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Wine GB: Sparkling opportunism in the "New/Old World"?

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ABSTRACT

Since the global financial crisis, wine production has become an increasingly visible feature of the British rural economy, responding to the market opportunities posed by the rise of an affluent and status-attentive middle class attuned to the equally globalizing, cosmopolitan, and hedonistic cultures of sparkling wines. These new wine producers have taken advantage of a shifting imbrication of climatic, political, socio-geographic, and production modalities to promote their positionality as new "quality" sparkling wine producers. Based upon collaborative anthropological research, this article examines their diverse strategies to enter the global wine market in the context of the recent granting of the PDO global marker of quality and Brexit.

Keywords: British wine-Brexit-Opportunism-Terroir-Strategies

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On October 21, 2018, the BBC's Food Programme devoted its podcast to what the expert Susie Barrie described as "one of the most exciting regions in the world of wine": Great Britain, whose wines have "enjoyed over twenty-five years of success, winning international awards and being served at the most prestigious of royal occasions."[1] The aim of the program was to launch 2018 as "the vintage of the century," following an estimated harvest of over 15.6 million bottles (Skelton 2019, 2). The following year, my colleague from New Zealand, Peter Howland, and I were preparing to start a series of visits and interviews in the regions of Hampshire, Kent, and Sussex, on an ethnographic tour exploring the concept of terroir and its transnational spread.[2] Our respective positions (an anthropologist working on France and a sociologist working on New Zealand) allowed us to reflect a number of familiar images in the world of wine for our informants. The New World/Old World relationship provided us with an ethnographic window that allowed our informants to speak more freely about wine production. From the outset, we aimed for a critical stance on the concept of wine quality, in order to demystify the discourse on this subject. Based on this—and each applying the comparative perspectives acquired from our knowledge of the production of

1. The Food Programme, October 21, 2018. "A Vintage Year for Homegrown Wine."

2. We started fieldwork together in New Zealand in 2013, with some reflections on ethnographic practice related to our respective positions (New World/Europe; male/female; New Zealand/Burgundy) and to the wine promotion discourses that we encountered in the field. The four weeks of fieldwork in Britain inspired a first set of reflections, which we hope to expand upon in the future. For further discussion on collective ethnographic practices, see Laferté (2016). In total, we visited twelve wineries (Breaky Bottom, Camel Valley, Danebury, Davenport, Exton Park, Hambledon, Hattingley, Mumfords, Nyetimber, Ridgeview, Rathfinny, and Waitrose Leckford) and interviewed various actors, including wine merchants, winemakers, wine producers, and estate managers. At other wine-related events, we met consumers, influencers, and the heads of WineGB.

French Champagne and New Zealand's sparkling wines and Champagne grape varieties—we formulated a set of questions on operational scales, technical operations, market initiatives, etc., while also exploring subjects like the specificities of terroirs, the typicity of wines, and wine quality. These served as a basis for our semi-structured interviews with various winegrowers, winemakers, and vineyard owners. Based on these interviews and our notes from vineyard visits and observations, we identified the key influences and narratives (including the silences) on which we base this article.

Our last meeting took us to Rathfinny,[3] "the perfect site for producing world-class sparkling wine," following an enthusiastic invitation from the manager of the winery (himself a New Zealander). Driving through the Sussex countryside, we finally arrived at the site, a vast ocean of meticulously worked vines, offering the perfect image of New World wine production. In the heart of the rolling Sussex countryside, in this rich part of England, just "three miles from the sea [. . .] This breath-taking south-facing slope [. . .] is one of England's exceptional natural landscapes. The climate, chalk, soil and aspect make it the perfect site for producing world-class sparkling wine," in a region that already produces some of England's best award-winning sparkling wines. The site, modeled on the wine tourism model of South African wineries,[4] includes a gourmet restaurant, accommodation, and conference spaces.

