

# WORK AS CULTURAL PRODUCTION: LABOUR AND SELF-IDENTITY AMONG SOUTHWEST FRENCH WINE-GROWERS

ROBERT C. ULIN

*Western Michigan University*

I criticize insufficiencies in the Marxist conceptualization of labour as instrumental action as a departure-point to evaluate the relation between work and self-identity among southwest French wine-growers who are members of co-operatives. The symbolic distinction between two wine-growing regions, and the tension between wine-growing as an artisanal practice and wine-growing as science, are used historically and ethnographically to argue for a cultural view of work and self-identity that is differentiated and thus acknowledges the potentials and constraints of power. The article also makes use of French ethnographic materials to address broader issues of the anthropology of work, the critique of science, and the cultural means through which subaltern subjects challenge hegemonic culture and the political economy of exploitation.

I argue that refiguring the Marxist concept of labour, and work more generally, from an instrumental act of appropriating and transforming nature to one of differentiated cultural production, offers the possibility of grasping important historical, political-economic, and social processes that have shaped and continue to transform contemporary life on a global basis. For example, in the early twentieth century Walter Benjamin (1969) identified the cultural connections between capitalist social relations, work, and representations of the human body as commodity through his critical analysis of the sandwich-board man. More recently, Michel Foucault (1979) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984) pursued the implications of work for the 'social body' through the panopticism of institutional discipline, inclusive of the workplace and schooling, and the class differentiation of consumption and taste respectively. Moreover, refiguring work in terms of cultural production opens the historical and ethnographic records to multiple avenues of human self-formation and resistance, and thus tends to avoid narrow economic and by extension instrumental readings of human motives that obfuscate the distinction between 'perception' and 'reality' in societies where a 'market culture' predominates (Reddy 1984). As William Reddy argues, emphasizing 'market culture', rather than 'market society', shifts our attention away from uniform assumptions of the market to differentiated and even discordant social assumptions and practices.

Arguing for a cultural reconceptualization of the Marxist concept of labour does not imply Marxism's irrelevance to the critical understanding of work

in societies where anthropologists typically conduct field research (see e.g. Bourgois 1995; Taussig 1980). On the contrary, much of our understanding of work in capitalist society – the formation of classes, the unequal structuring of regional and national economies, and the commodification of social relations – derives from Marx and from scholars working in the Marxist tradition. For example, Marx demonstrated historically and with resonant theoretical implications how capitalist social relations mask the labour of workers embodied in commodities in such a manner that commodities appear to have a life of their own. In fact, much of contemporary economics and popular consciousness in general is orientated towards predicting, measuring, and representing the circulation and consumption of commodities to the exclusion of their producers and the work they perform. Such an exclusion has, in turn, offered fertile grounds for critical social science research on global social and political relations as they inform the shifting cultural terrains of production and consumption.

Over the past two decades, however, the Marxist tradition, and most especially its central concept of labour, has been widely criticized for presenting human action in overly instrumental terms (see Sahlin 1976; Ulin 1984). That is, while Marx thought of labour, both ontologically and dialectically, as universally formative and transformative of humanity and the natural world, he none the less regarded labour as an essentially instrumental act of human appropriation and control.

Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. (Marx 1967: 177)<sup>1</sup>

As Habermas (1975) has argued, and I believe the above confirms, for Marx the natural world as an object of knowledge and action was constituted towards the end of technical control, a cultural theme consistent with the early Judaeo-Christian tradition's emphasis on humanity's earthly dominion and one which continues to influence Western science, technology, and 'social engineering' as the dominant mode of producing public policies (see also Habermas 1984; Leiss 1974).

Habermas's criticism of Marx emerges from the distinction between three different rationalities that inform human action: communicative, instrumental, and critical, and thus they should not be confused with the elective options whereby human subjects pursue advantageous ends by choosing from among available means. Communicative rationality is based upon the reciprocity of intersubjectively valid norms as embodied in symbolic ordinary language communication. Communicative rationality establishes the basis for mutual recognition of interlocutors and the mutual intelligibility of language communities, while instrumental rationality and the action it informs are concerned with technical rules of procedure and the subordination of ends to means within a value framework orientated towards the control of objectified reality. Critical rationality involves the self-reflexive monitoring of human action directed towards the end of challenging human exploitation and domination.

Habermas contends that by emphasizing labour as the predominant means through which the human species forms itself, Marx reduces the communicative and normative components of human existence to the technical demands of subsistence and human needs. Ironically, this was the very argument used by Marxist anthropologists in the 1970s in dismissing Marvin Harris's work as 'vulgar materialism' (Friedman 1974).

Hannah Arendt (1958: 100-9) concurs with Habermas's critique, though her key argument is that Marx fails to distinguish between labour and work. For Arendt, work is the social process through which humanity creates durable objects and relations, while labour simply involves the human metabolic exchange with nature. Arendt maintains that the concept of a species that forms itself through labour fails to take account of the culturally and politically formative potentials of work, a critique that supports my plea for re-figuring work as cultural production. In short, instrumental views of work, and more generally human action, tend to eclipse, or at the very least to render derivative, social interaction as symbolic and the cultural construction of work and identity.

By arguing for the cultural refiguration of work, I am not suggesting that labour and identity can be grasped normatively or in terms of a univocal notion of culture. Both Abu-Lughod (1991) and Fox (1991) have argued for differentially positioned human agents and against the hegemonic implications of the culture concept, whether as Tylor's complex whole or Geertz's semi-otic system. Furthermore, recent works on nationalism and post-colonial diaspora (e.g., Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Werbner 1998) have also shown that identity, like culture itself, is subject to contestation and the play of shifting historical, political, economic, and cultural grounds. Nevertheless, a critical understanding of work and identity requires a theoretical framework that is attentive to the norms of mutual expectation and recognition that are embodied in symbolic, ordinary language communication and which are intrinsic to the culturally formative activity of work and identity. Viewing work as cultural production thus shifts the emphasis in Marxism from 'social consciousness' as largely derivative of the 'logic of production' to culture as the communicative practice of differentially positioned human subjects. Moreover, as will be seen below, this shift allows us to explore ethnographically both the contextual meaning of work and the cultural positioning of subjects with respect to the representation of commodities.

Although this article could easily be devoted to the above critique alone, I use the reputed instrumental limitations of Marxist theory primarily to evaluate the relation between self-identity and work among co-operative wine-growers in the Dordogne and Médoc regions of southwest France where I have conducted research over the past seventeen years. More specifically, by developing the consequences for wine-growing work of the symbolic primacy of the Médoc over the Dordogne as a wine-growing locale and, in turn, discussing the theme of wine-growing artisanship as culturally illustrative of work identity, I argue that the cultural formation of work identity, and identity in general, exceeds the parameters of instrumental action as suggested in a strictly orthodox view of labour. Moreover, the implications for a cultural grasp of work as illustrated by the French ethnographic materials discussed here raise broader questions of rationality and contingency that challenge the universal

or context-independent truth claims of science and technology. Thus science and technology, like work, are open to cultural elaboration and thus cultural critique (Haraway 1991; Harding 1991; Martin 1987).

