Dynamics of markets and classifications
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The present economic and sociological literature places the emphasis on the advantages provided by the norms and classifications which, by establishing a common and coherent consensus on product quality, permit a reduction in the asymmetry of information and its perverting effect on the market\(^1\). As a result, we have the transformation of what were considered obstacles to the free operation of the market into elements of economic efficiency which minimise the risks of slump periods and, further still, create niche markets\(^2\). However, given the historical character of these classifications, the resultant diversity of the social organisations which produce them\(^3\) and the antagonistic interests which they can bring to the surface\(^4\), questions need to be raised on the relationships between these classifications and producers and the strategies which are put in place to maximise profits. In actual fact, they can be a benefit or a hindrance. They can lead producers, according to their position in the social space and their economic dispositions, to orientate their investment towards conforming to, and thereby reinforcing, the existing classifications when they are favourable or towards the creation of other classifications when they are not. In order to address these questions, we will examine the position of French wines within the context of global markets.

As a product of social distinction and at the base of large economic and symbolic benefits, it has a long history of classification, both legal and otherwise.

In contrast to “New World” wines, whose quality is distinguished by the grape or by the mark, the French wine industry is constituted in such a manner that the strategies adopted by producers are structured around whether or not they are categorised as a wine of Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (see appendix on the AOC) as opposed to being categorised as a vin de table and more recently a vin de pays, a category which takes into account the geographical origin of production but with less exacting criteria for production than for the AOC. The wines of the AOC evoke “quality”, whereas the others evoke “mass consumption”. It is amongst the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée that we find the most prestigious wines, notably the grands crus, categories which are used to define the most highly reputed of Bordeaux wines. These categories have been adopted in several regions, with the exception of the 1° grand cru category. All the forms of consecration, such as prizes, awards of the specialised literature and the principal organisations of viticulture, in France in particular, adopt this differentiation between vin de table or de pays and vins d’AOC, as well as the impossibility of comparing wines with different appellations (excellence can only be recognised within an appellation as in the prix de Mâcon or the prix du Salon Général de l’Agriculture to cite only

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5 According to Gilbert Garrier and Philippe Rouquié, a qualitative hierarchy established upon acquired reputation and thus by price has been present for several centuries. P. Rouquié notes in particular an early distinction in the Bordeaux region, before the Middle Ages, between vins de ville and vins de haut, the latter being sold cheaper on the foreign market. The first unofficial classification appeared in the 17th century, in Burgundy (abbé Claude Arnoux, 1728) and in the Bordeaux region (Thomas Jefferson in 1787). Other classifications increase this list, such as those of the wine brokers Lawton (1815) and Pagiure (1829) and the German merchant Franck (1924). In April 1855, for the World Fair in Paris, the Bordeaux chamber of commerce was asked to « organise a complete and satisfactory representation of the wines of the département ». The bureau of the chamber of wine brokers was enlisted to establish a hierarchy. It divided the red wines into five categories and the white wines into two categories. The category used, crus, has taken since the 17th century an inference of quality produced by quality people. The vins de graves only established their first classification in 1953 and those of Saint-Émilion in 1959, the latter being revisable each 10 years. Garrier Gilbert, Histoire sociale et culturelle du vin, Larousse-Bordas, 1998. Rouquié Philippe, Vignobles et vignerons du Bordelais (1950-1980), edited by CNRS, 1988.

6 According to EC regulation 822/87 of the 16th March 1987 on the common organisation of the market in wine, a vin de table can be made from a blend of wines coming from several French regions, or even several member states of the EU, whereas a vin de pays must come exclusively from the département or the zone which is stated and which must be subject to a specific agreement. The harvest per ha of vins de pays can be no greater than 90hl, whereas the maximum harvest of an AOC is defined for each appellation, but are often at less than half the above figure. It is interesting to note that the wine code contains no article which defines vin de table or wine for regular consumption, although it does refer to the Griffe law of 1889 which defines the wine and traits of AOC, wines unfit for consumption, plastered wines, etc.

7 The supremacy of Bordeaux wines can be objectified by the number of works consecrated to them, or further still by their position of choice during tastings.

8 According to Gilbert Garrier, a decree of 1964 listed the AOC vineyards authorised to use the term grand cru for certain wines from Alsace, Banyuls, Burgundy, Chablis and Champagne. Wines classified as 1° grand cru classé are restricted to Bordeaux vineyards. Garrier, Gilbert, op. cit.
the most prestigious awards). This specific historical construction plays a structuring role in the behaviour of producers who, according to their position in the socially instituted hierarchy of the valuation of wine, are led to maintain different relationships with regard to the established geographical identities and their reputations.

During research concerning the valorisation process of wines within a context of global markets, an article in the 1987 *Revue des vins de France*, the most prestigious periodical of French viticulture, entitled “Les vins du midi deviendront-ils de grands vins?” (Will the wines of the Midi become grands vins?) came to our attention. Amongst the “drivers behind a Midi viticulture which was undergoing a strong revival”, it mentioned two producers who “preferred the freedom of being a vin de pays as opposed to the constraints of an AOC” and whose “vins de pays sold at such a high price that they made others jealous”\(^9\): a situation of high valorisation in spite of being “down-classified” in both categories (a wine which is not an AOC coming from one of the most traditionally devalued wine producing regions of France) incited us to retrace, based upon interviews, the history of these two “stars” whose quality of production is considered, at the time of writing, as equally promising, but who have had, in previous years, very different reputations. We have tried to display their position in the social space, and in particular their relationships with the regional, national and international markets which have been decisive in the creation and management of their reputations and have even called into question dominant criteria of excellence within the oenological field.