In 2015, Rathfinny was one of the first British vineyards to receive the Protected Designation of Origin "Sussex PDO." In the British context, the appellation is attributed to the production zone attached to the winery, rather than to a particular geographical region or area with established collective interests. The attribution of such recognition of origin and quality through European regulations has not always achieved consensus in Britain's wine sector. In an interview with Ian Kellett of Hambledon (which in 1952 became the first commercial vineyard in Britain, located in Hampshire on soil very similar to that of Rathfinny), the journalist describes the winemaker's view that "if there were to be a meaningful PDO for top quality sparkling wine in the UK, then it would stipulate that the estate concerned should grow all its own grapes, and be located on chalk soils," in which case, according to Kellett, "there will only be two in the UK, us and Rathfinny."[5] This comment came in response to a production context in which most wineries were buying their grapes from local producers or importing them from abroad. Production has been somewhat reorganized since 2017 to promote British grape growing, but the question of buying grapes remains central in professional discussions.[6] The context of Brexit has of course reignited the debate on quality and designation of origin (Bernard 2017). Brexit remains a thorny question for wine production in the United Kingdom, which plans to "set up its own geographical indication (GI) schemes which will fulfil its World Trade Organisation (WTO) obligations."[7]

Thanks to more favorable climate conditions, newcomers like Rathfinny came onto the scene in 2010, trying to gain market share in the sparkling wine sector from more established competitors like Nyetimber (1988) or Ridgeview (1995), as well as other smaller producers. It is worth emphasizing that most vineyards in England and Wales are extremely small businesses (hobby viticulture), but there are also a few large operations looking to maximize profits while making excellent wines that command high prices (Clout 2013, 8). In total, around thirty producers own 50 percent of the total winegrowing area and account for almost 65 percent of sparkling wine production (Skelton 2019, 57). The question of financial investment is therefore central in strategies for establishing new vineyards.

Our article will examine the strategies adopted by British wine producers (in particular, those in England and Wales) and how they engage in the global production and consumption of wine. Some of these vineyards having recently been awarded global quality

3. https://rathfinnyestate.com/about/our-story/, accessed October 21, 2021.

4. We have chosen to use the term "wineries" because our informants constantly emphasized that wine is "an object technologically produced in terms of taste." Discourse on terroir coexists in an embryonic form but remains largely marginalized in discussions.

5. Jamie Goode, "Meeting Mark Driver of Rathfinny, Talking PDOs," Jamie Goode's Wine Blog, March 13, 2015, https://www.wineanorak.com/wineblog/england/meeting-mark-driver-of-rathfinny-talking-pdos, accessed April 1, 2020.

6. A seminar organized by Sheffield Hallam University (Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire and Dr John Dunning) on sparkling wines helped us understand how little historical connection producers have to their production sites. Most of them emphasize the grapes and their quality, and the role of the "flying winemaker" or enologist, with taste produced according to the climatic year in question. Terroir remains on the margins of producers' discussions.

7. See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-food-and-drink-names-from-1-january-2021--2, accessed October 21, 2021.

labels—the PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and the PGI (Protected Geographical Indication)—and in the context of Brexit, these establishments have decided to create new registers and models for their wine production, while attracting international consumers by using the slogan "made in Britain" to indicate quality and elitism. We believe that this opportunistic approach, using various tactics to gain an advantage (hedonistic drinking and the "made in Britain" slogan), is typical of embryonic (and even established) economic enterprises looking to make the most of new markets in a context of globalization. However, these new wineries are also trying to align themselves with the manufacturing or artisanal ethos of European wine production, by playing on and reinventing the idea of terroir. This supposed artisanship actually focuses more on vinification than on production and is ironically largely inspired by the major Champagne houses (Charters 2012; Demossier 2011; Guy 2003; Walters 2017). Playing on various ambiguities and paradoxes, the producers are strongly influenced by the Champagne region's terroir model, but they also exploit a new patriotic localism. They take advantage of a hedonistic alcohol culture, which has seen mass consumption of wine since the 1990s (Skelton 2019). The market for sparkling wines is part of this hedonistic, middle-class culture, and, in particular, it is a symbol of emancipation for young professionals.