In contrast to some of those cultural critiques of Marx which focus exclusively on symbolic or semiotic systems (e.g. Baudrillard 1975), I maintain that social action must take heed of the implicit power limitations which are central to Marx's theory of labour as self-formative. This is a strategy which would preserve Marx's critical thrust while shifting his emphasis on labour to a more culturally explicit framework. Consequently, we shall see that the culturally formative activity which is entailed in wine-growing work and identity unfolds in a social arena which positions wine-growers both literally and figuratively in fields of power and which should be seen as both historically and socially mediated.

### *Southwest French wine co-operatives*

Co-operatives are by no means novel to French agriculture. The earliest French co-operatives, most of which were particular to dairy farming, were founded in the late nineteenth century. Wine co-operatives followed somewhat later. The earliest were established in the early 1900s; most, however, date from the 1930s and 1940s, following the world-wide economic crisis and consecutive years of poor harvests with low economic returns. There are presently more than one thousand wine co-operatives in France which produce sizable portions of the total output in the wine-growing areas where they are located. As I have argued elsewhere (Ulin 1996), southwest French wine co-operatives, and probably wine co-operatives in general, have enabled the proprietors of small- and medium-sized wine-growing estates to accommodate the exigencies of capitalist production. That is, by combining the productive and marketing resources of small- and medium-sized growers, and pursuing a course of modernization consistent with the legislative mandates of the French government, wine co-operatives are competitive, through their own efforts and those of the numerous marketing organizations to which they belong, with significantly larger wine-growing enterprises. Without the formation of wine co-operatives, it is likely that most small and medium growers would have disappeared altogether, as wine production in the late twentieth century came increasingly to be controlled by large estates owned by insurance combines and multinational corporations like Seagrams and Grand Metropolitan that command enormous financial resources. Although co-operative growers in the southwest have not manifested the political activism of farmers elsewhere in France, they have been able through the co-operatives to ameliorate some of the effects of globalization and market concentration, for example, by purchasing vineyards collectively and, like the Costa Rican peasants described by Marc Edelman (1999), by appropriating and using hegemonic representations emanating from elite culture.

The labour that typifies southwest French wine-growing is, as elsewhere, cyclical and varies according to season. In general, the harvest occurs in late August or September and is followed by months of pruning once the leaves have fallen from the vines. Depending on the region, there are one or two

ploughings that turn the soil and expose the roots. There are several treatments with pesticides through early summer to protect the grapes from diseases and infestations. Because wine co-operatives are producer and marketing organizations exclusively, the labour of co-operative members is limited to the vineyards. It is employees of the co-operatives who vinify the harvested grapes and, with few exceptions, manage the commercial affairs of the co-operatives.

The division between work in the vineyards and that conducted at the co-operatives is neither new nor unique to the co-operative organization. Rather, this arrangement reproduces a long-standing division between viticulture, the care of vineyards, and vinification, the processing of harvested grapes into wine, that was introduced with the development of the *grands crus* or elite wines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This division initially undermined the paternalistic relationship between wine-growing proprietors and their workers and contributed, moreover, to a highly refined and fragmented division of labour with authority and knowledge concentrated in specialized labour and workers.

The co-operative wine-growers with whom I conducted field research in the Dordogne region, 90 kilometres east of Bordeaux, and the Médoc, directly north of Bordeaux, have been more successful than workers employed in the industrial sector in avoiding what Harry Braverman (1974) has called 'the capitalist degradation of labor'. For Braverman, the key features of this degradation are the fragmentation of work – or the division between those who plan the work and those who carry it out – and the rationalization of the work place through 'time management' or Taylorism.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, one reason why co-operative wine-growers have maintained the integrity of their work is that they have retained their ties to the land: all co-operative wine-growers are independent proprietors, even though only 10 to 15 per cent of co-operative growers on average have enough land to pursue wine-growing on a full-time basis.<sup>3</sup> With one exception, a short-lived communal experiment in the Languedoc in the early twentieth century, all French wine co-operatives have sought to preserve the sanctity of private property and thus the independence of small-scale family farming, especially control over work in the vineyards. However, over several generations, these same wine-growers have lost much of their knowledge of wine-making, as the process of vinification and marketing have been assumed by technicians and managers of the producer co-operatives trained at the university and rural agricultural schools. This was confirmed by an elderly informant of the St-Éstèphe co-operative in the Médoc who referred to himself as 'one of the last of the Mohicans' in that he is virtually the last remaining member of the co-operative who still knows how to vinify grapes.

It should be noted, however, that the distinction between wine-growing and wine-making, while perhaps particular to the production of wine as a commodity, is not in more general terms unfamiliar in other sectors of modern capitalist agriculture. That is, in France and elsewhere where capitalist agriculture predominates there has evolved a distinction between producers of raw agricultural materials and those who transform the agricultural commodities into products of consumption for a world market. This is surely the case with French dairy farmers who now produce almost nothing apart

from raw milk, having lost the capacity to produce milk-based foods to agricultural enterprises and their allied marketing organizations, another testimony to the fragmentation and specialization of capitalist production.

The question of power is central to the fragmentation and specialization of capitalist agriculture. For example, because the majority of co-operative members do not know how to vinify grapes, they remain relatively removed from its daily technical and commercial affairs. Moreover, co-operative growers do not have absolute control over work in their own vineyards as growers must comply with state and regional regulations concerning the quantity, quality, and varieties of grape plants cultivated. It is the co-operatives that assure compliance with these regulations, thus serving in this regard as a medium of state intervention. In fact, wine co-operatives facilitated agricultural modernization among small proprietors in that the French state decreed that producer co-operatives and their members must abide by state and regional wine-growing legislation in order to qualify for low-interest loans from the *Crédit Agricole* (state bank) which were important for the creation of co-operatives in the early twentieth century. Some of this legislation was directed to controlling both the quantity and quality of production, as over-production in particular had precipitated periodic crises through declining prices and thus significantly lower financial returns for growers. Agricultural modernization in wine-growing also involved, as it did in agriculture in general, a greater reliance on machinery – tractors, more sophisticated vinification equipment, storage tanks – which in turn increased the indebtedness of co-operatives and their members, and thus their integration into and dependence on international markets.

Nevertheless, a wine-grower who was a member of a local co-operative had and continues to have a significant degree of control over the nature and rhythm of work on a daily basis. My informants, some of whom had worked in industry, frequently cited control over the work process, ‘being their own boss’, as one of the pleasures of being a full-time wine-grower. Although this ‘relative’ independence is important, especially when compared to the work discipline of the factory and office, it only takes us so far in exploring the particular relation between identity and work for the co-operative wine-grower in that ‘relative’ independence is a quality of work and identity common to household or family farming in general. It is this which Marxists have typically called the household mode of production. Thus, to go any further in exploring the relation between work and identity, it is necessary to recognize that wine-growing regions, wine, and by extension the identity of wine-growers, are all culturally mediated and hegemonic – that is, they are all sources of social differentiation (see Bourdieu 1984).