“The Wines of V.”

F.V. was born into a family from Roussillon\(^10\) which had been producing wine for several generations and his father had found fame as a rugby coach. F.V. was amongst a handful of producers from the region who were known for producing quality red wines in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The region was well known for its vins doux naturels (fortified sweet wines, such as Banyuls, Rivesaltes and Maury), in the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée classification, whose legislation, which although not qualifying the quality of produce, does require a certain

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\(^9\) We do not possess the prices of the period. However, one of the producers cited sold his young wines between 150 and 200 francs per bottle between 1997 and 1999.

\(^10\) Languedoc-Roussillon is a région in the south of France.
number of production criteria which tend towards a product of quality\textsuperscript{11}. The red wines, were
classed as \textit{vins de table} by the legislation of the time. As a result, the large majority of
producers, of whom a certain number were organised in co-operatives, delivered a wine for
general consumption to be sold in bulk to wine dealers.

Being the owner of a family business with 20 ha of hillside land, a part of which had soil
conditions which were acknowledged as being favourable to the production of quality wine,
F.V. took the advice of an oenological advisor in the \textit{Chambre d’agriculture}\textsuperscript{12}, with whom he
developed strong links, and acquired production techniques of the highest standard. In 1968,
he was one of the first producers of the \textit{département}\textsuperscript{13} to bottle red wine, followed a self-
imposed draconian selection process and sold all inferior produce in bulk to wine dealers. He
had the idea, among others, of using the cellar of a family farm he owned at altitude in the
Pyrénées to make up for his lack of cellar conditions in a cool, consistent climate. Such
conditions are necessary for the development of wine and allowed him to produce \textit{vin de garde}.
This term is communally used to refer to the most sought after wines which reach
their height after several years, the essential condition to be included amongst the \textit{grands vins},
a non-official category at the very top of the hierarchy ranging from \textit{vins de table} to \textit{grands crus}.
His wine was consumed in the best restaurants of the region where it acquired a
reputation which is still spoken of today by professional and amateur wine connoisseurs\textsuperscript{14}.
The wines of F.V. made their reputation by word of mouth on the local market, made up of
residents and holidaymakers, and sales outwith Roussillon were based predominantly upon
the maintenance of this clientele. The only Parisian restaurant which bought his wines was a
Catalan restaurant, in a certain manner a variant of the local market. Customers referred to
the wines of F.V. as \textit{vin de V}. or as \textit{Vin de Tressere}, the \textit{commune} where his production was
based and where he was the sole producer of \textit{vin de garde}.

\textsuperscript{11} The criteria vary according to the appellations and are susceptible to revision with the agreement of the
national committee of the \textit{Institut National des Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée}. They cover the vines used, the
planting and pruning methods, the wine making process (products used) and sometimes the harvesting process
(specifically harvesting by hand). The label is awarded to each harvest after a chemical test and in recent years
by an organoleptic test.
\textsuperscript{12} Each \textit{région} and \textit{département} has at its disposal a \textit{Chambre d’agriculture} which is responsible for representing
the views of the farming sector and provides certain professional services.
\textsuperscript{13} For administrative purposes France is divided into \textit{régions} and subsequently into \textit{départements}. The \textit{commune}
is the smallest administrative unit.
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. in particular, the \textit{Guide Hachette 97} which names this production as a « high reputation traditional
vineyard ».
At this time, two other rival Roussillon producers were producing quality, dry wines\textsuperscript{15}, although there were no established criteria allowing their classification without a comparative tasting. Up until then, the quality of wines was linked to the name of the producer which provided sufficient information for interpretation by connoisseurs, and the official generic category to which these wines belonged was not a determinant factor for consumers. By the same token, the geographical origin (the commune) was not an element used when ranking the produce of these local elite.

**Classification and declassification**

In 1977, a part of the vineyards of Roussillon had been classified as Côtes du Roussillon by the Institut national des appellations d’origine contrôlée (INAO) and a small part of the vineyards north of Perpignan regrouped in the Agly valley and already well known for the quality of their produce, were classified Côtes du Roussillon-villages, a more selective classification. The vineyard of F.V. situated to the south of Perpignan was classified with the Côtes du Roussillon\textsuperscript{16} by the authorities of the INAO, a category which placed his produce at the same level as that of his local colleagues, the majority of whom did not enjoy a similar reputation for quality. After putting forward a demand for the classification of Côtes du Roussillon-villages, the same classification given to wine producers of a similar reputation, F.V. saw himself refused this distinction because he was the sole producer meeting the criteria in his commune, whereas the notion of this classification defined by the decree of 1935 was based upon the concept of “constant and faithful practice” with reference to the performance of a group of producers and not that of a single individual producer\textsuperscript{17}.

The establishment of the new classifications turned out to be disadvantageous for the producer who found himself down-classed compared to colleagues who enjoyed a similar reputation, even though the intrinsic properties of the produce had not changed. This was why he decided to ignore the new opportunities for classification, which would have permitted him to be better placed in the official hierarchy, and to continue to rely upon his own reputation as a guarantee of the quality of his produce, which up until then had generated his clientele.

\textsuperscript{15} As opposed to sweet wines which enjoy a high reputation in the region.

\textsuperscript{16} The requirements to obtain the Côtes du Roussillon label include, amongst others, that red wines and rosés must be obtained from several vines (Carignan Noir, Grenache Noir, Lladoner pelut and Cinsault as principal vines and Syrah, Mourvèdre and Macabeo as complementary vines).

