

Pinot pilgrims: metro-rurality, reflexive distinction & enchanted wine in Martinborough, New Zealand
(a work-in-progress & unedited!)

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Wine and 'life' – the argument in brief

Douglas' insight that "sampling a drink is sampling what is happening to a whole category of social life" (1989: 9) appears particularly apt for analysing Martinborough's wine tourism as tourists, wine producers and tourism operators dialogically construct, express and enact both collective and distinctive notions of time (e.g. holiday/ leisure time, seasonal, wine vintages, celebratory occasions etc), place (local, regional, national, public/private etc), socialability, gender and so on. My research specifically explores how the touristic, in-situ consumption of Martinborough's '*fine Pinot Noir wines*' - together with other urbane consumption opportunities (e.g. gourmet dining, upmarket accommodation etc) - were not only ethnographically cast as markers of superior status (i.e. 'middle-class'), but further engaged many of the core ideals of reflexive individualism (e.g. individual choice, progressive change, intentional social connectedness etc).

In brief, I argue that wine tourists were not only drawn to Martinborough to consume wine in-situ, but also shared romantic notions of an imagined rural idyll –of picturesque yet productive landscapes, ‘clean, green’ environment, socially intimate communities and rural families, and historical cottages, villas and townscapes. Further, that they drew upon the collective meta-narrative of this vernacular rural idyll (Bell 1993, 1997) as an enduring, and hence validating, morality (Cosgrove 1998; Williams 1979) upon which they created an equally romanticised metro-rural idyll that essentially celebrated their ‘middle-class’ consumption of ‘fine wine’, gourmet foods, upmarket accommodation, and intentional social connectedness (especially of friends and lovers). The tourists’ conspicuous, leisurely and episodic consumption of the metro-rural idyll – in conjunction with widely shared notions of the *‘French tradition of fine wine’* – significantly affirmed and idealised the cosmopolitan urbanity of Martinborough’s ‘middle-class’ tourists, wine producers and tourism practitioners.

Further, that Martinborough’s wine tourism often highlighted the core ideals of reflexive individualism (e.g. unique individuality, individual choice, individual progress etc) - which together with cosmopolitan urbanity and a conscious desire for conspicuous, affirming displays of social distinction - represent core generative components of the middle-class habitus (Bourdieu 1990; Lofgren 1987). And lastly that while Martinborough’s wine tourism, functioned as a socially stratifying mechanism with an ethnographically recognised potential to both ‘upclass’ and/or ‘downclass’ (Bourdieu 1984) individuals - this potential was, in part, alleviated by a collusive nexus of wine’s structural ‘democraticisation’ (via tasting notes, quality rating systems etc); the celebration of *‘New World’* innovation/pioneership in wine; and the personalisation of the purchase/consumption of wine - all of which ‘encouraged’ the parallel creation of reflexive narratives that publicly asserted individuals’ personal tastes (especially in terms of wine preferences and intentionally engaged social connectedness) and thus consistently emphasised praiseworthy notions of the exalted self (Howland 2004). Indeed, assertions of an exalted reflexive self (i.e. free-willed, autonomous, progressive etc) - at least in public narratives and in conspicuous displays of consumption and social connectedness - is a significant social compulsion that arises from the institutionalisation of reflexive individualism and the ideal dispositions that this generates (Beck 2002; de Botton 2004; Goffman 1969; Giddens 1991; Howland 2004). Thus I argue that Martinborough’s wine tourism

enables narration/performance of ideal reflexive self within conspicuous hierarchies of social distinction

From rural service town to boutique wine village

Martinborough is a small rural town approximately one hour's drive from Wellington, the capital of New Zealand. Since the first Martinborough vineyards – Ata Rangi, Chifney (now Margrain), Dry River and Waihenga (now Martinborough Vineyard) were planted over 19 hectares in 1979/80 – the township has been transformed from a 'sleepy hollow' to very popular 'boutique wine village'. In 2005 there were 38 wine-producing vineyards in or near Martinborough, with combined plantings covering more 320ha. And from having only two significant holiday accommodation providers in 1979 – the Martinborough and Club Hotels, which were both in marked states of disrepair – the *GOWairarapa* tourism website listed 6 motels/hotels, 90 self-contained 'homestays', 9 bed and breakfast establishments and two backpackers or budget accommodation providers. Furthermore, the town's resident population – which for best part of the 20th century was around 1500, has reduced from 1580 living in 586 households as recorded in the 1991 national census to 1356 individuals in 561 households recorded in 2001 census – a net decrease of 224 individuals (–16.5%) and some 25 (–4.2%) households (Statistics New Zealand 1992, 2002). Yet, in the seven years between 1997 to mid October 2004 the South Wairarapa District Council approved a total of 165 building permits for new residential dwellings in Martinborough and some 104 dwellings were relocated into the township and nearby area (pers. comm.). In other words – while Martinborough's resident and school populations have steadily decreased the total number of dwellings have markedly increased, which suggests that many of these 'new' abodes (together with a significant number of already established properties) are either being used as holiday homes or tourist accommodation.