### *Wine-growing differentiated*

The wine co-operatives in the Dordogne and Médoc where I conducted my research were known for the production of ordinary and quality wines respectively. While the two co-operatives that I studied in the Dordogne, Sigoulès, and Monbazillac, largely produce *Appellation contrôlée* (AOC) wines, the region as a whole, like the Languedoc, is generally associated with the production of

table wines or *Vins de consommation courante* (VCC). These wines are commonly sold to large marketing firms *en vrac* (in casks) and are thought to be best consumed young. In contrast, the Médoc is world renowned for the production of chateau wines, enabling the co-operatives located there to participate in the region's 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1984). That is, following Bourdieu's insight on cultural positioning, the co-operatives enjoy a reputation vastly superior to those in the Dordogne by virtue of their contiguity to the elite wines which gives them a symbolic pre-eminence with considerable social and thus commercial clout. Médoc wines are often aged in oak casks before bottling and consumers are advised to store the wine for a minimum of five years before consumption.

Contrary to the claims of some scholars and wine experts, the super-ordinate position of the Médoc and Bordeaux region in general and their commercial and cultural dominion over the Dordogne wines of the interior is not, however, a consequence of Bordeaux's superior climate and soil. In fact, prior to the twelfth century, interior wines were thought to be better than those of Bordeaux (Pijassou 1980: 299). Consequently, the pre-eminence of Bordeaux wines is attributable to related historical factors, such as the privileges they enjoyed during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries as a consequence of the English occupation of southwest France, and the superior marketing organization that was put in place by Bordeaux merchants with ties to northern Europe (Enjallbert 1953; Ulin 1996).

Prior to the English occupation, La Rochelle was the principal port through which southwest French wines were shipped to England. La Rochelle had a more favourable location than Bordeaux – directly on the Atlantic Ocean – as well as greater proximity to northern European markets. In fact, as Enjallbert and Enjallbert (1987: 21–2) note, La Rochelle had a culture of wine and commercial presence that far exceeded that of Bordeaux. However, the defeat of the English at La Rochelle in 1224 left Bordeaux as the exclusive supplier of wine to England, as the French king, Louis VIII, prohibited La Rochelle merchants from trading with the English. As a consequence, the English had little choice but to cultivate Bordeaux as a principal port, even though access to the Atlantic was indirect by way of the Garonne river. Moreover, to reduce potential resistance to their rule, the English granted special commercial favours to Bordeaux merchants and wine-growers, such that wines coming from the interior were subject to higher taxation and were not permitted to enter the Bordeaux port until after 1 December. The special privileges given to Bordeaux growers and merchants did much to augment the wine trade to England, leading to the clearing of forests and the planting of vineyards on the lands in proximity to Bordeaux. All this points to social rather than natural conditions to explain the ascendancy of Bordeaux wine-growing and commerce.

The Médoc region's widely acknowledged pre-eminence among the Bordeaux wine-growing areas, and thus the superior reputation of its wines over those of the Dordogne, translates into some noticeable differences between the two regions with respect to the growers' attitudes towards wine as a commodity. This in turn has a profound impact on their attitudes towards their work as wine-growers. I had some sense of this in 1983 when I began fieldwork at the Sigoulès and Monbazillac co-operatives in the Dordogne.

When I first met informants from the Sigoulès co-operative, I was frequently asked why I had come to study growers in the Dordogne when the famous vineyards of Bordeaux were so near. Although initially taken aback by this comment, I had to remind myself that in southwest France the recognition of wine-growers is an extension of the recognition of wine itself, a cultural theme that resonates with capitalist differentiation and especially the hegemonic ordering of work. Moreover, in conversations with Sigoulès co-operative officials, I was told that it was their objective to produce a wine that was standardized or varied only minimally in taste from year to year. While the latter of these comments could be taken quite straightforwardly as a desire to improve the quality of wines produced, it would none the less strike Médoc growers and aficionados as nearly heretical in its disregard for distinction. That is, although wines produced in any given year are compared to wines of the same variety produced in other years, it is expected that the taste will vary. It is therefore the mark of a quality or distinctive wine that its year can be determined from its taste – a serious challenge to the widely held assumption that with industrial capitalism all commodities are simply reproducible.

This discussion of perceived distinctions between Médoc and Dordogne wines is not meant as a dismissal of those wines held in lesser esteem by an established wine-growing elite or the general wine-consuming public. On the contrary, Dordogne wines, and especially those of Monbazillac, are highly regarded for their quality and are consumed on a daily basis by individuals from a wide variety of social classes. Moreover, local wines have played very well into tourism, as foreign holiday-makers are often eager to sample the region's wines as an accompaniment to the celebrated country cuisine of the Dordogne.

The history of Médoc wines reveals a deliberate effort upon the part of elite proprietors to distinguish their wines symbolically from those of the peasant masses. During the seventeenth century, when the *grands crus* were developed, southwest French wines experienced considerable competition from those produced in Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Proprietors of large estates decided to pursue the production of better wines from lower-yielding vine stocks rather than duplicate the mass wines coming from abroad. This was a highly successful strategy in that a unique market for quality wines was created in France and as far away as America to the west and Russia to the east. In the nineteenth century proprietors of the *grands crus* elected to distinguish not only their wines but themselves as well by building their homes as small-scale replicas of the famous medieval chateaux, thus hoping to borrow symbolically from the cultural associations of a noble life as a means of distinguishing grower and wine from the mass of peasant producers.

Moreover, elite growers have also made moves to sustain and enhance the distinctive status of their product by attempting – albeit without complete success – to claim exclusive rights to bottle and distribute wine with a chateau label. In France, only wines vinified from grapes coming from a single domain can carry the chateau label, a privilege that has considerable commercial appeal and translates into greater financial return. Because co-operatives largely vinify grapes coming from the numerous domains of their members, they cannot market their wines with a chateau label. The only exceptions to this are the

few full-time co-operative growers whose grapes are vinified separately from the general lot and whose wines can thus be commercialized with a chateau label. While this exception entices larger growers to join the co-operative, it also points to the capacity of subaltern populations to respond to domination by appropriating hegemonic institutional practices.

In spite of noteworthy similarities that ensue from the common technology of wine-growing, I contend that wine-growing labour in the Médoc is more committed than that of the Dordogne to the production and reproduction of 'distinction'. As Bourdieu (1984) has shown with respect to consumption – albeit with implications for production – distinction is central both to the wine-grower's identity and to the commercial value of wine in an increasingly capital-intensive age of mass production. No matter how compelling Marx's argument concerning labour as primarily appropriation and transformation of the physical world, and thus as Habermas argues essentially instrumental action, it is evident through wine-growing labour as differentiated that grasping the meaning of work is principally a consequence of evaluating its cultural and symbolic embodiment.

