. Moreover, this research needs to be undertaken from the transnational level of Constellation and Pernod Ricard for example, right down to family-based and artisan winemakers. Now, make no mistake this research is extremely difficult to undertake successfully. Typically, the more elite a research cohort the less access accorded to social scientists. It is certainly far beyond my paltry research capacities for example and in reality would probably be best undertaken by teams of economists, accountants, actuaries and social scientists. It might even be an impossibility—especially given the gate-keeping resources of the powerful—but even then the resulting analytical gaps need to be consistently noted and accounted for as appropriate and able.

Another similar area of potential research is into the elite enclaves of luxury wine purchasing and consumption.<sup>9</sup> Again this effectively entails ‘studying up’ and is a very difficult nut to crack. I’ve certainly never managed it. Indeed, I was even excluded from the exclusive annual vertical tastings on the vineyard where I undertook fieldwork as my palate was quite rightly considered to be too uninformed, too uneducated, to warrant an invitation. Smith Maguire’s (2017) research on how contemporary Chinese wine consumers—both the internationally agile and the emerging middle-classes within China—are negotiating, and are to some degree overcoming, their ‘outsider’ status in the international world of elite wine, partly through their Bordeaux-philic focus on luxury wines and chateaux, definitely provides a roadmap. Although ultimately the research focus needs to drill both down and out from the discourse of news reports and survey respondents’ narratives into the ethnographic and financial nitty gritty of social interactions, relationships and networking, and its socio-economic consequences for a wide swath of players—from casual vineyard workers and winemaker suppliers out to the Machiavellian opportunisms of high

<sup>8</sup> Mondovino is a documentary (2004) directed by Jonathan Nossiter and explores the impact of globalization—in particular the influence of critics like Robert Parker and consultants such as Michel Rolland—on wine production and consumption in different wine regions around the world.

<sup>9</sup> There is some consumer-based/orientated research on the luxury wine value creation and associated promotions and marketing (see Beverland, 2005, 2006).

finance. I know, however, there is a researcher who has cracked invites to elite, invitation-only, wine galas held in Hong Kong, where winemakers from Bordeaux and Burgundy grandly showcase (or it that flog?) their grand cru wines and induct notable locals into their Brotherhoods<sup>10</sup>. Once this researcher hits their analytical groove this will prove to be very valuable research, as would ethnographic and other research into exclusive wine clubs, the collectors of elite and historic wines, elite wine auctions and so on.

Meanwhile at the other end of the spectrum there is desperate need for research into failed vineyards and wineries, with 'failure' including everything from economic insolvency, succession failure or simply wine quality failure. Again, this is a difficult nut to crack. Personally, I have had three insolvent winemakers lined up to interview, only for all to cancel or simply not turn up. Indeed, a couple told me it was just too emotional a subject for them to discuss. However, this research is needed as a foil to the relentless good news ethos of wine industry promotions.

Other than this there is also a need for research into governmental and other forms of legal-political regulation and its sociological impacts on wine production, exchange and consumption. Moreover, as mentioned earlier wine and inebriation is woefully under researched to such an extent you could not be faulted for thinking all wine consumers were budding connoisseurs temperately supping wine solely for its aesthetic taste qualities. And lastly winemaker hospitality toward researchers raises some very interesting ethical questions and conundrums that are also worthy of critical research and discussion.

Now, I'm sorry, but I have to wrap this up as I have a taxi arriving soon to whisk me away to yet another physio appointment. Obviously, I've been intentionally over-generalizing and provocative in places, nevertheless I hope you have found some of it at least interesting and ideally also informative.

Peter: Well... I can't speak for anyone else, but you really didn't tell me anything I didn't already know.

Peter: Touché Peter... touché.

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<sup>10</sup> Brotherhoods such as *La Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin* in Burgundy, and *La Jurade de Saint-Emilion* and *Commanderie du Bontemps* in Bordeaux, organize invitation-only events in France and around the world (e.g. Hong Kong and USA) that promote the prestige of the French *grands crus*.

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## Book Review

# Wine, Terroir and Utopia: Making New Worlds

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Dutton, J. and Howland, P. J. (eds.) (2020). *Wine, Terroir and Utopia: Making New Worlds*. London: Routledge Press.