The majority of tourists who visit Martinborough are affluent, tertiary educated, New Zealand European/Pakeha, 'professionals' and mostly residents of Wellington. My survey of tourists (n=156 – Howland 2007) revealed that 56% had a university degrees compared with 16.3% of the Wellington population and 10.1% of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand 2002). In the New Zealand vernacular such people are typically categorised as 'middle-class' – a term that is essentially reserved for any individual who is not 'working class' and which makes no distinction

between the landed gentry, capitalists, self-employed professionals such as lawyers and doctors, or well-paid ‘white-collar’ occupations such as Government officials, accountants etc. Basically a ‘middle-class’ individual is deemed to be anyone who is ‘well-paid’, ‘well-educated’ and/or displays characteristic ‘middle-class’ cultural capital (e.g. a love of wine, gourmet food etc) – so that a wealthy builder or plumber (generally regarded as ‘blue-collar’ or working-class occupations) with such economic/cultural capitals would be categorised as ‘middle-class’ in appropriate circumstances.

Martinborough tourists and social distinction

As a general rule-of-thumb the “[The best] wine has always been the choice of the privileged” (Johnson 1998:10 and as Demossier, reflecting on the historical developments of the French wine culture, notes “wine has increasingly become a noble drink and a sign of ‘distinction’... Good wine and the culture attached to it has become a symbol of middle-class lifestyle” (2005: 131 & 133).

Similarly many of the Martinborough wine tourists I encountered were highly aware of, and finely attuned toward, the mechanisms and conspicuous articulations of social distinction – both in terms of signifying general ‘middle-class’ status and of intra middle-class distinctions. Firstly, it was widely acknowledged that the consumption of wine and holidaying in Martinborough were characteristically ‘middle-class’ activities (see Cooper 2002; Hadyn 1997 – for discussion of the similar New Zealand ethos). However, it was understood that being middle-class did not necessarily prohibit individuals from also indulging in potentially ‘working class’ pursuits such as beer consumption while attending/ watching a rugby match. Thus, while some activities were ethnographically regarded as middle-class – being middle-class did not necessarily require the near-exclusive pursuit of middle-class practices as is detailed amongst the French in Bourdieu’s seminal work on social distinction (1984). Although ‘failure’ to appreciatively engage an activity such as wine consumption could signify an individual lacked the necessary cultural, social, and perhaps, economic capital to be considered middle-class.

While this may reflect a particular New Zealand ethos in which social stratifications are simultaneously constructed and denied in deference to mythical notions of egalitarianism (Brigitte Bonisch-Brednich – person. comm.), the majority of wine

tourists were nevertheless highly sensitive to nuanced gradations of middle-class social distinction. So for example, the ‘appearance’ of a Platinum Amex card; an expensive ‘European’ car; ‘high-class’ designer/ label clothing, accessories etc (national and/or international); a local or international celebrity (ranging from wealthy New Zealand financiers to Hollywood movie stars); and/or the consumption of expensive holiday accommodation, often elicited ‘spontaneous’ and adulatory comments from tourism operators, wine tourists and Martinborough residents alike (though the focus of these adulatory gazes varied – especially by gender).

With respect to wine consumption – social distinction amongst the tourist was constructed and differentiated from three principal capitals (Bourdieu 1984). Firstly, individuals who possessed the economic capital to purchase expensive, top-quality wines were accorded higher status – more so if they were perceived to do so on regular, on-going basis. Second, individuals who demonstrated a connoisseur-like appreciation of quality wines (i.e. the cultural capital) were also accorded higher status – indeed the possession of this cultural capital was accorded greater respect than simple possession of the economic capital alone. And lastly, higher status was also attributed to those who had a personal or close relationships (i.e. social capital) with renowned a Martinborough (and/or other New Zealand/ international) winemaker. Socially validated possession of all three capitals obviously resulted in the highest status – although if an individual was perceived to be purposely displaying their high status (i.e. to assert their social superiority and the comparative inferiority of assembled others), they were routinely castigated (either publicly or in private) as being ‘too pretentious’ or a ‘try-hard’ and dismissed as socially irrelevant, worthless and/or ‘inferior’ compared with the detractor.