\textsuperscript{17} On this point, cf. Letablier, M.T. Delfosse, C., *op. cit.*
“When all the AOCs were given, why didn’t Tressere have the right to a Village appellation? I’m not going to make Côtes du Roussillon, I’ll make V., I don’t need their AOC, since I can’t put Tressere, I’ll make V!”

At the start of the 1980’s, F.V.’s son took over his father’s business. Judging that he would have difficulty establishing himself amongst the cellar men and restaurant owners in the face of his father’s reputation he decided to follow an oenological course in Dijon where he met the daughter of a farming family from Burgundy, a chemistry student who had also opted for the same course. They married in 1991 and returned to the family business. Together they proceeded to modernise the equipment (in particular the acquisition of a climate-controlled cellar), the development of the wines, the development of an increased clientele mainly through attending exhibitions, while always guarding the identity established by F.V. and the related profits. The daughter-in-law, who ran the business alone after the death of her husband, explained their investment strategy based upon their existing strengths:

“We were known for our vins de garde, wines made from Carignan and Grenache, vines which are well and truly Catalan vines and Macabeo whites, wines which age very well. It is true that now there are wines which can evolve in a colleague’s cellar, but at the time, the old 70 and 73 vintages of F., we drank one recently with some oenologists, they were all astonished, here was a wine which still had personality, power. With more traditional wines, the wines of ..., we were making blends, so we were in [within the criteria defined by the decree for the recognition of Côtes du Roussillon]. From the moment that you make 100% Grenache or 100% Carignan, you are out, from the moment that you demand 100%, that can’t be AOC…”

Although well entitled to the classification Côtes du Roussillon, with their production being situated in the zone defined by the INAO, it is characteristics other than an official classification which have determined the identity of the new wines created by the young couple. They consider that wines made from a base of a single grape (which are excluded from the official legislation which demands a blend) give a better result concerning the quality of the wine and, as a result, their wine will be declared a vin de pays.

Asked about their choice, V. mentions the divided opinion which they encounter and their position with regard to the AOC:
“Certain people say we are in the wrong, that we are not playing the game, that with our reputation and the quality of wines that we make that we should join the crowd and then say, the Côtes du Roussillon make very good produce, promote them on our name18, and I find myself thinking, well, how shall I put it? If this is the case, then let the wine maker be in control of his appellation, his land and his vines, and if we recognise that he does good work, we agree to leave him to work as he sees fit, we authorise a wine at 100% if it is good…well, I say leave the choice to the consumer.”

V. thus assumes that the consumer will have the opportunity to taste their wine and form an opinion. Previously, consumers of quality wines were mainly an elite with tasting habits formed at a very early age (mainly “connoisseurs” with an appreciation formed through a long, slow familiarisation with wine) and who had access to the most traditional institution of information, that of contacts (word of mouth). However, as we shall show later these consumers are starting to decrease in number compared to a clientele more recently won over by the pleasures of wine with a tendency to rely upon the classification of experts to make their purchases.

The construction of a collective of producers

This individual strategy, which runs counter to that of the immense majority of producers, is nevertheless felt to be a handicap: “we are separate, we know it, some winemakers…, if we can be compared to that which is comparable…”. For several years the couple tried to remedy the situation by trying to create a common strategy of wine producers with the aim of obtaining a more rewarding classification:

“In Tressere we have formed an association of 8 producers on the initiative of B., it is not a co-operative, we have a certain unity on the level of quality, we try to show that in Tressere there are many individual cellars, we have organised a St. Vincent’s day fete and have tried to be present at all the events. We would like to be able to put a label of “Domaines et caractère” to show that our wines are above a certain quality. This year we made a communal

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18 Even within the appellation, the reputation of producers varies to a certain extent. They can compete for the prizes which are organised in France for producers of the same appellation. To cite just a few, a producer can compete for the prix de Mâcon or for the prix du concours agricole de Paris, the most highly reputed, or for the prix Saint Bacchus, recently established for the wines of the Roussillon area.
vintage and have had tastings of this year’s wine. Next year, we would like to open the cellars, to get to that point… We would like to have the appellation “Village Tressere”. The term “village” might not be possible, apparently, it is not possible to use the term village, it is impossible to go back over things which happened years ago, but we must be able to use the term “Côtes du Roussillon, les Aspres, Tressere”. I don’t see any problem in putting my Carignan vintages in “Côtes du Roussillon, les Aspres, Tressere”.”

This shows the level of the constraint which led the couple to make the investments necessary to reconcile a reputation founded upon demanding standards which the name of a producer can evoke, and the demands of legislation which privileges collective savoir faire to individual enterprise. It is not only the time required to conform to the regulations of the AOC decree of 1935 which is notable (with the additional time required for the preparation of the necessary paperwork for a request of recognition and its acceptance by the national committee of the AOC, not to mention the uncertainty of success) but also the specificity of the harmonisation of the production of the different concerns: a clear mark of the effects of law upon economic investment.

Based upon a solid reputation established over several decades by F.V., the young couple did not have the immediate pressure of creating a clientele, and as such were not required to address the social transformation of demand over the last twenty years, to respond to the creation of the new middle classes and their corresponding lifestyles which favoured an increase in the power of the literature of opinion makers. In France, the consumption of vin de table, which had been a part of the daily diet, has greatly decreased to the advantage of conspicuous consumption during special occasions and friendly reunions, an evolution which is most often described by the professionals of wine literature as the shift from “wine drinking” to “wine culture”. These newcomers to wine consumption are confronted with the sale of a product, an object of social distinction, of which they have very little knowledge, both of its value or its usage. The transformation of lifestyle is also seen in the innovation of 19

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19 Work for production harmonisation is also necessary when the appellation is recognised. It is as such that in the Chinon appellation we can see the importance of the Confrérie des Bons Entonneurs Rabelaisiens and its « grand master », an elite producer who according to the Chinon producers « has achieved a great deal for the appellation. » Garcia-Parpet, M-F, « Dispositions économiques et stratégies de reconversion, la nouvelle viticulture », Ruralia, no 7, 2000, pp.129-158.