While the differential prefiguration of work in the Médoc and the Dordogne described above historically suggests rejecting the meta-theoretical implications of Marxism, such a theoretical move does not require us to dismiss Marxist theory. As Edelman (1999) also argues, the theoretical strength of Marxism resides in its emphasis on history and especially concrete human actors positioned differentially, this being what I refer to as differentiated fields of power. Work is thus a cultural practice that is historically variable and invested with a multiplicity of different meanings. Employing Geertzian techniques of thick description, William Sewell (1980: 22) offers a similar perspective on changing French cultural understandings of work from the early modern period to the nineteenth century. In his account, *travail* (labour) denoted 'toil, pain and fatigue' in the seventeenth century, while in the mid-nineteenth century it had come to be associated with 'productivity' and 'creativity'. This story of changing cultural perceptions hardly supports a univocal casting of work as instrumental action.

That work is culturally and symbolically embodied can be clearly seen, I believe, in the tension between the wine-grower as 'artisan' and the reliance of wine-growing and wine-making on science and technology. Moreover, the effort to preserve an artisanal past, even one that is invented, especially on the part of wine-growers in elite wine-growing regions, is interesting in its own right, given Marx's contention that industrial capitalism would eventually destroy craft production. In fact, Marx was not altogether wrong, as Susan Terrio maintains (2000: 150) with regard to yet another celebrated French commodity, chocolate.

According to Terrio, the French state has consistently tended to regard artisans as backward and an obstacle to industrial progress, especially in the post-Second World War period when a rapidly growing service sector favoured mental labour and the professionally trained. However, Terrio also observes that – contrary to the dismal future of artisanry anticipated by Marx – artisans did not accept their subaltern position with resignation but, rather, invented a collective discourse that associated artisans with the 'true' France – 'a France characterized by a traditional work ethic, family values,

community cohesion, and the noncompetitive practices of the small business sector' (2000: 151). While the invented discourse of French artisans may reflect nothing more than nostalgia for a past that never existed, given the hierarchy and privilege that typified French artisans in past centuries, the Médoc nevertheless illustrates the fact that the mass production of industrial capitalism, and by extension the mass-produced wines of some regions, is precisely what gives artisanal wine-making its symbolic distinction. This also points to the more general theme of work and work-related identity as cultural constructions.

### *Artisans and scientists*

Emile Peynaud (1988), perhaps the most distinguished of Bordeaux's present-day 'scientific' wine-makers, remarks that, until relatively recently, Médoc producers, especially the owners of the most highly esteemed estates, were reluctant to embrace oenology or the science of wine-making. According to Peynaud, wine-growers were resistant to the idea of abandoning their 'traditional' methods and were suspicious of the outside experts who were held up to them as a source of modern scientific expertise. However, it was not outsider status alone that fed wine-grower suspicion but, rather, a sense that the conflict between traditional methods and the science of oenology was ultimately about the control of the work process, a theme long consistent with the history of capital accumulation and capitalist social relations, which, in turn, suggests a connection between oenology as science and instrumental rationality. That is, while oenological knowledge is particular to cultivating and vinifying grapes, it proceeds, like science in general, with what Habermas (1971) calls a 'cognitive interest' in controlling or domesticating nature and thus by extension wine-growing work as a social and cultural process.

While Peynaud's characterization of wine-growers' reluctance to embrace oenology is no doubt accurate, as I show below, there is nevertheless a long-standing dependence on oenology that dates back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As Harry Paul (1996) has argued, French wine-growers whose vineyards were ravaged by the infamous phylloxera blight of the 1870s and the *odium* or powdery mildew of the mid-1880s were utterly dependent upon the 'science of the vine' in the reconstitution of their vineyards. Phylloxera is an aphid-like insect that attacks and destroys the roots of some grape stocks, while mildew is a fungus that grows on the leaves and fruit of the wine-producing plants and prevents the grapes from maturing. In the hunt for a phylloxera remedy, there was competition between oenological centres at Montpellier and Bordeaux. Some scientists were committed to the use of insecticides; others proposed flooding the infected vineyards to drown the insects. Even the famous French biologist Pasteur was unable to develop an effective treatment, having suggested biological means such as fungi to destroy the insects. In France, growers eventually agreed that the correct remedy for the blight was to graft fruit-bearing French *vinifera* vines onto phylloxera-resistant American root stocks (Paul 1996). This strategy was deemed preferable to one of utilizing hybrid direct-producer plants created through genetic crossing. The process of grafting was an enormous success and enabled French

growers to replant with alacrity in many of the areas that had been damaged by phylloxera. However, beyond the struggle to contain phylloxera, grafting raised many questions about the quality of the hybrid in relation to the 'traditional' *Vitis vinifera*. Although strongly in favour of grafting to combat phylloxera, a leading Montpellier expert, Professor Pierre Viala, was concerned in patriotic terms with replacing the French *vinifera* with hybrid direct-producer vines. In what amounts to a rather spectacular example of naturalized culture, 'Viala warned against planting hybrid direct producers to replace the vines of French blood that produced famous wines: it would be antipatriotic to sacrifice the legitimate fame of a high-quality French product' (Paul 1996: 27-8). In elite wine-growing regions, this controversy over hybrids was resolved in favour of the grafted indigenous vine stock.

In some wine-growing regions the damage from the *odium* or mildew actually exceeded that produced by the phylloxera. The eventual solution here was the treatment of the leaves and grapes with copper sulphate, a treatment still practised today. However, while the scientists' arguments about how to treat mildew are of some interest, nothing like the controversy over hybrids broached the scientific-cultural discourse of the time. Nevertheless, in spite of the invoking of 'tradition' by contemporary wine-growers to challenge oenology, the dependence of wine-growing in all its phases on science since the late nineteenth century is indisputable.

Unlike Peynaud's emphasis on the sanctity of tradition, Harry Paul argues that wine-grower impatience with the science of the vine had to do with the few practical suggestions that came from the agricultural schools that could provide assistance especially to the smaller-scale estates. However, in my experience with co-operative growers, it was neither tradition nor practical results alone that dominated the conversation but, rather, what amounts to a generational schism, a trope which none the less embodies the relation between knowledge and power. While there is hardly a wine-grower today who would not acknowledge the contribution of oenology to the consistent quality of the final product, there remains on the part of the older growers a certain scepticism about wine-growing as a science. This scepticism is directed particularly to the rural agricultural schools where many of the younger growers currently learn their trade. Consider the following conversation involving two senior Médoc wine-growers of the St-Estèphe co-operative which I believe reflects fairly typical views among local producers (Ulin 1996: 145).

ULIN: You are an artisan?

DIOUF: Yes, we are artisans. But you need learning, and more learning.

BESSON: Yes, you need learning for everything.

ULIN: You prefer artisanry to science?

DIOUF: Yes, it is rather craft-like. It is more artisanship than science.

BESSON: Vinification is evolving like a science, with oenology now.

DIOUF: Yes, but it's still craft-like (*Mais, c'est artisanal quand-même*). There are methods of work that are still identified with the Médoc region. That's why it's called a craft, because there are methods of work different from those in other areas. That's why we say it's a craft. They're identified with this region.

