BACCHUS ON TOUR

TASTING WINE AND SENSING PLACE

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PLATES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MAPS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 SOUTH AUSTRALIA - THE WINE STATE

1.1 INTRODUCTION: TASTING WINE, SENSING PLACES ..................1

1.2 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WINE TOURISM ......................10
  1.2.1 Global Trade and Local Places
  1.2.2 Wine Exports and Branding Australia

1.3 METHODOLOGY ...................................................................... 15
  1.3.1 Defining Wine Tourism
  1.3.2 Fieldwork

1.4 OUTLINE OF THESIS ............................................................. 18
  1.4.1 Chapter 2: Mapping the Market
  1.4.2 Chapter 3: “Come to Your Senses”
  1.4.3 Chapter 4: Wine Places
  1.4.4 Chapter 5: Talking About Wine
  1.4.5 Chapter 6: The New World

2 MAPPING THE MARKET

2.1 INTRODUCTION: WINE TOURISM AS A SPEECH COMMUNITY .. 22
  2.1.1 Language Games and the Senses

2.2 MARKETING AND THE ROLE OF TOURISTS ........................... 32
  2.2.1 DiFabio Estate
  2.2.2 Good to Think

2.3 WINE REGIONS AND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATORS ............... 42
  2.3.1 Adelaide and the Adelaide Hills
  2.3.2 McLaren Vale and Fleurieu Peninsula
  2.3.3 The Coonawarra: Politics of Taste
2.3.4 Barossa Valley, Clare and the Riverland
2.3.5 Landscapes and Markers

2.4 THE HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE .................................................. 65
  2.4.1 Conclusion

3 “COME TO YOUR SENSES”

3.1 INTRODUCTION................................................................. 70
  3.1.1 Smelling Wine
  3.1.2 Wine Tourism: A Corner of the ‘Natural’ World

3.2 ECOLOGY AND WINE ....................................................... 81
  3.2.1 Banrock Station Wine and Wetland Centre
  3.2.2 A National Issue
  3.2.3 Conclusion: Bush Views and Flavours

4 WINE PLACES

4.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................... 103
  4.1.1 Setting the Scene: Neo-Totemic Values

4.2 THE ECO CELLAR DOOR: GEMTREE VINEYARDS ............... 114

4.3 THE PRESTIGE OF PENFOLDS ........................................... 119
  4.3.1 Guided Tours: A Place World

4.4 CREATING TOURISTS PLACES ........................................... 128

4.5 TOURISTS MAKE WINE ...................................................... 138
  4.5.1 Cellar Hands and Tacit Knowledge
  4.5.2 Conclusion
5 TALKING ABOUT WINE

5.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................152
  5.1.1 The Aesthetics of Tasting Wine

5.2 WINE: ART, BUSINESS AND SCIENCE.................................................................158
  5.2.1 The Amateurs Masterclass: Wine and the Senses
  5.2.2 Marketing Places: A Barossa Valley Dinner

5.3 ASHTON HILLS AND ITS SPEECH COMMUNITIES.................................172
  5.3.1 Conclusion: Validating Taste

6 CONCLUSION

  6.1.1 The New World............................................................................................ 182
  6.1.2 The Market for Taste
  6.1.3 Sensing Place
  6.1.4 A Special Place

7 APPENDIX: TABLES............................................................................................... 192

BIBLIOGRAPHY........................................................................................................ 197
LIST OF TABLES (APPENDIX)

7.1: Number of Australian Wine Producers by State
7.2: Top Producers of Wine in the World, 2006
7.3: Top Exporters of Wine in the World, 2006
7.4: Australia's Largest Wine Companies by Winegrape Intake
7.5: Wine Imports to Australia 2008-09 by Country of Origin
7.6: Number of Wine Producers by Tonnes Crushed, by State 2009
7.7: Estimated Vineyard Plantings of Selected Varieties, 2009
LIST OF FIGURES

2.1: South Eastern Australia Geographical Indications
5.1: Henning’s Taste Tetrahedron
5.2: Aroma Wine Wheel
5.3: Ashton Hills Pinot Noir Blending
LIST OF PLATES

2.1: South Australia Tourism, Wine and Food Website
2.2: McLaren Vale Visitors Centre Pamphlets
2.3: DiFabio Fermenting Tanks
2.4: DiFabio Wines Displayed in the Office Area
2.5: Coonawarra Soil Structure
2.6: Church at Seven Hill winery, Clare
3.1: Tinlins ‘rustic’ Price List
3.2: Good Earth, Fine Wine
3.3: Banrock Cellar Door-Tent
3.4: Banrock Tail Information Board
3.5: Banrock Cellar Door Information Boards
3.6: Banrock Ecosystem and Vineyard
4.1: McLaren Vale Winery Signs
4.2: Fleurieu Peninsula Pamphlet
4.3: Totemic Tourists
4.4: Mystique of the Vineyards
4.5: Gemtree Vineyards
4.6: Penfolds Pamphlet, ‘Australia’s Most Famous Wine’
4.7: Max Schubert
4.8: Barrel Fermentation
4.9: Comparing the Smell of Food, Oak and Wine
4.10: Comparing the Smell of Food, Oak and Wine
4.11: Bed and Breakfast building at Penny’s Hill
4.12: Jacobs Creek Cellar Door
4.13: National Wine Centre
4.14: Operating the Crushers
4.15: Air Presses and Tanks
4.16: Cellar Crew Wine Tour
5.1: Barossa Valley Estate Tasting Notes
5.2: Ashton Hills Cellar Front Door
5.3: Ashton Hills Wine Tasting
LIST OF MAPS