21 According to a publication of the INAO, the consumption of AOC wine per inhabitant has multiplied by 3 in 30 years. Une réussite française : l’appellation d’origine contrôlée (INAO undated).
the forms of commercialisation with the development of large scale distribution and the progressive integration of luxury products, which provokes a diversification of supply in the face of which new consumers feel powerless\(^\text{22}\). Faced with the social diversification of wine demand, an increasing section of consumers is responding to the advice of experts appearing in books, specialist magazines and the press, often displayed by the producer in their tasting room, on exhibition stands or further still reproduced on their Internet site or in mail addressed directly to the client\(^\text{23}\).

Despite being aware of the need to publicise her wine and the importance of the publicity gained through the press and specialised publications, A. spoke of the small size of the business and the recent death of her husband, which has obliged her to spend a great deal of time with her children, as the reasons behind the lack of investment in this direction. “Each time that we appear in an article, I know I should make a proper press book, I just have these cuttings, I need to take the time.”

These official or non-official classifications have a greater importance on consumers as the knowledge of oenological culture is decreasing. A producer of Côtes du Roussillon, when talking about the influence of the literature of opinion makers, in particular that of the American critic Robert Parker, on foreign demand, said, “Two years ago Parker selected our wines. We had six wines selected by Parker, in America he is the guru, from which came the Japanese… the Japanese did not pour over the maps and did not come upon us by accident, it was because we had been selected by Parker, the Japanese will only take a wine if it has won a medal or if it is Parker. Last year we won a gold medal at the agricultural competition; we had to have it certified…The Parker…There are those who are for and those who are against…”

A. recounts, “just for the books”, that she was contacted two times by an American importer who asked for samples he could give to R. Parker. She provided the wines knowing full well that he would never select them, even saying so to the importer. In actual fact, the “guru” of

\(^{22}\) In 1978 the supermarket chains Leclerc and Auchan simultaneously launched wine fairs in their shops with grands crus as incentive products. Followed by their competitors in the 1990’s, they then began to compete with the Nicolas chain, the market leader amongst French wine retailers. Montaigne, Etienne, Contributed paper presented at the workshop : Market, right and equity : Rethinking Food and Agricultural Grades and Standards in a Shrinking World, 30th October, 3rd November 1999, IFAS, Institute for Food and Agricultural Standards, Michigan State University, 1999.
wines mainly appreciates wines with an oaky character, whereas A. knew that “my wines are different... At first people are a bit reticent. This comes from the land, our methods of wine production and our preference for developing silky wines.” In other words, the V. are not among the producers who have a tendency to “parkerise” their wine to give it a more oaky character, thus giving into the demand, an approach which “pays” commercially speaking since the opinions of Parker are known to govern the market. The V. have a tendency to sacrifice commercial benefits in favour of the symbolic benefits of the oenological field.

Alongside the social change in the demand of wine consumption, we have witnessed a change in the supply. The production of wines for general consumption has greatly decreased to the advantage of quality production in the Roussillon, as in the rest of France and also internationally. This improvement of production in the region is partly due to the politic of the restructuring of vineyards which was established by the government in the 1970’s24, the more general social transformations of the workplace and lifestyles, which led to an influx of upper management and professionals settling in the area, and their movement into the wine industry. These different factors have changed the perspective of success in the profession: the wine industry is no longer, as it was in the 1970’s, a profession without prospects which parents would try to distance their children from in favour of urban employment. The new generations are investing in their inherited family business and those children who were distanced from the family business are sometimes returning. With the advantage of technical qualifications, acquired through an oenological course or the intermediation of professionals, and a cultural capital which allows them to increase the standing of their wines, these producers are slowly establishing their pedigree in the appellation Côtes du Roussillon. Certain amongst them have seen themselves awarded the classification 1° cru or 2° cru by the Revue Française des vins de France. Although these classifications have no official character and are not on the same level as those which were instituted by the World Fair in 1855 or by the INAO, they are distinctions which are held in high regard by consumers and producers.

23 It is common that producers publicise the social status of their consumers. A producer of Côtes du Roussillon publicised the fact that the Elysée (the French presidential residence) was amongst his clients.
A. is perfectly aware of these changes:

“We said that it was all well and good to make very good wine but we needed people to be aware of our wine in order to sell it. During his time [that of her father-in-law] it was possible because there were very few …It is a model for the département, we are now amongst the best wines…, they are a lot of wine makers who do very, very good work and a lot better than in previous years. Our wines are different because they are less tannic, that comes from our land and our work methods.”

When questioned about the possibilities of foreign sales, A. said that the majority of the produce was sold in France. She complained that foreign buyers would always start by asking for a price and would not even taste it because the prices set by A. were higher than those wines not noted by opinion makers which belonged to the same category. A. has never submitted her wines to an international competition. She is persuaded that, even outside France, the wines are classed by the official French categories: “there will always be the notion of the AOC.”

It is through a long term insertion into the international market that the other wine grower we are going to cover has been able to make use of other more favourable classifications to increase the standing of his produce. Like V., G. produces wines which are classified as vin de pays. However, a different position in the social space has permitted him to be able to identify his soil as being of identical condition to that of the grands crus of Bordeaux and as such to bypass the handicap of having to produce his wine in one of the lowest official categories and in a devalued region. It is its level of renown, developed in Anglo-Saxon25 countries, which has allowed it to conquer the French market, putting into question the established criteria of legitimacy.