■ Climate change and viticulture in northern climes: "We're at the northernmost limit of commercial grape production"

The history of viticulture in Britain is characterized by sporadic efforts followed by numerous failures, often of a commercial nature.[8] Although there is debate about the origin of viticultural production (Williams 1977), vines have been present in Britain since Roman times, as illustrated by the thirty-five-hectare Roman site described by Brown et al. (2001). However, according to Tim Unwin (1990), it was not until the reign of William the Conqueror that the first inventory of forty-two viticultural sites located in the southeast, the center, and East Anglia was drawn up. Most of these sites were attached to monasteries or belonged to the nobility. The Norman Conquest, which brought French nobles and ecclesiastics to Britain, marked an important period in the expansion of viticulture, particularly in those areas in the southern half of England most suited to growing grapes (around Worcester in the west, and in Kent in the east). At the end of the seventeenth century, the London market began emerging as a barometer for Europe's international fortunes and, later, for global wine producers. This development explains a long-standing interest in the consumption of European wines, illustrated by the creation of the prestigious Master of Wine qualification and the Institute of Masters of Wine in London in the 1950s (with the first official exam in 1953). In this regard, British wine brokers and connoisseurs in aristocratic circles have long been an integral part of the Old World of wine, even though wine production in Britain remained economically marginalized for a long time. In the last decade, the wine industry in Britain (particularly sparkling wine producers in England and to a lesser degree Wales) has enjoyed the type of entrepreneurial growth seen in the twentieth century in New World wine industries in Oregon, California, Australia, and New Zealand. The national market has long been dominated by Champagne, cava, and Asti, and more recently prosecco, which attracts affluent female consumers.

In this context, the production of sparkling wines has contributed to the growth of the British wine industry. Since 2004, climate conditions also seem to be changing matters. In the last decade, wine production has been built upon the heritage left by this turbulent history. A handful of capitalist entrepreneurs were able to benefit from the 2008 financial crisis (some were involved in stock market investments) and are trying to give their sparkling wines legitimacy on global markets. Other, smaller producers have simply sought to make a living from their passions and a profit from their vineyards. What they have in common is the climate context in which they produce wine, which they present in their discourses as being advantageous to the expansion of winegrowing. There are other factors too, such as technical progress, better crop health control, and a revolution in drinking cultures (Skelton 2019, 27). Wine production over the last twenty years reflects the growing taste for sparkling wines and a marked enthusiasm for hedonistic

8. For an introduction to the history of viticulture in Britain, see Skelton (2019) and Unwin (1990).

drinking. According to WineGB (the organization representing British grape-growers and winemakers), in 2003 there were 333 vineyards in Britain, covering a total of 756 hectares, with an average size of 2.32 hectares (WineGB 2019). There were 109 wineries, with a total annual production of 1.79 million bottles. In 2015, the figure rose to 502 vineyards, with an average size of four to five hectares. There were 133 wineries, and total annual production was 5.06 million bottles. Indeed, the total area of vines nearly tripled in eighteen years (from 822 hectares in 2000 to 2,138 hectares in 2018), and, in 2017, a million new vines were planted, mainly growing chardonnay, pinot noir, and meunier. The big French Champagne producers Taittinger (which purchased the sixty-nine-hectare Domaine Evremond in 2018) and Pommery (which purchased the forty-hectare Pinglestone Estate in 2018) occupy a leading position, and production is set to reach 40 million bottles by 2040.

