



WINE AND CULTURE

VINEYARD TO GLASS

EDITED BY RACHEL E. BLACK
AND ROBERT C. ULIN

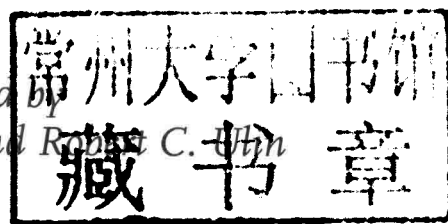


B L O O M S B U R Y

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
Introduction	1
<i>Rachel E. Black and Robert C. Ulin</i>	
Section I Rethinking Terroir	11
1 The Social Life of <i>Terroir</i> among Bordeaux Winemakers	15
<i>Sarah Daynes</i>	
2 The Things that Count: Rethinking <i>Terroir</i> in Australia	33
<i>Robert Swinburn</i>	
3 Space and <i>Terroir</i> in the Chilean Wine Industry	51
<i>Nicolas Sternsdorff Cisterna</i>	
4 <i>Terroir</i> and Locality: An Anthropological Perspective	67
<i>Robert C. Ulin</i>	
Section II Relationships of Power and the Construction of Place	85
5 Tasting Wine in Slovakia: Postsocialist Elite Consumption of Cultural Particularities	89
<i>Juraj Buzalka</i>	
6 Wine Histories, Wine Memories, and Local Identities in Western Poland	109
<i>Ewa Kopczyńska</i>	

7	<i>El Sabor de Galicia: Wine as Performance in Galicia, Spain</i> <i>Christina M. Ceisel</i>	125
8	“Local, Loyal, and Constant”: The Legal Construction of Wine in Bordeaux <i>Erica A. Farmer</i>	145
9	Cultural Patrimony and the Bureaucratization of Wine: The Bulgarian Case <i>Yuson Jung</i>	161
	Section III Labor, Commodification, and the Politics of Wine	179
10	Following <i>Grands Crus</i> : Global Markets, Transnational Histories, and Wine <i>Marion Demossier</i>	183
11	Georgian Wine: The Transformation of Socialist Quantity into Postsocialist Quality <i>Adam Walker and Paul Manning</i>	201
12	Regimes of Regulation, Gender, and Divisions of Labor in Languedoc Viticulture <i>Winnie Lem</i>	221
	Section IV Technology and Nature	241
13	Pursuits of Quality in the Vineyards: French Oenologists at Work in Lebanon <i>Elizabeth Saleh</i>	245
14	The Artifice of Natural Wine: Jules Chauvet and the Reinvention of Vinification in Postwar France <i>Paul Cohen</i>	261
15	<i>Vino Naturale</i> : Tensions between Nature and Technology in the Glass <i>Rachel E. Black</i>	279
	CONTRIBUTORS	295
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	299
	INDEX	319

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 7.1	<i>El Sabor de Galicia</i> (“It’s the Flavor of Galicia”).	132
Figure 7.2	<i>Pídelo por su nombre</i> (“Ask for it by name”).	133
Figure 9.1	Bulgarian viticultural regions.	167
Figure 9.2	Bulgarian wine regions recognized as EU’s QWpsr.	173
Figure 11.1	“Logic”.	207
Figure 11.2	Tbilvino ad (early 2000s) captioned “Don’t force it!” showing a man’s feet emerging from inside a giant drinking horn.	217

Introduction

RACHEL E. BLACK AND ROBERT C. ULIN

Wine has long been and continues to be an important commodity that generates significant interest because of its commercial, symbolic, cultural, and aesthetic value. On the academic side, historians, geographers, and economists continue to write prolifically about wine worldwide, documenting the involvement of elites and now multinational corporations in the development of winegrowing estates and global markets. There is, additionally, much enthusiasm for popular publications by wine writers and critics such as Robert Parker and magazines such as the *Wine Spectator*, all of which taken together are highly regarded for their authoritative evaluations and rankings of wine. Perhaps the most significant measure of interest is the consumption of wine that continues to rise robustly with globalization, clever advertising, and the proliferation of new winegrowing areas, such as China, to both cultivate and meet consumer demands.