Thus an analysis of the social distinction nuances in wine tourism – especially of the differences in individuals’ habitus (particularly family origin, education and occupation re: Bourdieu 1984) and its influence in the wine consumption/social distinction nexus would appear appropriate. Indeed the links between various forms, categories, beliefs, values, etc (often idealised and contested) of one’s subjectivity, intersubjectivities and/or collective identities and the conspicuous, performative, and embodied consumption of food/drink, place and a host of other consumption strategies is well established (Appadurai 1986; Auge 1995; Campbell 1983; 1987; Crang & Coleman 2002; Demossier 2001, 2004, 2005; Douglas 1975, 1987;

Finkelstein 1989, 2004; Fuller 1996; Hiller & Rooksby 2002; James 2005; Johnson 1998; Miller 1987; Urry 1995). Moreover, it has been routinely noted that the consumption of leisure/recreational commodities (wine tourism can be categorised as leisurely consumption) is often associated with the pursuit of various ideals ranging from personal pleasure, health (physical, mental, spiritual etc), personal development, socialability etc (Rojek 1995) – while the conspicuous consumption of luxury commodities can equally be regarded as facilitating conspicuous display, negotiation and monitoring of the ideals (imagined, emulative, ‘real’ etc) of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984; Douglas & Isherwood 1979; Goody 1982; McCracken 1990; Mintz 1985; Veblen 1925).

However, Bourdieu asserts that habitus generates dispositions and accordingly that the links between various capitals (especially economic, social and cultural) are not necessarily predictable and/or determinative of action or fields of engagement (see also McNay 2000). Further, the emergence of niche production and the apparent ‘democratisation’ of consumption–social status paradigms (Rouse 1995) potentially means that differences in social distinction can take on a horizontal, rather than vertical, appearance (e.g. classical music is now less regarded as ‘socially elite music’ and other genres such jazz, hip-hop, rap, country & western music are essentially considered to equally skilful, socially valid etc).

Indeed, the degree of variability in the tourists’ habitus-capital linkage was so marked that family origin, educational background and/or occupation simply could not adequately explain individual’s wine dispositions – while furthermore individuals personal tastes in wine, although sometimes contested and hierarchised, were nevertheless widely celebrated and perceived of as valid expressions of a praiseworthy self (see below). This may be explained, in part, by the fact a ‘sophisticated’ wine culture in New Zealand is in its infancy. However, as other researchers have noted a breakdown of the historical associations between exclusive forms of wine consumption and accordant social distinction (Demossier 2005) - and the emergence of eclectic and innovative wine consumption strategies as a significant component of middle-class wine consumption (Demossier 2005: Kjellgren 2004) - I believe that in their wine consumption strategies Martinborough’s tourists sought to articulate, and potentially reconcile, both their social distinction (‘achieved’, aspirational etc) and their ideal reflexive individuality.

Reflexive Individualism

Beck (2002) argues that institutionalised reflexive individualism is “the social structure of second modern society itself” (2002: xxii – emphasis original). A constructive reading of Beck’s thesis (c.f. Argyrou’s 2003) proposes a continuum of institutionalised reflexive subjectivity – from a simple awareness of a distinctive self in comparison to others through to the active (inter)subjective assembly and positioning of the unique self (via narrative, action and/or interaction) and onwards to extreme reflexivity that may exist in the radical, systematic critique of all knowledge, experience etc that perhaps represents an excessive consequence of the Enlightenment project. Beck’s (2002) fundamental point is that reflexive individualism is persistently institutionalised in late modernity – due in part to the hyper mobility of capital and consequential labour (Gellner 1983), the perpetual contestation of knowledge and authority (Giddens 1991), and the plurality/ hybridity of social contexts and references that individuals create/are exposed to and the resultant variability in intersubjectivities they are compelled to adopt/narrate (Beck 2002; McNay 2000) – so much so that change and risk-taking are routinely celebrated as pathways/ opportunities for personal growth and anxiety over personal choices in life trajectories, social connections, adherence to belief/knowledge paradigms etc has been significantly normalised (Beck 1992, 2002; Giddens 1991). Clearly the institutionalisation of reflexive individualism does not result in unbridled narcissism – as the individualistic pursuits, aspirations and ideals are routinely constructed, constrained, compromised, manipulated and/or thwarted within the various structures and disciplines of power. Indeed, as Beck notes the idealisation of reflexive individualism hegemonically deflects critical reflection away from the structural impediments to individual ‘success’ (economic, social etc) and by ideologically casting the individual as the architect of their own destiny ensures that ‘failure’ is essentially personalised - “Your own life – your own failure” (Beck 2002: 24). Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of reflexive individualism compels individuals to personally orientate (i.e. construct, interpret, choose, engage, and/or enact) themselves in relationship to an ever changing plethora of intersubjectivities/identities, knowleges, authorities, social sites etc – and furthermore reflexive individuality is increasingly regarded as an ideal and individuals consequently desire to be seen as the arbitrators of their own social and cultural existences.