BESSON: It's a craft, yes, because people who go to school, who never come to this region and who go to learn in schools, they then come here ... To the extent that they adapt, what they have learned will help them all the more, but I think it is necessary to learn here at work, next to the vines (*il faut aussi avoir appris ici sur le tas, à côté des pieds*). You have to

combine the two. And I think that with the vinification it is the same. It is necessary ... There's a skill on the large estates that must be joined with oenology. I think that the two must be paired to do what we do here, to do it well. In short, that's my point of view. It is nevertheless a craft, the two must be combined, but it is necessary that the fundamental artisanal themes and methods endure. From my point of view.

While the above qualification is most visibly tied to the rural agricultural schools, it also reflects a sense of tradition that participates in and enhances the commodification of wine and yet draws special symbolic value and distinction, as I suggested earlier, from the hierarchy of wine-growing regions. Moreover, by claiming that there are artisanal skills particular to the Médoc, Besson's qualification opens to self-defined identities and the cultural mediation of work in the phenomenological and existential senses championed by Michael Jackson (1998).

The vast majority of Dordogne and Médoc wine-growers, especially those in their mid-forties or older, learned wine-growing from their parents or, not infrequently, from in-laws. These older growers believe quite strongly that there is no substitute for 'hands-on' experience in the vineyards and thus they are critical of the 'book-learning' that predominates in the agricultural schools. As one of the above informants stated: 'One must learn at the feet of the vine.' This metaphorical statement points beyond the secular to an almost mystical sense of experience or intuition. As for the 'book-learning' in the schools, it is agricultural science to which the young growers are being exposed. To the older generation, book-learning merely appears abstract, theoretical, and removed from human experience, even if the real concern is that science is dismissive of their accumulated wisdom.

Younger growers, on the other hand, are generally enthusiastic about their educational experience at the agricultural schools. They point out that these schools combine theory and practice, as all students must complete an apprenticeship. Some of my younger informants noted that the differences between themselves and the older growers had less to do with 'book learning' and more to do with what they regarded as a 'modern' lifestyle. Unlike their older colleagues, the younger growers in both the Dordogne and Médoc are well travelled, take holidays, and in general are more involved with a consumerism that is usually associated with life in the city.

Regardless of generation, the belief that wine-growing is learned *sur place* is important to the work-related identities that my informants from Dordogne and Médoc wine co-operatives have assumed, especially growers who obtain their livelihoods wholly from wine-growing. As proprietors of their wine-growing estates, they tend to see themselves as performing the work of an artisan, although, as we shall see, this is thematically more evident in the Médoc where much is at stake in maintaining a sense of a quality craft. Consequently, whereas in industrial capitalism the producer is widely held to be anonymous and the product is merely a vessel for abstract labour time, co-operative wines bear a mark that is collectively distinct. As Loubère (1990: 45) remarks, '*Vignerons*, whether laborers or small owners, do not feel alienated from their work because *vignerons* maintain the artisanal quality of work'. Even with the more mass-produced wines, co-operative growers claimed to recognize their labour as being embodied in a final product whose taste and quality bore witness to the distinction of the region and thus a source of identity.

The artisanal theme, however, is not without some class implications, as wine co-operatives are class-stratified. This is especially important in that the nostalgia for an artisanal past on the part of wine-growers themselves can potentially gloss over significant inequalities that were indigenous to the guild system of the Old Regime and were reproduced throughout the nineteenth century and up to recent time (Reddy 1984; Sewell 1980; Terrio 2000). Although part-time co-operative growers own their wine-growing estates, these holdings, often a half-hectare, are not sufficient, especially in the Dordogne, to support the wine-grower's family. Consequently, many part-time growers earn their principal incomes as wage workers on the large agricultural estates, or as employees of nearby industries. Like their full-time colleagues at the co-operatives, these part-time growers take pride in the co-operative wines and undoubtedly identify with its artisanal qualities. Yet their work identities are more often associated with the labour that provides the larger share of their annual income. Moreover, the time commitment which is necessitated through holding a full-time job and working one's vineyard part-time precludes any serious involvement in the management and ongoing activities of the co-operative. This places part-time growers in a subordinate role to full-time growers who command larger financial resources and thus have the leisure to participate in policy-making local wine-growing associations and to run for elected offices at the co-operatives.

The identification with the end product also has more general consequences in relation to co-operative growers' self-identities, especially those with larger holdings. For example, Soon Young Song Yoon (1975) refers to the co-operative growers that she studied in Provence as 'gentleman farmers' largely because they are capitalist proprietors of their own estates, which she believes sets them off from the more conventional subsistence production of the peasantry. However, when I challenged some of my informants who were full-time wine-growers with Soon Yoon's formulation of co-operative proprietorship, their reactions were strongly adverse. Some of this is no doubt due to the ambiguities of the concepts involved, especially that of *paysan*, which can mean both 'peasant' and 'farmer' and has a long history in France of both positive and negative associations (see Rogers 1987). Moreover, 'gentleman farmer' invokes a manager who has little contact with the soil. While it is true that some of the larger co-operative growers are managers in that they have employees who work in the vineyards, none are removed from the actual quotidian labour of viticulture. Thus, co-operative growers see themselves as *paysans* because of their close contact with the vines and the fact that they must – in the words of one informant, Albert Colineau – 'clean the dirt from under their nails at the end of the day'.

In returning to the theme of identity as symbolically inscribed by the cultural capital of region, it is important to note that there are significant differences between the Dordogne and Médoc, and even within the different wine-growing regions of the Médoc itself, regarding the predominance of the artisanal theme. The fact that wines bear the marks of their producers is a significant part of their allure and commercial potential. In fact, as noted earlier, for the chateau estates and the small number of chateau wines produced by Médoc co-operatives, the wines are identified not only with a particular proprietor but also with a particular locale. For chateau proprietors and

co-operatives in elite wine-growing regions, much is at stake – both symbolically and commercially – in giving the impression that the vineyards are cultivated and the wines vinified by methods that are redolent of tradition, invented or otherwise. Customers purchasing wines from the Médoc and like regions are nostalgic for the quality that one typically associates with the craft of the artisan producer. St-Estèphe wine-growers in the Médoc, including my informants from the co-operative, meet the expectations of these customers by hand-picking the grapes at harvest and showing contempt for the efficient mechanical harvesters. The mechanical harvesters, moreover, render obsolete the harvest workers and all the ceremony, including collective meals, evening entertainment, and the end of harvest feast, that have long typified the harvest tradition. One informant, Nicole Ducros, anxious about potential damage to the quality of the grapes, ridiculed the harvester for collecting grapes and snails together so that one could ‘eat and drink at the same time’. In short, for growers with a deep emotional as well as commercial investment in the artisanal quality of wine-growing, the harvest machines, like capital intensive factories, have come to represent the production of a mass or non-distinct product.

Suffice it to say that, by virtue of the region’s elite reputation and commercial dominance, Médoc growers are able to invest more of their identity than Dordogne growers in constructing and reproducing a sense of wine-growing labour with ties to an artisanal past, whether real or imagined. What matters in the Médoc and other elite regions, more than efficient technology and science, is that the wine is distinct; its taste bearing the personal mark of its producer.