Curiously, by comparison, anthropological research on wine as an exclusive topic of inquiry is scant over the past twenty years. This collection of essays from around the world therefore breaks new ground in that the authors not only address the importance of wine as a commodity, but also most importantly link their research on wine to a number of critical issues at the forefront of the social sciences and humanities. Contained in this volume are essays that address globalization, local agency, representation, social class, the invention of tradition, socialist and postsocialist cultures of wine, gender, and the uses of history and culture to support the quality and authenticity of wine. However, before we pursue more closely what the scope of the book entails, it makes

sense to explore why there has not been a significant legacy of wine research on the part of anthropologists given the rather remarkable topical and geographical breadth of their research over the past century.

PAST MODELS AND CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Those familiar with the history of anthropology know well that there is an intimate relationship between European colonialism and the development of academic anthropology in North America and Europe. Apart from America's own indigenous population, anthropologists took advantage of opportunities for field research among African, Asian, and Pacific peoples who came under colonial rule. This is not to say that anthropologists simply aided and abetted the colonial effort; numerous anthropologists criticized the exploitation and cruelty often associated with colonialism and, moreover, like Paul Radin, Margaret Mead, and Marcel Griaule, wrote ethnographic accounts of indigenous peoples that celebrated their diversity and humanity. However, as the contributors to the important Talal Asad (ed. 1973) volume have argued, the tradition of fieldwork among small-scale indigenous populations was cultivated in the midst of the colonial process and therefore unwittingly became part of the legacy of the discipline reproduced until relatively recently.

It is surely not our intent to elaborate anthropology's relation to colonialism, as this well-traveled territory would take us far from the topic at hand. Nonetheless, there are good reasons why anthropologists have not written much about wine, or, for that matter, food, related to how the discipline developed historically, especially its focus on fieldwork in small-scale indigenous societies. It would be wrong, though, to conclude that anthropologists paid no attention to food or drink altogether. One is reminded of Franz Boas's (1964) classic ethnography on the Netsilik Eskimo that documents life in the social round inclusive of Eskimo foods and recipes. Moreover, ritual has long been a focus of anthropological writings, given the influence of Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and later Victor Turner, and thus food and drink such as palm wine in West Africa or manioc beer in the Amazon that are consumed with ritual are often highlighted in these accounts. It is thus clear that anthropologists have long noted what indigenous peoples consume in both the "raw and cooked" versions.

Acknowledging the attention devoted to food and drink in classical ethnography is not to suggest that the contributions of ethnographers today lack novelty. To the contrary, the classical iterations of fieldwork born in the colonial milieu precluded the sort of critical and intensive exploration of food and

drink that marks the contemporary research agenda of social and cultural anthropologists. With few exceptions, most classical fieldwork was carried out among indigenous peoples in locales constructed as circumscribed. That is, the specific locale of ethnographic research until relatively recently was the village, band, or tribe as a singular unit of analysis associated with a specific territory. Culture was thus regarded as coterminous with a geographically limited or bounded group of people. Apart from an emphasis on ranked lineages, the people themselves, as well as the culture associated with them, were often regarded as homogeneous, suggesting an organic composition that was isomorphic with nature.

This representation of circumscribed peoples and their cultures may appear as a caricature in light of the significant theoretical differences among classical anthropologists that incorporated functionalism, structuralism, structural functionalism, and historical particularism. The point, however, is not that these theoretical traditions lack difference, as surely they did, but rather that, methodologically, anthropology had constructed through its own historical formation a tradition of research focused on societies as cultural isolates. This was as much true of Boasian historical particularism as it was of French and British structural and functional anthropology invested theoretically in history's negation.

The idea that fieldwork in terms of participant observation took place in geographically and culturally circumscribed societies is only part of the problem associated with the legacy of colonial anthropology. Anthropology itself was nearly unique in carving out a research agenda that was exclusive, or nearly so, to indigenous societies. The identity of anthropologists and anthropology was profoundly associated with conducting empirical research by living among an indigenous society for a sustained period of time. In part, this initiative owes its origins to the Enlightenment and the fascination of writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau with civilization's ultimate corruption of human nature and the unrealized social potentials of "natural man." This meant anthropology both as a discipline and as a perspective was tied historically to the lives of indigenous peoples. Although some anthropologists in Europe conducted their research in the European countryside, Alpine regions, and in Southern Europe where initially rural people were likewise viewed as the analogs of natural humanity (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), for the most part it was the colonies and colonized peoples to whom these anthropologists turned the majority of their attention.