Clearly reflexive individualism is inculcated through a variety of educational, occupational, advertising, political and other mechanisms. Thus I argue that reflexive individualism particularly represents a core habitus of Martinborough's wine tourists, who like many of the middle-classes are tertiary educated and have a pronounced sense of individual 'seekership' (Campbell 1978), which involves individualistic construction, acquisition, negotiation and/or interpretation of 'knowledge'. And who also characteristically intentionally plot pathways through their occupational, recreational, consumerist, social network (especially in friendships, romantic relations, 'business' connections etc) and identity/ intersubjectivity endeavours (Campbell 1987; Goffman 1969; Howland 2004; McCracken 1990; Lofgren 1987; Rojek 1995). As a core habitus, reflexive individualism essentially generates ideal dispositions that are mediated through and in parallel with other habitus (e.g. gender, age, class, ethnicity etc), which influence their ultimate expression and practice. Thus the reflexive individual ideally aims to be:

- Regarded as highly differentiated or 'unique';
- Intentionally autonomous in thought and action – including maintenance of good physicality and aesthetic appearance;
- Aware of, and embraces, self as a series of self-generated/negotiated (inter) subjective and multi-contextual social positions, roles, statuses etc;
- Regards selfhood as a series of intentionally generated and negotiated life-trajectories and phases;
- Able to articulate their (inter)subjectivity as a series of autobiographical narratives that validate and affirm a coherent, progressive and praiseworthy notion of self;
- Attentive of the biographical narratives of themselves that are produced by others and in kind, actively creates intersubjective biographies of others;
- Actively interprets, positions self in relation to and/or generates various 'socio-cultural' narratives (e.g. scientific knowledge; religious beliefs, political movements etc);
- Progressive or purposely dedicated to self-improvement/ self-growth - constructively uses autobiographical narratives (both positive and negative) as constitutive C.V. experiences from which to plot a progressive, beneficial future;
- Adept, creative and dynamic - especially in changing circumstances, when faced with novelty and/or diversity etc - better still, positively embraces, seeks

and/or creates such situations when perceived as opportunities for self-development/improvement;

- Inter-subjectively judicious in that is capable of forming and maintaining rewarding social networks (hopefully empathetically so) across a diversity of social spaces - and similarly a number of satisfying ‘pure relationships’.
- Proficient in using both rational evaluations and/or subjective passion where appropriate (Howland 2007)

Obviously such ideals – indeed the mere pursuit of reflexive individualism – is constantly circumscribed or thwarted by an array of hegemonic and/or coercive economic, political, religious, social (intersubjective to ‘structural’) etc ‘disciplines’. Thus reflexive middle-class individuals are characteristically drawn toward constructing, engaging and celebrating phenomenon where the enactment of individual choice is particularly perceived to be most liberated and which typically enables them to conspicuously express and/or enact their ideal reflexive selves. Not surprisingly this includes the

- construction of narratives (public/private) that emphasis their ideal reflexive selves in a coherent manner;
- consumption & associated forms of conspicuous self/ identity-expressions;
- intentional forms of social connectedness re: romantic partners and friends etc – especially as these are ideally ‘pure relationships’ and thus represent the epitome of ‘basic trust’ in late modernity (Giddens 1991);
- intentional pursuit of occupational pathways and ‘career’ development;
- and “life politics” (Giddens 1991: 209), where membership of political movements are essentially based on personal sensibilities (e.g. from individual concern about the environment to neighbour crime) and which represents the “individualization of social risks” (Beck 2002: 39-40) and an accordant shift away from allegiance to broad political/ party-based ideologies.

Wine tourists and ideal reflexive individualism.