1.1: Field Site, South Australia
1.2: South Australian Wine Regions
2.1: Pertaringa Wines, near McLaren Vale
2.2: DiFabio Estate, McLaren Flat
2.3: McLaren Vale Wineries
2.4: Coonawarra Wineries
2.5: Cellars Doors around the three major towns
    of the Barossa Valley: Nuriootpa, Tanunda, Angaston.
2.6: Clare Valley and Surrounding Towns
2.7: Clare Valley Wineries
3.1: Banrock Station Wine and Wetland Centre
3.2: Barrock Station Walking Trails
4.1: Fleurieu Peninsula and McLaren Vale
4.2: McLaren Vale: Salopian Inn, (Gemtree and Dowie Doole
    cellar door formerly located next door till early 2011)
4.3: Penfolds, Magill
4.4: Houses surrounding Penfolds’ Magill Vineyard
4.5: Penny’s Hill cellar door
4.6: National Wine Centre
4.7: Indevin winery at Blenheim, Marlborough Wine Region, New Zealand
5.1: Barossa Valley Estate
5.2: Ashton Hills Vineyard
ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the meaning of tourism in relation to the globalisation of the wine industry and the significance of places, in particular, wine tours and tasting in South Australia. Tourism and travel are market sectors worth approximately 10% of world GNP in 2007/8 and from an economic and marketing perspective, tourism and wine tasting can prima facie be conceptualised as a form of consumption. However, as I argue in this thesis the leisure and appeal of a holiday, or a day out visiting wineries are more than simply an enjoyable form of relaxed socio-economic consumption. I argue that wine tasting and tourism are sensually based leisure practices and learning experiences. The analysis of wine tourism, festive events and wine tasting in South Australia is structured in relation to the tourist’s experience of a wine place, the cultural invention of standards surrounding taste, and the tourist’s movement through time and space during a wine tour. This methodological and theoretical approach acknowledges the significance of place in creating tourist experiences, as Casey observes: “The world comes bedecked in places; it is a place-world to begin with” (1996:43). Fieldwork included tasting events and coach and private tours to wine regions in the Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale, and wineries, such as Banrock Wine and Wetlands Centre, 200 kilometres north of Adelaide, South Australia’s capital. Fieldwork also included a period in New Zealand, studying the learning experiences of international tourists when working as cellar hands at a major wine processing plant.

I examine how tourist sites in South Australian wine regions are place-worlds, and draw upon Stoller (1989, 1997), and Feld and Basso’s (1996) emphasis on a sensuous anthropology in analysing how wine tourism is an experiential form of enculturated sensual practice. Central to the problematic of unravelling why and how tourists value and desire (Graeber 2001, Kluckhohn 1951) their leisure experiences in South Australia is the signification and media promotion of wineries and their products as naturalised environments, independent of their physical and symbolic creation by tourists, tour guides and the wine industry. I argue that marketing, brand building, tourism and wine tasting events are neo-totemic. From a marketing perspective totemic branding denotes and classifies what is valuable and thus desirable in relation to the corresponding cultural construction of social difference and similarity (Lien 1997: 240; Moeran 1996; Barthes 1967; 2000: 58). The problem is to conceptualise the pleasure of wine tasting and the creation of wine and leisure places as not only market driven economic activities, but as well, emplaced sensual experiences for tourists and culinary consumers.
DECLARATION

NAME: John Claridge  PROGRAM: PhD (Anthropology)

This work contains no material for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Possessed, ecstatic, he leads their happy cries;
The earth flows with milk, flows with wine,
Flows with nectar of bees;
The air is thick with a scent of Syrian myrrh.
Euripides, The Bacchae (1974: lines 144-147)

I acknowledge those people who shared a convivial glass of wine, or exchanged ideas with me, for their participation, however subtly into my research to understand the anthropology of wine, learning, food, place, tourism, and the sensate body. Adelaide University provided a scholarship to cover its fees and the Anthropology Department provided an initial postgraduate grant for fieldwork. I would like to thank Professor John Gray and Sharon Lewis for their administrative help; and Dr Alison Dundon, and co-supervisor Dr Michael Wilmore for their academic advice and editing, while my principal supervisor Ade Peace, was on leave of absence. Of course, without Ade’s faith in my research, editing skills and decisive candor, my thesis might still be on the “lees”, fermenting.

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