Surely one can argue today that anthropology has long surpassed its colonial legacy and research tradition exclusive to circumscribed indigenous

cultures. There is some truth to this belief except for the fact that some historical connections are reproduced in the subtlest of ways. This is surely Johannes Fabian's point in what he has characterized as the "denial of coevalness" (1983). According to Fabian, anthropology makes use of unrecognized rhetorical strategies whereby indigenous peoples are regarded as noncontemporaneous. Such rhetorical strategies are implied in commonly used dichotomies such as modern and traditional or urban and rural. Fabian maintains that these dichotomies are not benign rhetorical strategies in that they place indigenous peoples in a subordinate position to the anthropologist, the very consequence most contemporary anthropologists have sought to avoid in rejecting evolutionary models of human culture.

The appeal to colonial anthropology, bounded cultures, and the denial of coevalness remain germane to the concerns of a volume concretely grounded in the ethnography of wine. For example, Fabian's point about coevalness applies to a socially differentiated winegrowing community in that the modernity of current wine technology is often invoked by elites and oenologists to dismiss the veneration of tradition, invented or otherwise, on the part of small-scale growers who live at what appears to be the margins of winegrowing history and discourse.

Our objective here is to suggest why anthropologists until recently paid such little attention to wine, and food more generally, toward the end of better appreciating the uniqueness and importance of research on the anthropology of wine. While the anthropology of wine is today as broad as the many world regions where grapes are cultivated and vinified, as a specific arena of research it depended largely on the maturation of the anthropology of Europe. This was not only the case because of the history and dominion of European winegrowing regions, albeit very important, but also that the development of a Europeanist anthropology, and a North American anthropology as well, foretold an important shift in anthropological theorizing and the identity of its object domain. Doing ethnography "at home" or in a culture closely related to one's own was problematic for the developing discipline of anthropology, a social science initially geared toward constructing Otherness. Until the second half of the twentieth century, most anthropologists felt that doing fieldwork in Western cultures lacked objectivity and therefore validity. There was also a certain discomfort to doing anthropology at home as the critical gaze turned inward. Although the list of anthropologists who have conducted research in Europe is significant, inclusive of Eric Wolf, Ernestine Friedl, and Jane Schneider to name just a few, the acceptance of the anthropology of Europe was arguably slow for a discipline whose identity remained heavily invested in research among

indigenous societies. This is not to say that anthropologists working among indigenous populations and peasants have paid no attention to food and drink beyond its local articulations—research on plantation agriculture and global commodities such as coffee and sugar stand as important and not exceptional examples that have contributed significantly to the interest in the anthropology of food. However, interest in wine as a topic of research in its own right has matured as a theme in conjunction with the growing acceptance and recognition of the anthropology of Europe and North America that has opened the door for a whole group of younger anthropologists interested in drink.

Anthropological research today has changed considerably, moreover, from its classical emphasis on the totality of life in the social round in that ethnographers working in both indigenous communities and those of much larger scale are likely to focus on a smaller set of issues and problems as they link local lives to regional, national, and transnational economic, political, and social processes. Furthermore, along with the movement of peoples, labor markets, and commodities that go along with transnationalism and globalization, quality fieldwork has become by necessity multi-sited. Most contemporary anthropologists have a sense of culture that is translocal and porous rather than circumscribed, and are prepared, therefore, to pursue their research agenda in a number of geographical locations. Again, this is not entirely new as anthropologists such as Oscar Lewis followed his Puerto Rican informants from the island to the continental United States. However, rather than being exceptional, this has become the standard. When studying drink and food, not to mention the associated reproduction of labor, culture, and social relations, the capacity to conduct research through the cycles of production and consumption necessitates multi-sited research inclusive of the archives and historical narratives.

We can see, therefore, that an anthropology fashioned in the midst of colonialism and dedicated to studying life in the circumscribed social round is ill prepared to study the complexities of contemporary life defined by rapid transfer of technologies, the mobility of people and culture, and the multiplicities of forms that globalization takes in linking diverse populations throughout the world. The focus on food and drink by classical anthropologists, while noteworthy, was simply not prepared to address their contemporary articulations. While it may be true that much has changed historically, it is also the case that anthropologists are theorizing the contemporary world and their own discipline quite differently.