### *Politics, identity and work*

Virtually every scholar who has written on France has taken note of politics as a central mediator of work and identity. This is a significant theme in William Sewell’s (1980) discussion of working-class associations as replicating earlier corporate groups; William Reddy’s (1984) portrayal of textile workers who in struggling to preserve their autonomy avoided the commodification of labour which is associated elsewhere with market societies; and Tony Judt’s (1979) and Maurice Agulhon’s (1982) assertions that present-day Socialists and Communists replicate some of the characteristics of nineteenth-century French radicals (see also Lem 1999: 98–9). Moreover, we are all familiar with the capacity of striking French workers to bring the country to a standstill, especially in peak holiday periods. One tactic which is much favoured by farmers in southern France in protests against state and European Community agricultural policies is the creation of massive traffic jams through the dumping onto roads and highways of foreign wines and other commodities which are seen as a source of unfair competition by local producers. In fact, given the highly political nature of French work identity, I expected at the outset of my research in the early 1980s to experience southwest French wine co-operatives as the political vanguard of the small proprietor. What I came to discover was that political activism was considerably

restrained and culturally oblique, certainly in comparison to the neighbouring Languedoc.

Unlike southwest France, the Languedoc is well known for the political activism of its agricultural workers and small proprietors, and for its reputedly long-standing regional political identity (see Le Roy Ladurie 1979). Furthermore, the Languedoc is a region with numerous wine and agricultural co-operatives and hence a strongly developed corporate identity. The first French wine co-operative, Marausson, was founded in the Languedoc in the early 1900s. What is most noteworthy about this co-operative compared to those of the Dordogne and Médoc is its pronounced Socialist and Communist origins. The Marausson wine-growers not only collectivized vinification and marketing resources like most later wine co-operatives, but they also collectivized their vineyards, though this effort was short-lived because of the continuing predominance of household production.

The Languedoc was, moreover, the location of the celebrated 1907 wine-growers' revolt during which seven wine-growers died at the hands of French troops. The 1907 rebels were protesting against the adverse effects of over-production which they believed were the result of frauds perpetrated by local merchants. As Winnie Lem (1999) has shown, Languedoc wine-growers and small-scale farmers in general have not abandoned their struggles as they continue to resist capital accumulation and state modernization and what they see as assaults on their distinct regional identity. As one informant recounted to Lem (1999: 82), the Languedoc's distinct regional identity is embodied in a long-standing tradition of political radicalism. The small proprietors and agricultural workers of the Languedoc – widely known as the *Midi Rouge* or 'Red South' – tend to vote either Socialist or Communist, and generally identify themselves as *ouvriers* or working class.

On the other hand, Médoc and Dordogne wine-growers were not initially as receptive to co-operatives as their neighbours in the Languedoc. Médoc growers attribute this to their 'individualism'. However, I believe that this reluctance arose from the predominance of household production in the area, and from a distinct regional history which entailed an earlier and more complete absorption into capitalist markets and social relations than was the case in the Languedoc. The development of the *grands crus*, as noted above, did much to advance the cause of wine-growing and to introduce and reinforce a capitalist wine-growing hierarchy in the areas where the large elite estates predominate today.

The vast majority of Médoc and Dordogne wine co-operatives were founded from the mid-1930s through the early 1940s in a period of economic duress. The mid-1930s were difficult years for wine-growers, in that they followed a world-wide economic crisis and repeated years of low yields and poor quality in the vineyards. Informants whose parents endured the hardship of this period related that their families discouraged them from pursuing wine-growing. Nevertheless, Médoc and Dordogne growers decided to form co-operatives as a consequence of substantial government incentives that favoured modernization. They also saw in co-operatives the potential to avoid the exploitation of middlemen who dictated the prices to be paid to growers for their grapes. Although there was a pronounced Socialist presence in the

founding of Médoc and Dordogne co-operatives, the founding members sought to recruit growers from across the political spectrum. The statutes governing Médoc and Dordogne wine co-operatives forbid political debate, thus giving the co-operatives a manifestly pragmatic or populist political casting. Thus, because the co-operative is not an arena for open political debate, it is difficult to make an argument for the overt political nature of work identity among southwest French wine-growers, especially a politics that is party driven.

Relegating politics to the margins of wine co-operatives and wine-growing work does not mean that wine-growers in southwest France lack a sense of political identity. As I proposed in my introduction, identities are complex and multifaceted, almost never univocal. For example, my informant Albert Colineau, not only identifies himself as a *paysan*, like most Médoc and Dordogne wine-growers, but speaks proudly of his family's radical socialist past. Colineau's grandfather was one of the founding members of the Lustrac co-operative and was active politically in the village of Lustrac. Upon his grandfather's retirement, Albert's father assumed proprietorship of the family estate and was likewise active at the co-operative. Albert himself was pursuing an advanced degree in history when his father died suddenly from a heart attack. For a while Albert tried to combine his studies with caring for the family estate. He claimed that he did neither well and finally decided to commit himself to wine-growing, eventually becoming vice-president of the Lustrac co-operative. In spite of Albert's identification with his family's political past, he reminded me that the co-operative ethos was to render the highest financial returns possible for its members and not to remake the local political landscape.

The above political disclaimer does not, however, directly challenge Colineau's and other southwest wine-growers' identities as *paysans*, even though *paysan* is an important idiom for one who works the land and thus symbolizes a challenge to bourgeois managers and proprietors who remain remote from their vineyards. That is, real work involves getting dirty, in contrast to the intellectual work of a manager or, for that matter, the book-learning of the schools. Nevertheless, the circumscription of *paysan* to local attachment to the land fails to achieve, I believe, and as did Marx, the more radical identification with the working class that is ubiquitous among Languedoc wine-growers and more generally throughout France.

As I indicated earlier, though, Médoc wine co-operatives in particular have pursued more subtle cultural means to advance their collective interests and to compete with the elite estates and large multinationals that own vineyards locally. Co-operative growers have thus fought the large estates on their own cultural grounds by winning the right to commercialize some of their wines with a chateau label, a move that has brought distinction to both the growers' wines and the labour which it embodies. In like fashion, purchasing vineyards through the collective resources of the wine co-operatives also contributes to their long-term financial well-being, while modifying to some extent their self-identified individualism. While all of the above examples do speak to the political nature of work identity, in my view they are considerably more oblique than the politics of work identity in regions like the Languedoc and the party-driven politics long associated with the French working class.

*Culture of work*

Let me conclude where I began. There is little doubt that the Marxist perspective continues to contribute in valuable ways to the anthropology of work and to the understanding of labour in general, even if one does not accept its meta-theoretical foundations. However, and I believe that my example of co-operative growers usefully illustrates the point, the historical and cultural contingencies of concrete human subjects both give form to and qualify the more general process through which an abstract species makes itself. To understand this self-formative process in simply instrumental terms, as has been the tendency in some orthodox versions of the Marxist tradition that privilege labour, is to eclipse the process of mutual communicative exchange through which self-identities are forged and the social world in general is constituted.