I have analysed a number of ways that the ideal reflexive individuality of Martinborough’s tourists, wine producers and tourists promoters - in combination with their middle-class social distinction (including intra-class rankings) - is dialogically constructed, articulated and enabled (Foster 2005) through the

production/ consumption of wine tourism. I argue that the wine industry and wine consumerism – as exemplified by Martinborough’s wine tourism (and perhaps also paralleled in changes to the French wine culture– Domessier 2005) - is being dialogically structured to ensure that public narratives of social distinction (as ‘middle class’ and intra-class rankings) and of a praiseworthy reflexive self are not necessarily co-dependent and/or contradictory. The space that is opened for the idealisation of reflexive individualism and associated narration/performance of ideal reflexive individuality, essentially enables all tourists to position themselves as praiseworthy individuals within the middle-class hierarchies of social distinction. And while the public rendering of these positionings can range from the aspirational through to the emulative, achieved, frustrated or even disinterested, the integrity of the ideal reflexive self – as an autonomous, free-willed, self-determining and personal choice enacting individual – is significantly maintained (and critical understanding of potential structural impediments or constraints is significantly obscured). In this respect one can think of the construction of wine tourism as providing the mechanisms and strategies for the construction of reflexive distinction.

For brevities sake I have simply listed and briefly commented on some of these mechanisms/strategies – the foremost, and most obvious of which is the enactment of personal choices – that is personally choosing to holiday in Martinborough, personally selecting the wines one is to consume, who one wishes to share these wines with and in what contexts etc. Indeed it is upon this fundamental platform of personal choice that the ‘structural’ enablement and validation of the tourists’ ideal reflexive individuality significantly rests:

- **Reflexive wine consumption:**

The winemaker at the vineyard where I did a lot of fieldwork was constantly stating that one of things he most liked about the industry was that it attracted an array of ‘different people’, drawn from ‘different backgrounds’ (occupational, educational, experience etc) and further how this translated into highly differentiated perspectives on wine – from different varietal and/or taste preferences to preferred modes of production. Further, in the wine shop where I also conducted fieldwork, customers – who ranged from wine novices to erudite connoisseurs – were characteristically encouraged by the wine shop host and/or fellow wine tourists to articulate their personal tastes in wine. Assertions of personal tastes in wine were never contradicted or contested by the wine shop hosts (at least in public) – which at one level reflects

the formulaic ‘the customer is always right’ ethos that is predicated on ensuring maximal customer satisfaction and sales. Although wine tourists would sometimes contest, even deride, their fellow tourists’ personal tastes in wine - and would instruct each other on how to improve their wine experiences and/or taste preferences. However, an assertion of personal tastes appeared to operate as a default mechanism and statements such as ‘I know what I like’ – or even ‘Yes I’ll try (A) although up till now (B) is the best pinot I’ve tasted’ - functioned to publicly validate and affirm the uttering tourist as an inherently reflexive and ultimately praiseworthy individual. Indeed, the fact that tourists characteristically encouraged each other to state their preferences – both in the wine shop and in other settings such as dining at a local café – and that many also spontaneously volunteered their personal opinions and their recollections of consuming memorable wines (e.g. first Pinot Noir, first Ata Rangi wine, best Pinot Noir etc), suggests that such personal assertions are a socially valued ways of expressing narratives of a worthwhile reflexive self.

Not surprisingly tourists also typically and persistently emphasised their reflexive (inter)subjectivity as evidenced by frequency by which they prefixed or qualified statements such as ‘*I think...*’, ‘*I said to...*’, ‘*I feel...*’, ‘*I love...*’, ‘*I hate...*’ etc in their conversations with one another. Even when discussing their membership in corporate social groups, such as families, sports clubs or occupational institutions, the tourists were highly cognisant of their personal contributions (material, effective, moral etc), roles and often status, in comparison with corporate others. For example, a discussion about corporate decisions within a family would be typically premised by individuals with statements such as ‘*I thought we should...*’ or ‘*We agreed to...*’.

- **Social connectedness**

Martinborough is clearly a place that is dialogically constructed – by tourists and promoters – as ‘romantic getaway’ for adults to vacation as couples and/or in groups of friends, and one from which children are often purposely excluded. For example, the following is typical of the many self-contained homestays in Martinborough:

“Burgundy Cottage

Treat yourself to a romantic weekend in this famous Martinborough wine district. Cosy well appointed cottage alongside vineyards and easy walking distance to Square. ... The perfect place for a romantic weekend away”

(www.burgundycottage.co.nz/ 23 march, 2007)

In the Martinborough Information Centre – where I also conducted fieldwork – volunteers reproduced this ethos (and interconnected notions of the rural idyll) by stating that the typical tourist request for accommodation was for a ‘colonial cottage, with an open fire and a bath big enough for two’ (Howland 2004).