There are a number of reasons why anthropologists and other academics have not seen the anthropology of food and alcohol as serious areas of study. First, most scholars associated food, wine, and alcohol first and foremost with

pleasure and therefore deemed them unworthy of serious investigation or theorizing. In the case of alcohol, particularly in North America, academics have taken up a disease prevention stance; this has largely precluded the study of the social and cultural value of alcohol (Black 2010). Second, wine is categorized simply as alcohol and becomes another dangerous intoxicant; once again, this overshadows the ritual, symbolic, and social importance of wine in many cultures. For instance, there would be no Catholic mass without wine. Last, we should rethink the categorization of wine as simply alcohol: for many cultures now and in the past wine is food. From a practical perspective, wine is an important source of calories. In many European countries, along with water, wine is ever-present on the dining table and is rarely consumed outside of meals. This may be changing, but it is important that scholars note these changes and try to understand the social, cultural, and economic shifts signaled by the French and Italian polices' cracking down on drinking and driving, for instance. Although associated with the pleasures of the table, wine offers an important site for anthropological investigation into larger social issues.

This brings us back to the anthropology of wine and what is potentially fresh and unique in today's scholarship focused on wine. Scholars from multiple disciplines would agree that wine as a commodity is symbolically charged because of its long-standing associations with religion, ritual, debauchery, sexuality, and sociability more generally. In this regard, wine is a window on actual and symbolic processes that point beyond the commodity itself. In fact, this is somewhat the problem with popular accounts of wine in that apart from social class, refinement, or perhaps the contrary but nonetheless important with bulk wines, wine tends to be discussed and written about as an object in itself. There is no shortage of articles, news reports, and books that discuss the colors, aromas, tannins, acidity and so on associated with particular wines. It is not that the biochemistry and technical skills reflected in wines is unimportant; for example, they are essential in understanding consumer preferences and professional ratings even if they are based on unacknowledged social and cultural assumptions. As anthropologists who research wine, we are well aware of the blending of technology, science, and tradition, or their oppositions, in making what are widely regarded as venerable wines. Even the issue of *terroir* and the linking of taste to place are given a paramount position in how we evaluate and appreciate wine. However, and here is where this volume makes a special contribution, the reputed qualities of the wine itself are only a departure point for a much broader and critical commentary on wine.

The readers of this volume will not only be exposed to richly textured ethnographic accounts of wines from a number of world areas, but they will also

have a critical exposure to the peoples and diverse traditions, contested and otherwise, too often ignored or eclipsed by narratives specifically devoted to the commodity itself. This is an especially important point because wine is often discussed, like most commodities under late capitalism, as if it were remote or divorced from the social relationships of its production, circulation, and consumption, thus ostensibly and wrongly giving the impression that it has a life of its own. Because of the symbolic capital invested in their representation, elite wines in particular seem especially prone to the reified discourses of connoisseurs and aficionados that reproduce social class while expunging concrete images of social labor. In analogous terms, this is exactly what is at risk with the now common notion of *terroir*. *Terroir* is meant to draw our imagination to the natural conditions of climate and soil as a signifier of distinction and in so doing reinforces the sense that the standards of excellence as well as the commodity itself is nothing more than natural—a point of view written into the French Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) legislation of the early twentieth century. Such rhetorical moves take us away from the unromantic images of concrete human subjects as they toil in the vineyards, experience harsh living conditions, and even face gender and class exploitation that are quite contrary to how we wish to imagine wine.

This volume is, therefore, most fundamentally about wine as a sociocultural and historical commodity and thus it brings anthropology's unique emphasis on culture, social relations, representation, and power to a critical understanding of wine. Themes such as the dismissal of tradition and its opposition to science will be explored and deconstructed as will the importance of wine to local and national identities negotiated from differently positioned subjects. As noted, wine is utilized in this book to raise important questions about globalization, markets, cultural constructions of history, and identity without losing the pleasures associated with reading about wine. None of this would have been possible in a classical version of ethnographic research tied to the identity of locally circumscribed indigenous populations nor in conventional volumes of wine that fail to pay significant attention to the social relations through which wine is produced, circulated, and symbolically represented.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

We have chosen to structure this volume around four broad themes that bring together a variety of perspectives on the anthropological study of wine. Each section opens with a short introduction that highlights some of the common analytical threads and theoretical approaches.