The emphasis on mutual communicative exchange, or what Habermas calls communicative rationality, as a basis for grasping the cultural articulation of work and identity also has important parallels for the understanding of science and technology more generally. Although the culture of science and technology is a relatively recent research interest in anthropology (e.g. Hanson 1993; Haraway 1991; Martin 1987; Rapp 1999), the ancestry of this research can be traced to early twentieth-century phenomenology. Husserl (1970) argued that the 'mathematization of nature' through the natural sciences threatens the experience of the *Lebenswelt* or life world as socially meaningful (cf. Arendt 1958). That is, the continuing emphasis in the natural sciences on abstract formulations of a technical nature, especially mathematical ones, threatens human experience as meaningful in that scientific formulations of life are removed from the discourse of everyday experience. Habermas (1984) put this in somewhat more ominous terms by arguing that the dominion of science and technology informed by instrumental rationality not only renders problematic intersubjective meaning but also results potentially in the colonization of the life world when public policy is prefigured by science. According to Habermas, the end result is the depoliticization of public life.

The natural sciences and the social sciences that follow their methodological monism are informed, as was Marx's concept of labour, by an instrumental rationality that constructs objects of possible knowledge as ones of technical control. Moreover, the methodological uniformity of the natural sciences ideally brackets the contingencies of human experience and thus advances scientific explanations exclusive of culture as adequate to grasp its own practice. Consequently, within scientific self-understanding, it is not possible to raise questions about the cultural and historical constructions of science and the technologies it supports, and thus scientific explanations risk being dogmatically defended. Martin's analysis (1987) of the unexamined assumptions underpinning representations of female bodies in medical textbooks is a major contribution in this area. Hanson (1993) discloses, likewise, the concealed cultural assumptions of testing and thus poses a challenge to the applied and managerial potential of testing to rank hierarchically the reputed 'natural endowments' of human individuals and populations. All these examples show that confronting the cultural assumptions, the stories sciences tell about themselves, allows us to access the emancipatory possibilities of critical reason and critical practice.

On a more ethnographic note, instrumental rationality transforms concrete human subjects into mere shadows of an abstract historical process or, as Taussig (1987) relates with respect to the works of Wolf (1982) and Mintz (1985), a narrative that simply tells itself.<sup>4</sup> Like a marionette, passive subjects are moved by external forces and are thus unable to forge an existence of their own making or to contest existing hegemonic social relations. Moreover, to relegate what informants have to say about themselves to the ethnographic and historical margins places them in a subaltern position outside the time framework of the anthropologist, this being what Johannes Fabian (1983) calls the 'denial of coevalness'.

Thus I have shown that what is particular to wine-growing labour and wine-growers themselves, despite some apparent similarities, stems from the ways in which the Médoc and Dordogne regions have been historically and culturally constituted. In other words, the Médoc and Dordogne consist of different fields of social action and power that establish both limits and possibilities for the growers there. This, in turn, has led to fragmented and rank-ordered specialization of labour. These fields are not *a priori* or 'essential' but have been mediated through the historical circumstances which gave Bordeaux and its growers considerable commercial advantages subsequently augmented by the development of a *grand cru* niche market both locally and internationally. As elite estates changed hands from the conventional nobility to the marketing firms and nascent bourgeoisie of the post-revolutionary era, this new entrepreneurial class sought to distinguish itself culturally from the peasant masses and thus to appropriate the cultural capital associated with the now-surpassed nobility. The distinct history of wine in the Bordeaux region thus established a field of commercial or economic power that largely mediated social differences in the representations of artisanship, albeit as a matter of degree, in the two regions of Bordeaux and the Dordogne compared here.

For Bordeaux growers, a significant part of their wines' allure is their association with place, tradition, and by extension distinction. While the science of wine-making (oenology) has no doubt contributed to the recent success of Bordeaux wines, it has done so in a manner that, while representing progress and the obsolescence of some methods of vinification, has none the less respected the commercial value and symbolic importance of tradition. For example, oenology has done nothing to challenge the image of hand-picking the grapes and, in some cases, has favoured oak vinification vats over steel as redolent of a glorious-yet-invented past. This is not, however, to claim that oenologists have simply endorsed the methods of a time-honoured past, as they have been quick to criticize the imprecise control of temperature in the fermentation process that often in the past had undesirable consequences for the quality of wine. None the less, oenologists are aware that a sterile environment does little for the commercialization of wine, and thus they have sought to preserve some connection to a continuous past over that of novelty or continuous change.

The special symbolic capital of the Bordeaux region, especially the Médoc, also places growers in this region at significantly greater financial risk than growers in the Dordogne. In the monocultural Médoc, the pursuit of full-time wine-growing is a possibility for numerous co-operative growers because

of the significant returns on harvested grapes, while polycultural regions such as the Dordogne often combine wine-growing on a part-time basis with other agricultural pursuits. The higher returns of the Médoc come, at least in terms of co-operative wines, from their symbolic contiguity to the elite estates. However, the regions which are held in high cultural esteem for their wine are also more subject to the exploitation of multinational corporations that, through purchasing vineyards at exceptionally inflated prices, have placed in doubt the capacity for succession among the Médoc's small proprietors. A comparable development among the Dordogne's less prestigious vineyards is unlikely.

As I have argued, although Médoc co-operative growers have not exhibited the overt political resistance that has long been associated with regions like the Languedoc, they have been very adept at understanding the historical and cultural foundations of their subordinate position in the wine-growing hierarchy. Thus they have been able to appropriate what would otherwise be a symbol of their subaltern status, that is the chateau label, and to put this elite symbol to their own collective use. Moreover, co-operative growers have also played the contrary symbol of their subordinate status – that co-operative grapes are non-distinct in coming from the multiplicity of vineyards owned by their members – to their benefit by claiming that 'co-operative grapes are the true grapes of the Médoc'. Such a claim inverts mutuality and collective enterprise to a position of distinction, while implicitly challenging the exclusivity of the individually or sometimes corporate owned wine-growing estates. The symbolic play that I have identified contributes significantly to the value of wine-growing labour among co-operative growers, and most especially its distinct artisanal quality.

Such symbolic appropriation and inversion among subaltern populations is well known to anthropologists. For example, Sally Cole's (1991) study of Portuguese fisherwomen involves a celebration of mutuality and collective effort over exclusive and individualized landed estates that have a superordinate standing in the village community. Such examples show that subaltern populations often find ingenious means of appropriating hegemonic symbols and to invert their subordinate status, thus reminding us of the multiple grounds through which human subjects 'make' themselves.

Grasping the process of work among southwest French wine-growers is thus a matter of understanding the cultural articulations of work. Wine-growers position themselves as historical agents and are likewise constrained through the social universes in which they engage others. Thus as the often ignored Marxist maxim reminds us, the process of communicative exchange, like the mark of distinction that differentiates wines, producers, and their labour, is constrained and enabled by relations of power.