Studies of food and alcohol examine culturally-preferred ways of making and consuming. One particularly difficult aspect of this process is taste: what flavors are desired, and how do producers ensure their consumers detect and appreciate the correct flavors? What we taste is heavily influenced by what we are expecting or told to taste. Conceptualizing these perception-influences on taste is a difficult task. Terroir is one such word that scholars and laypeople use to describe a great range of influences on food products, particularly wine. In *Wine, Terroir and Utopia: Making New Worlds* edited by Jacqueline Dutton and Peter Howland, a series of scholars seek to overlay ideas of utopia over wine and terroir in an effort to illuminate some of the boundaries of this term. This work excels in highlighting the multiple, multi-faceted, and endless definitions of terroir and applying them in a series of case studies. Foreground in a great theoretical introduction, the following chapters ask questions to clarify, expand, and challenge terroir.

Though not formally divided in this way, the chapters roughly address three major wine regions: Europe (particularly France), South Africa, and Australia. Each chapter addresses how we can use utopia--itself a flexible and intangible term--to better understand wine and winemaking in various parts of the world. Fundamentally, they posit that utopia is a sort of constant hope. In wine, it manifests as a sense of anticipation that the grapes will ripen well, the desire for a good harvest, that the multitude of factors that come together to ferment great wine will all occur, and that no matter how good the current year's yield hope that the following one will surpass it. Utopian hope also manifests in the desired benefits of wine over other alcohols to better society, and in the hope that gruesome working conditions can improve. The applications are varied, and each chapter presents a new way to use hope to understand the wine world.

In applying utopia to terroir, it opens up a dialogue of perceptions, hopes, and idealized landscapes. This work does a fantastic job of showing the endless components of terroir, and how each is shaped by utopian visions of wine, landscapes, and people. Briefly, terroir is the people, land, and climate that contribute to a finished bottle of wine. Within each of these categories lie bottomless factors of history, the environment, capitalism, race, class, gender, among other variations that can be tapped into to make one plot of land somehow different from another. Some of these are real, scientific differences that do indeed impact the product--France's soil and climate is highly variable, and different again from other wine regions. Despite this, one crucial element of terroir and utopia is their malleability. The way marketers, oenologists, and others involved in the production and promotion of wines sell their landscapes and histories does tremendous work in cultivating desired tastes and perceptions in consumers.

Yet, the work does not dismiss concerns of dystopia and what the pursuit of the perfect wine costs in human and environmental capital. Pointedly, McIntyre, Pierre, and Germov's chapter on Australia highlights how the desire to develop vineyards as an effort to curb the uncouth drinking habits of early colonists meant an extension of dystopian experiences for Aboriginal Peoples. Further, Howson, Murray, and Overton's chapter on South Africa engages in the ethical considerations of terroir. They discuss the awful working and living conditions of many Black vineyard laborers, and how ethical production has become another aspect of the wine landscape that can be manipulated and sold.

This is a useful collection to evaluate the ways humans view landscapes with expectations. What hopes, dreams, realities, perceptions do we apply to agricultural spaces, workers, and products? In applying utopia, the contributors ask us to expand how terroir can include a new set of attributes. In many ways, this work re-opens questions about what we should include in descriptions of terroir.

This collection might be best suited for people wanting to learn more about wine and terroir theory. The case studies draw upon a variety of time periods and regions. A working knowledge of these histories is not required, but some familiarity would certainly help frame several chapters' arguments. Certainly, this is a theoretical work with case studies to support assertions and frameworks more than it is a historical work of wine growing regions.

## Book Review

# Burgundy: The Global Story of Terroir

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Demossier, M. (2020). *Burgundy: The Global Story of Terroir*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

The notion of *terroir*, which lies at the core of this book, is a much-debated topic in the world of wine. The critical reaction to Mark A. Matthews's book, *Terroir and Other Myths of Winegrowing* (Matthews, 2016), was often fierce and demonstrated how devoted some wine writers are to the notion. It has a centuries-long history in France as a belief that specific places produced characteristic styles of art, language, and human personality and it is only recently, from the early 1900s, that terroir has been focused so closely on wine and has come to refer to the effects on wine of the environment in which grapes grow.