Although today 72 percent of the total production area is located in the southeast of the country and 13 percent in the southwest, vines are grown as far north as Yorkshire,[9] past the northernmost limit for winegrowing. British producers (unlike the French) emphasize enological quality (the interviews focus on tasting and the organoleptic profile of the wines they want to make) rather than terroir, which has no cultural weight on the ground. Over the decades, the grape varieties grown and the types of wine produced have changed significantly, moving toward quality and the democratization of wine culture. In the 1960s and 1970s, Liebfraumilch and other German wines were particularly popular among wine drinkers in the United Kingdom, and table wines produced from grapes grown in English vineyards were just as light and fruity. Beyond the climate challenges, environmental challenges (orientation of sites, quality of soils, planting and pruning), and economic challenges (taxation) faced by the wine sector, real renewal did not occur until the 1990s. This renewal was accompanied by improved quality and a reflection within the profession on which varieties to plant, which sites to choose, and the quality of soils. The context of the climate crisis and the abundant harvest in 2018 offered new opportunities for certain wineries to expand. Most of the estates that we visited mentioned this year of overproduction as a turning point for them, because they required new equipment in terms of fermenting rooms, facilities, and cellars. As for the varieties planted, the increased focus on quality has led to pinot noir and chardonnay accounting for 59 percent of new plantations, alongside grapes like bacchus, seyval blanc, and pinot grigio.[10] The production of sparkling wines reached 9.1 million bottles in 2019, representing 69 percent of total production. Of this, only 8 percent of production was exported, but this covered forty countries, including the United States, Norway, various Asian countries, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Canada, China, and New Zealand. Wine is therefore a new, expanding industry in Britain, marked by a liberal economic context and a break away from old Europe.

Based on interviews with managers, winemaker-enologists, wine producers, vineyard managers, and vineyard owners,[11] a textual analysis of vineyard websites, and media reports and historical sources,[12] we can observe that the discourse of Britain's new wine investors and producers sways between two elements: the opportunities that the various climate, seasonal, political, and socio-geographic production modalities offer to promote their positionality and their reputation as producers of high-quality sparkling wine (see also Hall 2014; Howley and van Westering 2008); and more traditional references to European vineyards. Efforts to enhance the reputation of British wines became a priority particularly after the summer of 2018 (one of the hottest on record), when British production of sparkling wine saw record yields.[13] These exceptional climate conditions allowed many producers to try to expand the markets for their wines and, in preparation for future seasonal fluctuations

9. Personal communication with WineGB. We met some of these producers, who in general work with a "flying winemaker" and function cooperatively.

10. For further details, see https://www.winegb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/infographics-WineGB-Julia-marketing-2019-a5-brochure-v2-update-Sep-2019-single-pages.pdf.

11. We use the term "wine producers" rather than "winegrowers" or "winemakers," as we were often dealing with managers, vineyard managers, or teams, as the websites illustrate.

12. The twelve wineries we visited, mostly located in Hampshire and Sussex, share this ambiguity between a New World discourse focused on commercialization, tourism, and wine technology, and a marketing discourse referring to terroir and the Old World. The Champagne region often serves as a point of reference in this expression of their image, but also in the way they describe themselves to anthropologists, with many references to this region.

13. See https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2019/02/record-15-6m-bottles-of-wine-produced-in-england-and-wales-last-year/, accessed October 21, 2021.

and potentially lower yields, to stockpile large quantities of excess wine.[14] Furthermore, the political climate surrounding Brexit facilitated the promotion of English sparkling wines (Financial Times, November–December 2018). British wines and even regional wines (for example those from Sussex and Hampshire) were presented as broad and unproblematic assertions on behalf of the nation and its uniqueness in global contexts that were being increasingly undermined by the rise of popular nationalisms. British popular nationalism can also be explained by the electoral system, which favors the Conservative Party rather than the opposition (split between the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party).

On January 31, 2020, the British government, led by Boris Johnson, uncorked bottles of Nyetimber (at £150 each) to celebrate the triumph of the populist Conservatives in "getting Brexit done!" These last ten years of austerity, as part of a liberal and capitalist policy that plays strongly on isolationist nationalism, serve as the backdrop for the renewal of Britain's wine industry. Until 2017, this industry was largely defined by the rise of identity-based territorial interests separating Wales, England, and other regions. Paradoxically, Brexit has created the opportunity to build a national industry, except for a few wineries that dominate the sector and want to maintain their independence. In 2017, WineGB (Wines of Great Britain) was born when the UKVA (United Kingdom Vineyards Association) merged with the EWP (English Wine Producers). In the context of this reorganization of production, new territorial principles were established and a certain defensive localism emerged, combining local approaches and a global commercial policy. David Harvey (1996) observes that localism is never an innocent term, since it can provide the ideological foundations for reactionary politics and native sentiments. DuPuis and Goodman (2005, 369) state that "an inclusive and reflexive politics in place would understand local food systems not as local 'resistance' against a global capitalist 'logic' but as a mutually constitutive, imperfect, political process in which the local and the global make each other on an everyday basis."