#### NOTES

I would like to thank my wife, Inge Meffert, and colleagues F. Allan Hanson, Andrew Lass, Mustafa Mirzeler, and the anonymous *JRAI* reviewers for their valuable criticism with respect to the arguments and supporting ethnographic evidence presented here. A special acknowledgment goes to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research which supported my French field research on two occasions.

<sup>1</sup> See also Marx's 'First premises of the materialist method' (Marx & Engels 1970: 42-8), where there is likewise a pronounced emphasis on labour as the appropriation and transformation of nature. It is important to recognize that, although Marx's notion of labour is instrumental, it is none the less dialectical in that transforming nature also involves the transformation of humanity. However, it is Habermas's point to show that instrumental perspectives are insufficient to grasp the process of human self-formation.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor's time-management studies of the early twentieth century were designed to increase the efficiency of labour by carefully measuring the time expended by workers in completing certain tasks. From a Marxist perspective, Taylorism and the industrial psychology to which it gave rise were seen as increasing the exploitation of workers by establishing a more controlled work environment.

<sup>3</sup> Those growers who have insufficient land to pursue wine-growing on a full-time basis usually work as agriculturalists on large estates or as factory workers in nearby towns.

<sup>4</sup> Taussing argues that Wolf and Mintz are only attentive to abstract subjects in the same way in which Marx was attentive to abstract labour, thus creating an historical narrative that is overdetermined by the theory. While Taussig's point is well taken with respect to abstract theories that gloss concrete lived experience, I believe that he overstates the case with respect to Wolf and Mintz who have sought in much of their work to outline the broad processes of capitalist development with respect to interregional and global connections.

#### REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod, L. 1991. Writing against culture. In *Recapturing anthropology: working in the present* (ed.) R.G. Fox, 137-62. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Agulhon, M. 1982. *The republic in the village: the people of the Var from the French Revolution to the Second Republic* (trans. J. Lloyd). Cambridge: University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1958. *The human condition*: Chicago: University Press.
- Baudrillard, J. 1975. *The mirror of production*. St Louis, Mo.: Telos Press.
- Benjamin, W. 1969. *Illuminations* (trans. H. Zolin; ed. H. Arendt). New York: Schocken Books.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bourgeois, P. 1995. *In search of respect: selling crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Braverman, H. 1974. *Labor and monopoly capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Cole, S. 1991. *Women of Praia*. Princeton: University Press.
- Comaroff, J. & J. Comaroff 1992. *Ethnography and the historical imagination*. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press.
- Edelman, M. 1999. *Peasants against globalization: rural social movements in Costa Rica*. Stanford: University Press.
- Enjalbert, H. 1953. Comment naissent les grands crus: Bordeaux, Porto, Cognac. *Annales* 8, 315-28, 457-74.
- & B. Enjalbert. 1987. *L'histoire de la vigne et du vin*. Paris: Bordas.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other: how anthropology makes its object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1979. *Discipline and punish*. New York: Vintage.
- Friedman, J. 1974. The place of fetishism and the problem of materialist interpretations. *Critique of Anthropology* 1, 26-62.
- Habermas, J. 1971. *Knowledge and human interests*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- 1975. Towards a reconstruction of historical materialism. *Theory and Society* 2, 287-300.
- 1984. *The theory of communicative action*, vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Handler, R. & J. Linnekin. 1984. Tradition, genuine or spurious. *Journal of American Folklore* 97, 273-90.
- Hanson, F.A. 1993. *Testing testing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, S.G. 1991. *Whose science? Whose knowledge: thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Hobsbawm E. & T. Ranger (eds) 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: University Press.

- Husserl, E. 1970. *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology* (trans. D. Carr). Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.
- Jackson, M. 1998. *Minima ethnographica: intersubjectivity and the anthropological project*. Chicago: University Press.
- Judt, T. 1979. *Socialism in Provence*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Le Roy Ladurie, E. 1979. *Montaillou: the promised land of error*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Leiss, W. 1974. *The domination of nature*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lem, W. 1999. *Cultivating dissent: work, identity, and praxis in rural Languedoc*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Loubère, L. 1990. *The wine revolution in France*. Princeton: University Press.
- Lyotard, J.-F. 1984. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martin, E. 1987. *The woman in the body: a cultural analysis of reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marx, K. 1967. *Capital*, vol. 1. New York: International.
- & F. Engels 1970. *The German ideology*. New York: International.
- Mintz, S.W. 1985. *Sweetness and power*. New York: Penguin.
- Paul, H. 1996. *Science, wine and the vine in modern France*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Peynaud, E. 1988. *Le vin et les jours*. Paris: Bordas.
- Pijassou, R. 1980. *Le Médoc: un grand vignoble de qualité*. 2 vols. Paris: Tallandier.
- Rapp, R. 1999. *Testing women: testing the fetus: the social impact of amniocentesis in America*. New York: Routledge.
- Reddy, W.M. 1984. *The rise of market culture: the textile trade and French society, 1750-1900*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Rogers, S. 1987. Good to think: the 'peasant' in contemporary France. *Anthropological Quarterly* 60, 56-63.
- Sahlins, M. 1976. *Culture and practical reason*. Chicago: University Press.
- Sewell, W.H. Jr. 1980. *Work and revolution in France: the language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Taussig, M. 1980. *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.
- 1987. History as commodity in some recent American (anthropological) literature. *Food and Foodways* 2, 151-69.
- Terrio, S.J. 2000. *Crafting the culture and history of French chocolate*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ulin, R.C. 1984. *Understanding cultures: perspectives in anthropology and social theory*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 1991. Critical anthropology twenty years later: modernism and postmodernism in anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology* 11, 63-89.
- 1996. *Vintages and traditions: an ethnohistory of southwest French wine cooperatives*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Werbner, R. (ed.) 1998. *Memory and the postcolony: African anthropology and the critique of power*. London: Zed books.
- Wolf, E. 1982. *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yoon, S.Y.S. 1975. Provençal wine co-operatives. In *Beyond the community: social process in Europe* (eds) J. Boissevain & J. Friedl, 140-65. The Hague: Department of Education and Science of the Netherlands.

## L'activité laborale comme production culturelle: le travail et l'identité personnelle des viticulteurs du sud-ouest de la France

### Résumé

Ma critique des insuffisances dans la conceptualisation marxiste du travail en tant qu'action instrumentale est un point de départ pour évaluer le rapport entre occupation laborale et identité personnelle chez des viticulteurs du Sud-ouest de la France qui sont membres de coopératives. La distinction symbolique entre deux régions viticoles, et la tension entre la viticulture comme pratique artisanale et la viticulture comme science, sont utilisées

historiquement et ethnographiquement à l'appui d'une vision culturelle du travail et de l'identité personnelle, qui puisse reconnaître les potentiels et les contraintes du pouvoir. L'article utilise aussi des matériaux ethnographiques français pour aborder des questions plus générales portant sur l'anthropologie du travail, la critique de la science et les moyens culturels par lesquels les sujets subalternes défient la culture hégémonique et l'économie politique de l'exploitation.

*Western Michigan University Department of Anthropology, 116 Moore Hall, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008, USA. robert.uln@wmich.edu*