The first section is entitled “Rethinking *Terroir*.” With the renewed debate on this topic in the wine, food, and anthropological worlds, it made sense to showcase the ways in which anthropologists are reconsidering, advancing, and challenging this debate. Based on ethnographic findings, anthropologists are looking beyond a geological and climactic definition of *terroir*. In this section, contributors bring to the table the social and economic relations embedded in the struggle to define and codify the concept of *terroir*. In Chapter 1, Sarah Daynes gives an overview of the academic literature on *terroir* and then goes on to look at the production of collective knowledge based on locality. Daynes’s ethnography of Bordelais winemakers offers insight into local understanding and articulation of the concept of *terroir*. In Chapter 2, “The Things that Count: Rethinking *Terroir* in Australia,” Robert Swinburn explores the tensions between how wine critics and academics have defined *terroir* in Australia and the lived experience of *terroir* of new winegrowers, recent transplants from urban areas. Chapter 3 also looks at questions of *terroir* in the New World. Nicolas Sternsdorff Cisterna looks at how the Chilean wine industry is mobilizing notions of *terroir* as it attempts to change the reputation of its wines from good value to quality, premium wines. More specifically, Cisterna investigates how *terroir* turns vineyards into spaces of capitalist production. In this chapter, *terroir* is used as an analytical tool for examining the power relations mobilized in the construction of spaces, in this case vineyards. In the same vein, Robert Ulin considers the ways in which the concept of *terroir* naturalizes human relations in wine production. In Chapter 4, Ulin explores the tensions between *terroir*’s ability to create specificity and distinction by tying wine to a specific place while at the same time leading back to a mystification of the social elements necessary for the production of wine.

The second section, “Relationships of power and the construction of place,” carries over many of the themes developed in the previous chapters. At the same time, the chapters in this section engage in discussions of place, distinction, and labor through broader discursive frameworks. The first two chapters consider the changing place of wine in postsocialist Europe and the power dynamics embedded in wine production and consumption. In Chapter 5, “Tasting Wine in Slovakia: Postsocialist Elite Cultural Particularities,” Juraj Buzalka focuses on the changing meanings of wine consumption in Slovakia, and how for young, middle-class Slovaks wine tourism and wine drinking has become a mark of distinction. In Chapter 6, Ewa Kopczyńska explores the role of wine as a component of emergent collective memory and as part of public rituals. Echoing Buzalka’s ethnographic research in Slovakia, Kopczyńska uses wine production to investigate regional power structures in Western Poland.

The next two chapters in this section turn toward Western Europe and look at the ways in which wine can tell us more about changing patterns of consumption and social power. In Chapter 7, Christina Ceisel uses wine production and consumption to consider how globalization has shaped local, regional, and national symbols. Using Galician wine as an example, Ceisel looks at larger social questions related to labor, land, commodification, and nostalgia. Chapter 8, “‘Local, Loyal, and Constant’: The Legal Construction of Wine in Bordeaux,” takes a closer look at the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée system in France. Erica Farmer uses both ethnographic and historic sources to investigate the social relations and power structures embedded in this system. Next, Yuson Jung’s chapter also looks at the bureaucratization of wine classifications and the role they play in legitimating production in some places while excluding other production areas in Bulgaria. Drawing on ethnographic examples, Jung shows how the European Union classification systems for food and beverages actively recreate established global hierarchies, particularly with reference to wine.

Section three, “Labor, commodification, and the politics of wine,” looks at wine as a global commodity. By applying anthropological theory, this transnational commodity reveals both local and global shifts in consumption and the cultural meanings of wine drinking. In Chapter 10, “Following *Grands Crus*: Global Markets, Transnational Histories, and Wine,” Marion Demossier applies ethnographic methods and theory to the study of *Grands Crus*. She argues that these wines offer a unique window onto the transnational processes of commodification as well as the global market forces that shape the place of the *Grands Crus*. Adam Walker and Paul Manning’s chapter looks at the ways changing political and production regimes have reshaped the cultural practices surrounding wine production in Bulgaria from the socialist to the postsocialist eras. In particular, the current focus on quality wines in Bulgaria has had a significant impact on traditional Bulgarian drinking rituals that tended to focus on quantity. Ethnographic and material culture sources offer insights into the changing relationships between wine production, consumption, and cultural practices. Chapter 12 rounds out this section with a look at the ways in which small family farms in the Languedoc region of France deal with the problem of the reproduction of the family farm. In this chapter, Winnie Lem focuses on questions of labor and gender relations and the ways in which “regimes of regulation” on winegrowing family farms shape and attempt to ensure the reproduction of labor.

The last section of this book is entitled “Technology and nature.” It includes three chapters that explore the tensions between technology and nature