The birth of a grand cru?

A.G.’s background was as an industrial glove maker with a degree in political sciences originating from Millau where he was the president of the chamber of commerce. He was struck by the economic crisis which affected the leather trade in the 1960’s and moved into

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25 In this article, the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ refers to the French acceptation of the term, that is pertaining to British and/or American cultures and more generally to the English speaking world
the wine industry where he turned out to be a producer of some talent, although there was nothing which could have predicted this change. In the 1970’s A.G., married to a woman of aristocratic lineage with a passion for archaeology, became the owner of a farm in the Hérault\textsuperscript{26} region with a tradition of mixed farming, centred around an old gallo-roman mill. However, this département, as for the rest of Languedoc, was a wine growing region of poor renown\textsuperscript{27}. A.G. discovered, thanks to Henri Enjalbert, a friend originating from Aveyron\textsuperscript{28} who was a geography professor in Bordeaux and a specialist in wine growing soil, that a part of his land was exceptional for the production of wine\textsuperscript{29} and susceptible to the production of a grand cru. Enjalbert performed a study with the appropriate geological maps\textsuperscript{30}. Encouraged by this expert analysis, and facing an increasingly unstable environment in his current industry, A.G. began the creation of a vineyard to compete alongside the most prestigious. In actual fact, he was blessed with soil which, according to its pedological specifications and microclimate, was susceptible to the production of wine with the organoleptic properties equivalent to the best grands crus of Burgundy and Bordeaux. Thus, A.G. judged that he could produce what connoisseurs call the grands vins: “From the moment that Enjalbert said what he said and wrote what he wrote, well, I did what every good aveyronnais would do, I rolled up my sleeves, I went to see the best, eh, the very best wine makers, Monsieur Peynaud (professor of oenology at the faculty of Bordeaux), and there you have it. Hard work and patience, of course.”

Of course the enterprise was far from simple. Large economic investment was necessary to create the wine growing facilities for the production of a grand cru: the planting of vines, all the adaptation necessary for its cultivation and development, the acquisition of the necessary skills for the production of a grand vin, and specifically its maturing, and of course the fact that the wine would not hold any value until after several years of production. Although largely lacking in financial capital due to the rocky patch of his entrepreneurial life, A.G. had

\textsuperscript{26} This is a département located in Languedoc-Roussillon.
\textsuperscript{28} This département is located in the north of the Midi-Pyrénées région.
\textsuperscript{29} Between 40 and 50 hectares of deep soil where the roots of the vine could sink deep, perfectly drained soil where the roots would never encounter humidity, poor soil which forces the vines to suffer and work which helps to create rare aromas. Screes which are similar to the soil of limestone fragments which have drifted from the Burgundy riverbanks. A cold micro climate which corresponds to an altitude of 500m, due to the cold air of the Larzac which spills into the \textit{Haute vallée du Gassac} and guarantees for the vineyard cool evenings and days of moderate heat.
\textsuperscript{30} Since the start of his career, Henri Enjalbert has devoted himself to the birth of grands crus; he produced a thesis in 1960 on \textit{Les pays aquitains : le relief et les sols}, 1960, in 1973 he wrote \textit{rapport sur les territoires viticoles de Californie}, in 1974 participated in the collective work, \textit{La seigneurie et le vignoble de Château-Latour}, and in the same year wrote the book \textit{Histoire de la vigne et du vin}. 
a sufficient network and an astute knowledge of fiscal operations, acquired through the management of an industry of 500 employees, to solicit the necessary loans. Descended from an industrial family which for several generations had been a supplier to the court of England, A.G. was familiar with the consumption and production of luxury items and its demands. He transferred this economic savoir faire to the universe of wine production: choosing the “noble” vines, operating a small yield, being highly selective in harvesting, holding an ascetic attitude with regard to immediate profit and adopting only the most reputed techniques. A.G. contacted Emile Peynaud, the most highly regarded wine expert of Bordeaux at the time, the advisor to the famous producer of Château Margaux (classed as 1° cru of Bordeaux), to advise him on his wine production. Although his name does not appear on the label, his involvement is mentioned in publicity notices and on A.G.’s site by “oenologist Emile Peynaud”, accompanied with the phrase “It is very uncommon for an oenologist to witness the creation of a grand cru”. This double distinction for this unique product is highlighted by A.G., who knew that he would be up against Hérault’s reputation as being amongst the most devalued areas in wine production, a position established and ratified by legal provisions.

Punished by the French institutions

The terroir is not constituted on its geological and climatic qualities alone but is an area recognised socially and legally as possessing specific qualities. It is by taking into account the particularities of capital specific to the oenological field that A.G.’s business could be called an “adventure”. It was an operation with both the opportunity for great profits and the existence of huge risks given the investment necessary. The positions and ideals of each of the parties involved need to be appreciated to fully understand the logic of the operation. As a person with nothing left to lose A.G. had a certain recklessness, as well as an ethic of risk taking and an affinity for the production of luxury items. Commenting on the changes in economic activity, the mentality of entrepreneurs and the development of standardised production, A.G. states that, “I can’t compromise in this way, I can only follow one ideal, to continue to do what I did in Millau, that is make beautiful things, after that, material success is nearly secondary. Normally beautiful things allow the existence of a gem polisher, a

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31 Cabernet-Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet franc.
32 Emile Peynaud recounts his experience as a consultant in a series of interviews granted to a journalist. Œnologue dans le siècle, entretiens avec Michel Guillard, La table ronde, 1995.
Parisian carpenter, someone who makes beautiful things, someone who makes the most beautiful gloves in the world for the Pope or the Queen of England, I work in this spirit…”

For Emile Peynaud, A.G.’s proposition, which he only accepted after three months of reflection, came about at the moment when his career, which started with him as a laboratory assistant for a Bordeaux wine merchant and led to validation at the highest university level, had already reached its apogee with his retirement. It was an “adventure” as he referred to it in an interview with journalist Michel Gaillard, a consultant post for which he refused any payment but which for him would eventually lead to a large, symbolic benefit: that of contributing to the creation of a grand cru, to produce in a few years that which elsewhere had taken history several centuries33.