14. Referring to the vintage for British sparkling wines is not a very widespread strategy, except for among a few very prestigious wineries.

■ "Made in Britain": Sparkling wines and market opportunism

The quality of wines, taste profiles, and commercial opportunities are often constructed according to the characteristics of the vineyard and its location. Consequently, the physical and sociocultural characteristics connected to terroirs (Demossier 2018; 2011; Parker 2015; Trubek 2008)—encompassing the political and economic dimensions, including within the focus around localism (DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Overton 2020)—play an essential role in the production of British wines, which is marked by a certain economic pragmatism. Claims relating to terroir—which are mostly consensual (Teil 2012) but highly questionable (Matthews 2016; Meinert 2018)—currently dominate the global wine industry, and in particular the discourses focused on quality and the typicity of fine wines (Beverland 2005; Trubek et al. 2010). The geographer Warren Moran (2016, 6–7) has identified six interrelated registers through which viticultural terroir is expressed: agro-terroir or plant cultivation; vini-terroir or the biochemistry and technologies of winemaking; legal terroir, including policy, regulation, governance, etc.; territorial terroir, from appellations to nations; identity terroir; and promotional terroir. British wine production has played on all these registers, obtaining several PDOs and PGIs prior to Brexit based on individual strategies and, since Brexit, developing a system of British labels.[15]

For the contemporary British wine industry, these registers are not necessarily as important or relevant as they are in more historically entrenched wine cultures like those in continental Europe. Several times, the producers we interviewed noted a lack of agronomic and vinicultural experience, which they attributed to the relative newness of their winegrowing businesses. One cellar master, whose father had spent several decades going to Champagne to learn the trade, admitted having no viticultural training beyond courses completed at Plumpton College. Similarly, the vineyard manager of another winery described visiting nursery gardeners in Germany with the site owner to find the most suitable solutions for the vineyard. Despite now having produced several vintages, British producers have little or no winegrowing culture, especially in

15. See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-food-and-drink-names-from-1-january-2021--2, accessed October 21, 2021.

comparison to French Champagne producers imbued with the ideology of terroir. This lack of experience, knowledge, and discourse relating to terroir causes or even forces English producers to opportunistically create their own constantly changing territorial, identity, and promotional registers of terroirs. These registers may be based on establishing connections with typically English village cultures by emphasizing county-based alliances, or on creating geological "bridges" with the chalky soils of Champagne (along with references to advice from French experts and expertise from Champagne winegrowing culture). In other cases, they align themselves with various Anglophilic groups and populist slogans such as "British is best," or use associated phrases like "made in Britain," which denote the elitism of luxury products (Rolls-Royce, Burberry, etc.) on export markets, particularly in former colonies such as Hong Kong and Canada. They also use references to idyllic winegrowing cultures imagined by an emergent global middle class as an embodiment of rural purity (Demossier 2019; Howland 2019; Koo 2016; Trubek et al. 2010). Together, these registers are both local and global (Ritzer 2004), simultaneously swaying between and combining the two. Moreover, the opportunism of wine producers is clearly motivated by commercial imperatives to provide various ways of penetrating the market and aligning with consumer trajectories (Hall and Mitchell 2008).