Further tourists reproduced this ethos by holidaying with ‘intentionally selected others’ – and the majority of respondents to my 2001 survey (n = 156) recorded that they travelled in the ‘company of friends’ as opposed to ‘family’:

- 59% or 92 *in the company of ‘friends only’;*
- 28% or 44 *with ‘family’ only;*
- 11% or 17 *with both “family and friends;*
- 2% or 3 *travelling alone.*

Further, a survey of Martinborough’s homestay operators (n = 24) reported a similar bias. From a total of 460 ‘accommodation nights’ canvassed – 61% or 283 nights were booked by couples, comprising of 58% or 268 male–female couples; 2% or 10 female–female couples; and 1% or 5 male–male couples. By comparison family groups (i.e. parents and children under age of 16) accounted for 33% or 153 nights in total. Although the group dynamics of Martinborough’s tourists largely reflect the household configurations for Wellington (from which the bulk of Martinborough’s tourists are drawn) – where nearly 38% (23,455) were parent–children compositions (Statistics New Zealand 2001), and the rest were comprised of either couples, one–person households and flatting situations.

Nevertheless it is interesting to also note that 73 or 47% of respondents to my survey (2001) of tourists (n = 156) stated that they had dependent ‘live–at–home’ children aged 16 years or younger and of these 85% of males (n = 39) and 79 % of females (n = 34) visited Martinborough without their children (though the sample size means results are only indicative). Further, another survey (n=120) of wine tourists to Martinborough’s – conducted at four vineyards in December 2001 – reported a similar result with 34% or 41 respondents stating they had ‘children at home’, with nearly 80% or 32 of these touring without their children (Abramovici 2002). Thus the couple and friend inclination of Martinborough’s adult tourists does, in the first instance, appear to contradict their idealisation of rural families and generational communities as discussed above. Clearly there can be a financial imperative in excluding children from one’s holiday plans – for example, most homestays charge

children (aged between 2–14) at 70–80% of the adult rate. However, I contend that many tourists predominately connect with the sentiment of relationship intimacy that is emphasised in their idealisation of rural families and generationally based communities – rather than with its actual or absolute practice. In this respect many of Martinborough’s tourists enact intentional and idealised social connections whenever they wave hello to a stranger passing-by (usually a fellow tourist) or when they share a romantic bath with a loved one. And it is this sentiment of relationship intimacy/harmony – together with the high value placed on exercising autonomous personal choice in social relationships – that the tourists desire to experience when they holiday in Martinborough in the company of their intentionally chosen loved ones and friends. Or as one tourist explained to me: ‘You can chose to have children, but you can’t choose the children you have – and I definitely need some time-out from my kids’ (Male, mid 40s). Further, that an adult, similarly reflexively inclined individual (ideally) chooses to spend ‘quality time’ with you can be a validation and affirmation of one’s individual worth. And lastly, such intentional forms of social connectedness (i.e. friendship, romantic relations) can represent the epitome of ‘pure relationships’ that are characterised by enduring practices of ‘basic trust’ (Giddens 1991) and which essentially further validate and affirm the idealised autobiographical narratives of the tourists.

- **Cult of winemaker**

Wine tourists generally reproduced a belief that the quality of wine principally result from the skills and associated beliefs, values, practices etc of wine-maker: “New Zealanders tend to worship the winemaker rather than the vineyard. This NEW WORLD phenomenon is in direct contrast to the French view of the primacy of TERRIOR.” (Campbell in Robinson (ed) 1999: 488). Often winemakers were regarded as conduits between the ‘bounty of nature’ and the ‘sophistication’ of wine and enjoyed the status of ‘celebrities. For example, the following is a letter spontaneously sent to a Martinborough winemaker

“Dear ... – a note to say how good it was to see you over the weekend. Especially wanted to say (hoping it won’t sound “precious”) that it was a memorable experience sitting at the long table dans la chambre noire with the master – bit of a magic moment for me and I know the others felt the same”
(Female, ‘wine buff’, mid 50s).