The specific character of his oenological capital was felt during the period of commercialisation. Despite a production which, from the technical point of view, could boast every strength, A.G. relates the general refusal which met the early harvests:

“When I started to present my bottles on the French market, nobody wanted to buy Daumas Gassac, no cellar man, no restaurant owner. When they heard “Vin de Pays de l’Hérault”, they said no! No! We don’t want it! They didn’t even condescend to taste it! I was almost broke because I had done the first harvest in 78 and I had tried to sell in France. Shown the door by buyers, shown the door by the market, in 78 if you asked for 50 francs for a bottle of Languedoc, well, it was a joke! So, I was on the verge of going bust… There had been quite a few books, an English book had a whole chapter on Daumas Gassac and then a whole book, by Christie’s, yes, but treated like a cripple at the official level in France.”

While F.V. only had access to a regional market, and a small level of national exposure, and his understanding of the international oenological field was limited to Belgium, it was A.G.’s international relations which allowed him to discover other viewpoints and manners to legitimise wine. In effect, the Anglo-Saxon countries have a conception of wine which does not give the same importance to terroir, history or law34. The literature of recommendation

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33 Peynaud E., op. cit.
34 The article devoted to the New World in the book, The Oxford Companion to Wine, offers a good summary of the difference in approach to production compared to that of the traditional wine producing countries : « In the Old World, where there are several centuries of tradition, nature is determinant, it is a driving force. In the New World, nature is regarded with suspicion, an enemy which must be controlled, dominated by science to the smallest detail. » Robinson, Jancis (ed), The Oxford Companion to Wine, Oxford University press, 1999. This
which has developed in these countries since the 1960’s to inform consumers lacking in oenological culture has produced classifications which apply other criteria: the established prizes and tastings do not respect the geographical closeting imposed by the AOC nor the distinction between the AOC and other categories of wine. The produce of A.G. which found itself in an awkward position on the French market was able to establish itself first in the British market and then in several other countries, gaining a choice position in these markets and acquiring an international reputation of excellence.

“An international, Anglo-Saxon reputation”

It was in effect the international character, and more precisely British character of the previous activities of A.G., and the corresponding social capital, which allowed him to establish his wines. Having no success with French wine makers and cellar men, he found himself forced, to try and resolve his financial problems, to call upon the contacts that he had made in the leather industry as an exporter. It was by the mediation of an English restaurant owner and wine merchant that he made his name on the Anglo-Saxon market through critics who placed his wine on the same level as that of Château Lafite and Château Latour (two wines from Pauillac in Medoc classed as premier cru) and even that of Petrus (a legendary wine of Pomerol). In other words, classifying his wine along with those which were at the summit of the hierarchy of French wines which associated the most prestigious geographical origin and classification. The wines of A.G. have been mentioned by the most famous critics in Great Britain and the United States and have resulted in articles, chapters in books and even a book written by the head of the wine department of Christie’s35.

A.G. relates how the fact of being known by one prestigious wine professional has a snowball effect and how all the renowned critics have mentioned his wine:

“There was a restaurant owner (and wine merchant) who had had his hour of glory and who had invited us to London. Unthinkable! An idiot from Aveyron who gaffed up on every level, all of a sudden I find myself in London with my wife in the financial centre, in a restaurant, which no longer exists, which was in the same building where this English friend

difference also translates to the terms used to refer to wines from traditional wine producing countries and to those of the New World: vins de terroir/ vins technologiques.
had his wine business and where he stocked his crates for distribution. A dinner where there was everything which counted for an unknown Frenchman from Languedoc. I don’t think that could happen today because everything was so strange, but at the time a Languedoc wine which had the stature of a Château Latour, in other words very tannic with a solid tendency to age, the English at the time, it was truly something extravagant, that first dinner was astonishing, I had the feeling of… Afterwards it was all done and dusted. Once the English press said two words about you, there was more press, then books… We had international Anglo-Saxon success, it was the famous English wine connoisseurs like Hugh Johnson\textsuperscript{36}, Oz Clark and Michael Broadbent who put us in orbit.”

After this breakthrough A.G. profited from his experience of the Anglo-Saxon market to establish the credibility of his knowledge and that of other wine producers in Hérault. He offered his services to two co-operatives, proposing to make their wine on the condition that they met particularly demanding specifications. In 1993, the wine Figaro, of the Villeveyrac co-operative with its Daumas Gassac label was voted wine of the year by the magazine Wine and the Sunday Telegraph. It was this wine and its awards which are mentioned under A.G. in the Who’s Who International Wines and Spirits of 1996.