The contemporary British wine industry faces the same dilemmas as its predecessors. However, these problems are offset by the increasingly structured and sophisticated local viticultural knowledge (Nesbitt 2016; Skelton 2019). Producers are also facing a more competitive market characterized by a growing variety of wines from the Old and New Worlds, which are available to local consumers all over Britain (Ritchie 2009). Like their global counterparts, British producers are also increasingly mobile in terms of taste (which is either a blessing or a curse depending on the time and place where they choose to "set up shop"). Furthermore, many new sparkling wine producers are presenting their vineyards as idyllic and decadent destinations, following the New World model (see Howland 2019). They offer upscale accommodation, restaurants, tours, events such as weddings or music festivals, and other food or wine-based products. Attracting consumers to the vineyard can easily take precedence over the actual quality of the wines. Having multiple and diverse promotional initiatives, both internal and external, has proven its worth as a business model for wine producers (Hall and Mitchell 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that English wine producers have developed a variety of territorial, identity, and promotional registers of terroir to compete on the local and global markets.

Nor is it surprising, in this context, that English vineyards have regularly connected their identity in a quasi-historical and promotional way with neighboring villages and regions. For example, Hambledon Vineyard emphasizes its apparent "links" with the cricket club of the neighboring village, which claims to be the: "cradle of cricket [. . .]. Originally a social club for local nobility, Hambledon became the foremost cricket club in England by the late 18th Century, attracting some of the best players in the country." This historical development is also commemorated in Hambledon's logo[16]: two cricket bats meeting at the top, with a wicket in the middle, and a cricket ball nestled between the stumps. This logo is shared with the Bat & Ball, an eighteenth-century pub opposite the Broadhalfpenny Down cricket ground. According to a sign outside, the inn was the "first headquarters of English Cricket [. . . where] the modern game was formulated on rules drawn up by the Hambledon Cricket Club." For a long time, the pub has stocked Hambledon wines (personal correspondence). Danebury represents another variant of historical references. Danebury Vineyards (founded in 1988) uses stylized images of racehorses on its wine labels to put a promotional emphasis on its location: a former racehorse training yard near Stockbridge, Hampshire, which is famous for "its historical racecourse [. . .] considered amongst the finest of the provincial racecourses in Victorian times, with the patronage of the then Prince of Wales [later King Edward VII]."[17] Edward VII is also known for the creation of the Champagne-based Prince of Wales cocktail. Wines from Danebury Vineyards, promoted as "distinctly English," are also sold under the logo of a stylized Dog Rose: the official flower of the county of Hampshire. Meanwhile, another Hampshire vineyard, Hattingley Valley (founded in 2008), uses the slogan "Hattingley Valley - Unapologetically British," and has a logo featuring a rare local butterfly. The advertising posters state that "the Silver-washed

16. See www.hambledonvineyard.co.uk/see-our-heritage/cradle-of-cricket, accessed July 17, 2020.

17. www.danebury.com/about-us/, accessed October 21, 2021.

Fritillary is a rare butterfly found on our chalk-based vineyard in rural Hampshire, England. The presence of the pretty butterfly indicates that the vineyard is a healthy environment with a rich biodiversity."

In the promotional discourses cited above, other territorial registers emerge, particularly based on counties and nationalism, which are both effectively supported by the local register of the "village." County-based allegiances and rivalries (for example between Lancashire and Yorkshire, from the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century to cricket matches today) have also been a key (if changing) aspect of English culture since the Middle Ages (Richardson 2018). Consequently, it is not surprising that there are winegrowing and winemaking associations representing their counties (for example, Sussex Wineries, Vineyards of Hampshire, and Kent Vineyards). Such nationalist assertions, both English and British, have undoubtedly been part of the global repertoire of the wine industry since the 1900s (Johnson 2004 [1989]) and of the emergence of an increasingly globalized industrial capitalism. Furthermore, many English producers attempt to associate themselves with the idealized production of French Champagne. They generally do this by using French-made equipment (Coquard, for example) and specific techniques, but also through associations with French staff and consultants or friendly defenders of terroir, and by claiming deep and emulative geological connections. For example, Hambledon Vineyard has a page on its website called "Why is Hambledons [sic] Terroir so Special?" which reads: "In Good Company – Geology has played a key role in the planning for Hambledon Vineyard. The chalk on which we grow our vines was formed on the seabed of the Paris basin some 65 million years ago. [. . .] The same chalk, with the same Belemnite content, is found in the best Chardonnay areas of the Côtes des Blancs in Champagne and is thought to be a key factor in the quality of the wines."[18]