I argue that the winemaker was essentially cast as an exemplar of the ideal reflexive individual – one who was firstly a named social entity/producer – who was purposefully creative, innovative, developmental etc in their occupational/production practices (this being the New World ethos of winemaking – see below) and who were also able to intentionally interlink valued social connectedness (e.g. family/romance etc) and ‘work’. Indeed many tourists openly daydreamed about owning a vineyard, being a winemaker and being able to serve their ‘own wine’ to family and friends. Further, numerous newspaper and magazine articles highlighted the ‘personal quest’ of Martinborough winemakers to produce ‘fine wine’ and to also enjoy the ‘good life’ – which includes economic success, social status and ‘life-work balance’. In fact, winemaking was often cast as the type of occupation that would facilitate ideal, romantic attachments. For example, an article entitled “LOVE AMONG the vines” detailed how Alie and Oliver Masters ‘first meet’ when a “tall, blond and handsome” Oliver Masters, who had just completed post-graduate studies in viticulture and oenology at Lincoln University (Christchurch, New Zealand) visited Ata Rangi vineyard in 1989. It also discusses how Alie recalls it was “sort of love at first sight” and that Oliver’s “interest was also sparked and he quietly jacked up a job for the next vintage”. (The Evening Post 1998, January 16: 23).

Many of Martinborough tourism producers – from retailers (including retailing producers) to homestay operators – report a similar ethos in which tourists are keen to ‘get to know them’ or hear their personal stories about how they ‘came to set up in Martinborough’. In part, this represents an idealisation by tourists of artisan, hand-made products and the associated practice of ‘working from home’ (which is seen to facilitate family intimacy), both of which that reflect romanticised notions of the rural idyll. However, they also desire to personalise or ‘humanise’ the commodities they consumed – and indeed the act of purchase - through the creation of biographical links between product, producer, context of purchase and themselves as consumers. And while this represents a reaction against the social anonymity and estrangement that typically occurs in the production, retailing and consumption that tourists habitually encounter in their urban haunts (Carrier 1994), it also fulfils the tourists’ desire to enact ideal reflexive individualism in which both producer and consumer are named, knowable entities and the resultant acts of production, purchase and consumption are consequently personalised and thus establish ‘intimate’ or biographised social

relationships. Indeed the relationship that many tourists sought with Martinborough winemakers and homestay operators was akin to ‘friendship’ – with some paying homestay guests offering to freely host homestay operators in their own homes and many tourists sending gifts and/or letters of thanks to winemakers, homestay operators and others in the tourism industry. In this respect tourists sometimes sought to transcend the functional contractuality of everyday commodity exchange and recast it as a form of ‘gift exchange’ (Hermann 1997) with the implied social reciprocity of such relationships.

- **Biographisation of wine production**

The reflexive individualism of winemakers and winemaking is further articulated by the biographisation of wine production. While numerous magazine articles etc biographise winemakers, most Martinborough vineyards expanded this by maintaining websites that also biographised a plethora of vineyard workers (and often cast them as ‘family’ – re: the rural idyll and romantic notions of intimate farming families). For example, the Palliser Estate website (www.palliserestate.co.nz/ March 23, 2007) details how Narida Hooper, the cellar sales manager “looks after our cellar door and visitors during the week” and how her “bright and happy personality keep our cellar door guests well entertained”. Other promotional websites include even more personalised, biographical information – so at Ata Rangi, Gerry – the Vineyard Manager has “always been a ‘plant man’ at heart’ and. “his enthusiasm, warmth and generosity of spirit are legendary” Gerry also has “two grown children, Nat and Louie, and is married to Steph who is the creative talent behind Greytown’s gorgeous designer clothes shop ‘Invest’” (www.atarangi.co.nz/ March 23, 2007). While, “Murray Charles, aka Mr FIXIT, is a mechanical genius who maintains and repairs anything and everything that moves - from crusher and press, to tractors, mowers and toilet seats! Murray has lived in Martinborough for about 10 years. He owns an olive press, and takes time off annually to press much of the region's olive harvest, including the 70 or so litres that we produce from our own trees”

- **Vineyard names**

Under the classical French model, vineyards are named after the generational/surname of a vineyard founder – or after a local geographical/place reference (Robinson 1999). In Martinborough the practice of naming vineyards has further evolved to simply

using Christian names of their founders – for example, Alana Estate and Christina Estate - while elsewhere in the naming practice sometimes includes both Christian and surname names – Murdoch James – a practice that is found in other New Zealand vineyards (e.g. Danny Schuster (Amberley, North Canterbury); *Allan Scott* (Blenheim); *Kim Crawford* (Gisborne); *Kathy Lysley* (Blenheim)).