Definitions of terroir vary, but all include climate and mesoclimate, the exposure of the vineyard, and soil structure. Many definitions of terroir give emphasis to vineyard rocks and soils – limestone, slate, volcanic soils, and so on – which are claimed to exert a direct influence on wine style, including weight, texture, and acidity level. Some definitions of terroir include the human contribution to wine, such as the history of viticulture in a particular location or prevailing winemaking techniques.

Burgundy was the first major wine region to be associated with terroir, thanks to the work of its wine industry's leaders, generation after generation, constructing and reinforcing identities for the region and its wines that are inseparable from terroir. Burgundy is a complicated region with more than a hundred appellations covering not only generic Bourgogne wines but many small villages, each of which has a signature style of pinot noir and/or chardonnay. The variations are said to reflect the specific terroir of each village and its individual *climats* (small parcels of vines), the history of viticulture there, and the work of its *vignerons* – which originally referred to small-scale producers who tended their vines and made wine for a living. Religion is an important part of the mix – adding a spiritual dimension to the terroir story – because for centuries, until the French Revolution, most of Burgundy's vineyards were owned by religious orders and other Church entities.

This longer history of terroir in Burgundy is the backdrop to Marion Demossier's excellent study, which focuses on the early 2000s. It was clearly animated by the 2015 application to have Burgundy's vineyards and terroir given World Heritage status by UNESCO – an application in which Demossier participated as a consultant. Her account of the process occupies the last chapter of this book, but her work on the application (which was successful and includes the vineyards on the slopes between Dijon and Beaune as well as Beaune itself and the historic centre of Dijon) seems to have driven much of the research for the book. Terroir is clearly central to the book as the retitling of the second edition suggests: 'terroir' was absent from the title of the first edition (2018), and it would be interesting to know what motivated the change.

Demossier has effectively applied her skills as an anthropologist to deconstruct Burgundian terroir and its associated notions of authenticity and traditions. She writes,

“The Burgundy terroir story has never been altered radically, it is about history, God – or the monks – and the goodness of the soil. These ingredients form part of the social reconstruction of authenticity and the reinvention of tradition....” (Page 55)

As she suggests, the narrative of terroir in Burgundy mounted for the UNESCO application stressed continuity over rupture and projected the needs of the present to the past.

Demossier demonstrates how the narrative was originally constructed by the elites in Burgundy’s wine industry but over time it was reinforced by local wine societies and by outsiders such as non-French wine writers who readily took on board the image of Burgundy wine that the region’s leaders promoted. The enterprise assumed a global dimension as the primacy of Burgundy’s wines, in terms of quality and authenticity, was so universally acknowledged that producers of pinot noir and chardonnay throughout the world claimed to be making their wines in a ‘Burgundian style’. The local became the global.

The ‘global’ part of the book’s title takes the form of an examination of the ways in which terroir and its associated notions have been received in Japan and New Zealand. The latter is a particularly interesting study, based on Demossier’s fieldwork among the winemakers of Central Otago, a relatively new wine region now well known for its pinot noir wines. Here the notion of terroir is alive and well, and producers have free rein to grow grapes and make wine unhampered by the restrictions imposed on Burgundy’s producers by appellation laws.

*Burgundy: The Global Story of Terroir* is a fascinating exercise in probing scholarship and common sense. Demossier has excavated the modalities and strategies of terroir-thought and has brought the lessons of her target region, Burgundy, to bear on the wider world of wine. In doing so she has shown how the Burgundian notion of terroir was adopted and adapted so that the notion of wines’ having ‘a sense of place’ (code for terroir) has now become a mantra throughout the wine world.

How long this phase will last is a matter of conjecture, with the basics of terroir being questioned by soil scientists such as Mark Matthews and Alex Maltman – the latter in *Vineyards, Rocks, and Soils: The Wine Lover’s Guide to Geology* (Maltman, 2018) – and by historians such as Joseph Bohling – in *The Sober Revolution: Appellation Wine and the Transformation of France* (Bohling, 2018). These two titles were published after Demossier’s book was complete and they indicate just how relevant and dynamic Demossier’s subject is. For her painstaking analysis of the pivotal part Burgundy has played in the persistence, endurance, and global spread of the notion of terroir, we are indebted to her.