Creating territorial, promotional, and identity connections based on existing and hegemonic everyday forms (including local nature, history, and various socio-economic, political, or other hierarchical relationships) is partly an act of "defensive localism" (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, 362) aiming to preserve the status quo of the capitalist and nationalist agricultural economy, in response to threats from alternative practices, such as those of sustainable food networks. However, it is also part of a varied repertoire of localist registers (Harvey 1996) and is just as easily deployed to draw the attention of non-local consumers to the "unique" aspects of locally produced wines, thereby exoticizing them and their consumption (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Hull 2016). Moreover, the geological, technological, and personal connections with an equally romanticized French Champagne culture seek to imply similar quality and therefore to satisfy the many Francophilic desires of local and global consumers. Therefore, the glocal (the constant interdependence between local connections and the interweaving of the local into the global and vice versa) is a variation constructively adopted by producers in the United Kingdom.

■ "Terroir? It's like we're in Champagne"

Paradoxically, and against the background of an ambiguous discourse on terroir to which we will return, what struck us about the wineries that we visited in Hampshire and Sussex was their constant reference to the Champagne region, regarding not only the locations of their vineyards, but also their expertise, equipment, and vinification process: "The equipment is mostly French. That's because we don't speak German or Italian, and France isn't far away" (SR). Indeed, the equipment in the fermenting rooms that we visited reminded us of our travels in Champagne. The phrase "the Champagne region is our production model" characterizes the commercial strategy of the most competitive wineries. Moreover, their websites stress this comparison with the Champagne region, and most of the interviewees evoked historical connections and regular visits to the region.

The owners mostly have relatively diverse backgrounds (from the financier who divides his time between Hong Kong and Kent, to the retired owner whose children have taken over the family winery, to the president of WineGB who bought an agricultural estate after the 2008 crisis). They have nevertheless all traveled to Champagne and elsewhere and are all "passionate about wine." These examples perfectly illustrate the narratives that are often found in New World wine production. Thus, the cellar master

18. See https://hambledonvineyard.co.uk/pages/why-is-hambledons-terroir-so-special, accessed October 21, 2021.

in charge of one of the large wineries in southeast England describes his journey from New Zealand to Britain:

> I left New Zealand with my wife and my three children more than five years ago to develop Rathfinny Wine Estate in East Sussex, turning what was once a 240-ha arable farm into what will eventually become one of the largest vineyards in the United Kingdom when development is finished. I grew up in New Zealand on a sheep and cattle farm and I have spent my entire professional life in the wine industry in New Zealand, Australia, and now the United Kingdom (CR).

Being involved in the development of a new vineyard allowed CR to work with the owner MD on a winery concept that follows the South African model: "MD and his wife visited various wineries around the world, and they were impressed by one concept in particular." Rathfinny follows this kind of model, combining the very best of wine tourism, from the accommodation to the on-site restaurant and store, and even trying to integrate into the local community (even though the owners spend much of their time in Hong Kong). According to CR, MD wanted to employ local students and retirees, and he wanted the harvest to be organized according to a more traditional model, "like in Champagne," rather than employing foreign seasonal workers.

Ridgeview, another estate a few kilometers from Rathfinny, demonstrates a different social approach. We met one of the owners, who manages the estate with his sister. Once again, we did not visit the vines or taste the wine. The winemaker, SR, initially trained in viticulture at Brown Bros. in Victoria, Australia, before returning to the family company in 1999, then attending Plumpton College. Founded in 1994 by Mike and Chris, S's parents, Ridgeview was the first English wine (and the very first sparkling wine) to beat Champagne in the Decanter World Wine Awards, winning the award for best sparkling wine in 2010: "My father often traveled to Champagne. It's not far away, and for him Champagne was the model of wine he wanted to produce. He befriended a family in Champagne, and his contacts helped him to develop the estate here, until its creation in 1995." The recent video with top British chef Michel Roux Jr clearly illustrates this British pragmatism that plays on several registers of terroir.[19] In the case of sparkling wines, which often only account for part of the production, blending is the key process that SR highlights for gaining market share in Britain.