This practice in part reflects the boutique, idyllic lifestyle and individualised ethos of many of New Zealand’s vineyards. Small in size and dedicated to the pastoral-based, pleasure-seeking ‘lifestyle’ of wine production/ consumption, New Zealand’s boutique vineyards are often intimately associated with their winemakers and/or founders (although this focus is also perhaps, in part, due to the fact New Zealand’s wine industry is relatively new and the opportunity for generational vineyards to be established over time has been accordingly limited). Nevertheless, naming a vineyard after the Christian or surname of its owner/founder is also designed to highlight the link between a specific, named and biographised person and their vineyards in a way that at once humanises and personalises the commodities they produce. One potential connotation is that, like these exceptional persons, the vineyards and wines are also matchless and not simply derivative variations on the common themes of viticulture and viniculture.

- **Reflexive/ social distinction purchasing:**

There are number of structural innovations in the New Zealand (and New World) wine industry that enable individuals to easily acquire the necessary economic and/or culture capitals to identify and purchase ‘quality’ wines irrespective of their actual wine knowledge or experience – at once facilitating the middle-class social distinction that is aligned with the appreciative consumption of ‘good wine’ and enabling the reflexive wine consumer to construct/ maintain associated narratives and practices in the ideal and thereby potentially alleviating any potential contradictions of their ideal notions of self:

- **Tiered production** – most Martinborough/ New Zealand/ New World (and now numerous Old World) vineyards produce several tiers of wine that are differentiated by cost and quality. This provides a number of ‘budgetary’ entry points for consumers - combined with the consequential capacity of consumers to purchase wines from highly renowned vineyards (e.g. 4th tier Chateaux Lafite-

Rothschild - Légende R Bordeaux Red) and an overall lifting of quality (especially of 'lower quality' wines – Johnson 1998; Robinson 1999) - essentially means that 'wine duffers' are evermore able to impress their friends etc by easily procuring 'good quality wine'. Thus tiered production is also contributes to ethos of niche production and appearance of horizontal distinctions discussed above.

- The **singularity** (Miller 1987) **of wine** – sold in bottles and glasses– can facilitate social distinction/ consumption practices that are affirmative, emulative, experimental, educative and even counterfeit, without necessarily exacting a 'taxing' economic, social and/or cultural capital toll on the consumer. Further, the episodic nature of wine tourism also allows for the enactment of ideal and conspicuous displays of social distinction/ reflexive individualism (and of the rural idyll/ metro-rural idyll) without the degree of critical scrutiny that enduring, everyday practices might attract.
- The **democratisation of the cultural capital** of knowledgeable and appreciative wine consumption – that historically was acquired principally from elite family and/or education backgrounds – has been appreciably facilitated by the New World practice of labelling wines by varietal (i.e. as Pinot Noir etc as opposed to the historical French practice of labelling by region – Burgundy) and through the inclusion of tasting notes, which detail the wine taste characteristics, ideal food combinations etc, on the bottle labels, vineyard websites and in the reviews of wine experts/critics in various media (e.g. Bob Campbell's NZ Wine Annual). Further, the awarding of wine show medals and quality rating systems (e.g. Robert Parker's famous /100 rating scale), means that the quality of wine is often pre-established by experts and the consumer need not necessarily develop a broad wine palate/experience to easily identify a quality wine.
- **New World connoisseurship and production** is significantly cast as being founded on innovation, experimentation and novelty (e.g. blending varietals etc) and is thus contrasted with the 'French tradition' of connoisseurship/production which is popularly perceived as rule/tradition bound and appellation inhibited. So for example, 'finding a bargain wine' – that is one of good quality, low price and has little public recognition – can confer considerable status on a New Zealand wine consumer (connoisseur and 'average' drinker alike). However, this does not mean that social hierarchies based on the purchase and/or appreciative consumption of top quality wine do not exist – indeed the popularly imagined 'French Tradition' is typically invoked to reference standards of excellence in

wine (e.g. first growth Burgundies/ Pinot Noir), in wine production (e.g. aging wine in French oak etc) and/or wine consumption (e.g. consuming wine at correct temperature and in correct glass etc). However, New Zealand wine producers characteristically claim they are taking the best from the ‘French traditions’ and enhancing these through New World innovation.

In sum, Martinborough wine tourism can be analysed as being comprised of dialogically entwined mechanisms of enchanted production, purchase and consumption that consistently emphasises, constructs, and reaffirms the ideals of wine, the rural/metro-rural idyll, middle-class distinction and reflexive individualism. Further, Martinborough wine tourism also reproduces mechanisms that aim to ameliorate any conflict or contradictions between these ideals – especially with respect to the narration and conspicuous performance of social distinctions (inter/intra middle-class) and ideal reflexive individuality.

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