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## Book Review

### Culture and Art: Selected Writings, Volume 1

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Bauman, Z. (2021). *Culture and Art: Selected Writings, Volume 1*. Edited and Introduced by D. Brzezinski, M. Davis, J. Palmer, and T. Campbell. Translations from the Polish by K. Bartoszynska. Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Many of us quite naturally associate the work of Zygmunt Bauman with his work on 'liquid modernity', 'liquid life' and 'liquid love', mortality, in his later work problems of social exclusion, and of course his seminal and controversial book on the Holocaust. Again, although many of us were familiar with his writings on the broad question of culture, I suspect that few of us knew that he had a significant interest in the arts, visual and performative. This valuable volume brings together a range of papers on the arts and culture, some unpublished and others published only in Polish, some fully polished and ready to print, others from the large archive of papers by Bauman and his wife and now deposited at the University of Leeds, the institution where he taught throughout his long sojourn in the United Kingdom.

The papers collected here and ably organized by the editorial collective and translator of those only in Polish, range over subjects as diverse as expositions of Bauman's own theory of culture, Marxism and culture, values, photography, the theatre, the novel, the stories of Jorge Luis Borges, Jewish Polish writers, and the connections between these and sociology as understood and practiced in a remarkable number of books by Bauman himself. The papers range over the period 1966-2015, and while some in effect introduce themes later developed by Bauman into full-length books (the idea of liquid modernity for example), others see their author ranging off into subjects as varied as actors and spectators, for many of us, alas, little known Polish writers and artists here introduced to an English-reading audience, the whimsical imaginary meeting between Einstein and Magritte that gave birth to postmodernism, the limits of interpretation, love and hate, and the novels of Milan Kundera, of which Bauman was clearly a great admirer. This range shows Bauman as an important public intellectual in his native Poland, engaging with the literary and intellectual communities there and provides insights into his life and professional genesis before he became known to many of us as a leading sociologist writing in English, as well as a bridge between sociology in the West and the rich if politically repressed artistic and literary life of Eastern Europe.

On reading these essays one rather regrets that Bauman did not, as did his predecessor Herbert Marcuse, devote a whole book to the arts and aesthetics. Had he done so, it is possible to see what many of the themes of that volume might have been. But beyond signaling Bauman's interest in the arts, the book reveals several other aspects of his work. One of these is stylistic. When he removed himself from the strictures of more academic writing (although one of his many virtues is that he is always eminently readable) - when writing for Polish literary journals for example - another, more relaxed and expansive Bauman appears. Clearly, he was able to write fluently in a

number of registers, as this book so ably reveals. Another is the profound idea that the sociological imagination and the artistic imagination, far from being opposed to one another, inform each other in ways that enriches both. This relationship, as revealed in these essays, is not a simple one of cause and effect, but a kind of constant dialogue. Sociology sheds light on the conditions of artistic and cultural production; the arts point to alternative forms of knowledge and to paraphrase the term of Bauman's contemporary, John Berger, "ways of seeing". It would be very good if this book stimulated further exploration along these lines, since even these brief essays suggest an exploration in progress that can be carried much further. As the editors point out, Bauman frequently drew on literature in particular in elucidating a range of sociological problems, and the book reveals that he was himself an accomplished practitioner of photography and film. I am always more respectful of people who write about the arts when I know that they themselves actually practice at least one.

In relation to the sociology of culture, Bauman has an interesting relationship. He was never an empirical sociologist in the usual sense, but his work illuminates culture through the sociological and theoretical perspective that he brought to bear on it in his prolific writings, and as one reads him, one has the intuitive sense that he has indeed grasped the essence of whatever phenomenon he is discussing. Here, as in most of his other work, one does not read Bauman for the "facts", but precisely for the interpretation of culture which he writes about in these essays. Embedded in this interpretative project, as this book makes abundantly clear, were both a critique of contemporary culture, and in particular its tendency to marginalize and exclude those not fully included in its gaze, and a deeply humanistic view of sociology rooted in what is finally more of an ethical vision than a political one. The issue of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics has been much discussed elsewhere: here Bauman sheds new light on this by triangulating it with sociology, providing an "interpretative sociology" that does not fit into any existing school, and in that sense, Bauman was a genuinely original thinker. These essays both reveal a lesser-known aspect of Bauman's thought and interests, and significantly demonstrate how he wished to link sociology and the arts in ways that open new interpretative horizons that deserve much further exploration, an activity that would carry the impetus of his work into the future.

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