Nevertheless, it was a fragile “international renown”, because of the lack of recognition in France which, despite a spectacular increase in quality wines coming from New World countries, still maintains its hegemony as far as grands vins are concerned. He needed to wait eight years before the success obtained in Anglo-Saxon classifications had a boomerang effect upon the interest shown by French opinion makers. For example, we can cite the article which appeared in the Revue des Vins de France in 1993 on the Farm of Daumas Gassac, entitled “Dans le Gotha des grands terroirs bordelais, bourguignon ou champenois” by Pierre Casamayor, lecturer on climatology and researcher at the laboratoire d’œnologie de la faculté de pharmacie de Toulouse and the author of several books for the general public on wines and

spirits. In praise of A.G.’s production he states that “The quality of the soil is a gift from the fairies”, to quote just one of the eulogistic commentaries which pepper the article.

This praise is not only the result of the influence of foreign critical recommendation upon French critical recommendation, but also the additional effect of the creation, with the heavy involvement of specialised literature, of an oenological field in the South East. We can see the interrelated effects of public policies, which were designed to restructure the wine industry towards quality production\textsuperscript{37}, and institutional innovation. This would allow the industry, despite the restriction of strict rules of production (production limits, etc.), to escape the negative effects of a poor reputation and to find a market on the other side of the Atlantic, which would validate the wines of the Languedoc area through the use of the Anglo-Saxon classification (which is based upon the type of vine used). In actual fact, the introduction into the area of “noble” vines, notably Merlot and Chardonnay, and of an official classification which has allowed the mention of the vine on the label has contributed to an increase in the standing of the wines of the region. This new approach to the product linking high demands on quality with a motif of recognition for consumers more used to distinguishing wines by grape has permitted a direct response to the demands of the international market, and in particular the American market\textsuperscript{38}. A.G.’s experiences inspired the arrival of several producers to the Languedoc-Roussillon area, who could aspire to high quality production while profiting from the low price of land, and bank their production upon a reconstruction of the values of excellence. The most emblematic and publicised case was without doubt the aborted attempt by Mondavi, the most famous of American producers, the 3\textsuperscript{rd} largest in the United States, who had produced wine in the United States and Chile with the Baroness of Rothschild, to set up production on scrubland bordering that of A.G.\textsuperscript{39}.

With the strength of his success in the Anglo-Saxon market, and the signs of recognition being put forth by the specialised French literature, A.G. reoriented some of his investment towards the French market: he started to frequent the exhibitions in France, instigated the

\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Garcia-Parpet, Marie-France, « Le terroir, le cépage et la marque, Stratégies de valorisation des vins dans un contexte de mondialisation », Cahiers d’économie et de sociologie rurales, no 60-61, 2001 and Touzard, J.M. \textit{op. cit.}


\textsuperscript{39} Mondavi was unable to set up business in Hérault because the land he wanted to work was situated in an environmentally protected area of garrigues (a local type of bush). The conflict which mainly involved the opposition of A.G. revolved around environmental interests. It created a great deal of interest in the regional press when those in opposition to his project created a « political » event by blocking a cycling competition which was reported by the local press, specialist magazines of the wine field and even the \textit{New York Times}. 
creation of an exhibition in Aniane, the commune where his vineyard was located, stimulated an improvement in the quality of production in the region by giving advice to other producers, improved his image with his tasting cellar where he exhibited all his press cuttings as well as the prizes that he had won. In the early days around 90% of his production was exported. “85% of distribution to Anglo-Saxon countries and 10 to 15% to personal friends because I had tons of friends in the leather trade and the clothing industry. It carried on like that until around 85, 86, when the big French buyers turned up, for example, when the group Nicolas came,… There it is, the two big points, the English in 78, 8 years later Nicolas puts us in 400 shop windows in France.” At the time of writing, the sales in France roughly equal international sales.

An avant-garde producer

In this context, A.G. appears to be one of the parties with a tendency to call into question the methods of production and evaluation imposed by the institutions which dominate the oenological field in France. His Internet site gives pride of place to the inferior position of the official category in which he is obliged to declare his wine and the world-wide fame that he has been granted by experts. The phrase “a vin de pays with not an inkling of an official appellation has had the honour of being compared to the greatest of French wines”, is followed by the eulogies of critics: “one of the ten best wines in the world,” Michael Broadbent, “exceptional,” Robert Parker, “a major grand cru,” Oz Clarke, “the only grand cru of the Midi,” Hugh Johnson. The expertise of Henri Enjalbert, in a posthumous book edited by A.G., does not hesitate to cite the wine classification of A. Julien (Topographie de tous les vignobles connus) who in 1816 and in 1832 placed the wines of Saint-Georges d'Orques, Vérargues, Saint-Christol from Hérault, Saint-Émilion from Gironde, and Mercurey and Givry from Côte d'Or on the same level (4th class): a reminder of the history which allows us to relativise the official classifications.

This distancing from the appellations is becoming a trend amongst many producers. According to a selection of 165 of the “best wine growers of the Languedoc-Roussillon”, established at the request of professional regional organisations, 13% of producers make vin de pays, 32% of producers make both AOC and vin de pays and 55% of producers make AOC. An article of the RVF of April 1994, entitled “Bousculez vos papilles” (Shock your taste buds), is an insight into this choice of liberty in relation to the official references:
“The local classifications were not totally satisfactory to the ambitions of producers and the desires of consumers. It is a healthy, universal, economic rule that pushes people to find other commercial opportunities, other products when their habitual production suffers poor sales. As far as a wine grower from Saint-Émilion or Sancerre would never deign to produce a vin de pays, an ambitious wine grower from Languedoc may judge that they have found the solution in this category. However, the economic considerations are not the only cause: there is also the rigidity of the rules which regulate the proportions of grapes blended in appellations. In the name of a supposed “protection of type-group”, wine growers of the Languedoc-Roussillon, the Loire and the South West have been prohibited, or at the very least restricted, from planting vines which are used world-wide as guarantees of success. It should not be a surprise that the vins de pays, for which these vines are to the greater extent authorised, serve as a solution for producers who wish to create quality wines.”