As early as the 1960s, British winegrowers took an interest in viticulture in France and Germany.[20] Most of the vines were planted according to the Champagne model, but with individual variations to improve productivity by adapting to the local climate. The liberal legislative context is often implicitly evoked: "We don't have the legislation that they have, so we can adapt our new techniques and develop new ideas," explains the president of WineGB. For the Hambledon winery, the recruitment of one of Champagne's old cellar masters, Hervé Jestin, as an advisor in 2011 is cited as an emblematic mark of product quality, even if this expertise is currently being provided remotely. The expertise used by the wineries therefore mainly concerns vinification techniques for sparkling wines. It is obtained by recruiting enologists, often with experience in Champagne, but also increasingly in Australia or New Zealand. The picture would not be complete without mentioning individuals from Champagne who have set up business in southeast England, where sparkling wines are flourishing. Examples include Didier Pierson from Avize, who planted the Meonhill vineyard in Hampshire, and the Hampshire Wine School created by Cécile Bergart.

The importance placed on vinification over vine cultivation was a constant trait encountered in our ethnographic research. Our visits, arranged in advance, almost always focused on the cellar, where vinification takes place and where wines are stored. In most cases, we were not able to access the vineyards themselves. Only three of the twelve establishments that we visited gave us access to their vines, with our guides evoking the terroir of the Champagne region and its similarities with the site. In the case of one of these establishments, the site is directly accessible and visible from the terrace of its founder's home, and the winery is cited as one of the oldest tourist wineries,

19. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHtVXmR7w48, accessed October 21, 2021.

20. Skelton (2019, 32–38) cites the correspondence between Raymond Barrington Brock and the ampelographer Pierre Galet about grape varieties. Brock is cited as the first producer of sparkling wines: "A Bottle of Maidstone '49'," Daily Mirror, August 17, 1950.

having opened to the public in the 1970s.[21] In another case, the manager organized the tour with one of the new trainees who had just returned from France and wanted to talk about his experience of terroir. The co-owner of this winery, which follows the Dallas model, only appeared at the end of our visit, driving a Rolls-Royce. At the last winery, because the manager was a New Zealander like Peter, we got an in-depth tour of the whole site, but once again, the discourse about terroir was limited to the question of the site and its orientation. One of our informants, evoking the many prizes that his sparkling wine had won, even joked when we asked our questions about terroir: "I believe in terroir. The soil is important. We have this site on a car park near Heathrow. Before that it was an industrial site in the automobile industry and an aviation zone during the Second World War. Year after year, we have won international prizes for these wines (laughs)."

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Leaving aside the matter of Brexit and the paradoxes that surrounded the campaign to leave the European Union, the British have always shown a certain aversion to the imposition of rules that endanger their political sovereignty. For them, wine production remains a way of combining a passion for wine with the hope of turning this into a profitable industry. The discourses of the producers we met are therefore characterized by the opportunities offered by the climate crisis (seen as a force that might potentially transform the national wine industry) and the possibility of throwing off the European yoke and embracing the logic of the market and of money. Wine, which today has become one of the most popular drinks in Britain, has conquered many parts of the market, particularly sparkling wine and chardonnay, which appeal to young women. After beer (35.3 percent), wine is the drink of choice (32.3 percent). In 2017, wine consumption per person was over twenty liters.[22] The near-absence of the ideology of terroir among our informants, in spite of their wine-drinking culture, is also an important element for better understanding the ambiguities between the different registers used to construct their products. A fundamental interest in experiencing taste as a hedonistic pleasure and as a form of social sharing based on excess drinking presents the ideal conditions for the rapid expansion of a market that has built its recently acquired position on opportunities, ambiguities, and paradoxes. . .

21. See https://www.hambledonvineyard.co.uk/ and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10jkoEHZNhE, accessed May 13, 2020.

22. https://www.statista.com/statistics/288779/wine-alcohol-clearances-in-the-united-kingdom-uk-annually/, accessed October 21, 2021.

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