A.G. has attempted to spark off a revolution in the oenological field by trying to discredit the old, established principles of production and evaluation, by introducing a style in opposition to the dominant values: he has taken an avant-garde approach based upon concern for the environment and the health considerations of his products as the new criteria for excellence. Like many producers in the countryside of Languedoc, he is gifted with a rare capital: the vineyards only cover a certain part of the land of the region, the rest being scrubland, which allows organic wine production based upon a complete ecosystem, a manner of production which is impossible in other regions. This presents a geographical originality (and, therefore, non-reproducible) in the same mould as the oenological movement aspiring to organic production methods which has developed on the margins of the official institutions over the last few years. He presents his industry as follows: “An area of 80 hectares with the vineyard occupying 40 hectares, the rest left as forest. The total forest area surrounding the vineyard: 1,500 ha.” This particularity is picked up on by the Revue des vins de France: “the vines have their niche in the clearings in the middle of the forest and scrubland, a real patchwork between human production and the countryside in its natural state. This overlapping results in 3 advantages: the constant presence of fresh and humid air guaranteed by the forest, an environment full of odours and a respect for the wildlife, birds and insects.

40 The establishment of a label « vin biologique » (organic wine) encountered difficulties, firstly, from the opposition of professional organisations with links to the AOC, and secondly, from the fact that certain chemical products have been traditionally used for the production of vins de garde. Currently, the wines produced are termed to be issus de culture biologique.
which help maintain a balance in the vineyard.” (RVF, November 1993, p.58). A.G. claims to have planted the roots of old Medoc vines from before 1914 and refuses all forms of cloning, a common method of plant selection amongst producers and regularly allowed by the official institutions. “I bought roots of uncloned vines for cutting. I refused all the modern extravagances: in the meat industry cloning results in mad cow disease, in wine production the result is industrial wine.” (Interview by Anne-Marie Schaller, Midi Libre, 17th November 1998).

Finally, A.G. increased the standing of local vines which the national policies for the improvement of the wine industry in the region had condemned to be uprooted (Carignan, Cinsault, etc.). This dramatic change was only possible through continuous action and by a process of legitimisation starting with the more accepted capital, that is, soil equivalent to that of the best soil in Bordeaux, “noble” vines (vines used traditionally in this region) and a “classic Medoc” wine making process. Just as Weber says for religion, the new prophets often come from the ranks of priests, it was his capital of authority and the contacts that he acquired by producing wines in the most pure Bordeaux style which would permit A.G. to propose a new style of wine without risking radical condemnation and which would allow him to transform his heretical decisions into avant-garde characteristics. It is these terms which are now used to describe the production of A.G. and other producers of the Languedoc-Roussillon area who “can henceforth seriously compete with those from Bordeaux and Burgundy.” (“Cap sur l’avant garde”, RVF, September 1987, p.43). The Languedoc-Roussillon area with its “uncontested star” has become a pioneering region.

The two cases studied reveal the importance of institutional frameworks and how these have an effect on the dynamics of the market, while at the same time showing that one cannot neglect the sociology of the actors involved. Indeed, the two people we have discussed have neither the same oenological capital, nor the same position in the social sphere nor the same background. They did not react in the same manner in face of the established classifications and transformations which concerned them. As A. Stanzianini has shown with regard to legislation concerning the use of plaster in the fabrication of wine, the passage from one

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41 This is noted by Pierre Bourdieu in relation to haute couture where change is continuous and designers considered avant garde have more chance of success if they have worked for the large fashion houses. Bourdieu, Pierre, Delsaut Yvette, « Le couturier et sa griffe », Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales no 1, 1975, pp.7-36.
system to another (authorisation or prohibition) is not neutral for economic parties. In the cases with which we are concerned, it is clear that the new classifications in use (AOC) are not favourable to the first producer and his descendants. Even though, initially, a refusal to conform to the classifications in use seemed like the only attitude possible, and even though the reputation acquired could be maintained through a clientele which was well established through word of mouth, F.V.’s children were soon to take into account the transformations occurring in the oenological field and the increasing importance of the official classifications on the French wine market. They were to direct a large part of their investment into the harmonisation of their production with that of their colleagues from the same commune with the aim of the acquisition of a more valued classification than that which had been assigned to them up until that point. This is an attitude which may seem outmoded given that the official classifications are no longer a mark in themselves of rarity: the number of AOC has multiplied by 10 since their creation in 1935, the surface considered to correspond to the established criteria has significantly increased, the label initially reserved for wines and spirits has also been attributed to several other alimentary products. In this context, the official classifications become more often the framework for further forms of distinction such as price and reviews in guides and specialised magazines.

As far as the second producer we have covered is concerned, we see the conjunction of a very strong oenological capital, although at odds with the official classifications, and a strong position in the economy of luxury products, which was also threatened, which would result in the adoption of the most favourable forms of classification. We have noted here the importance of the moment when A.G. proposed his wines to the British market. The literature of opinion makers started to develop in Britain and in the United States in the 1960’s and saw a significant increase from the 1970’s. The production of guides and reviews of a more or less formal nature, which nevertheless contributed to the establishment of a hierarchy of wines, had a more cosmopolitan view of the production of wine. The classification production process differed further still due to the fact that opinion mainly came from journalists or professional tasters and not from producers (who tend to be the majority in juries organised along the lines of professional organisations and association of producers of appellations). All the red wines, all the white wines and all the sweet wines could compete

42 A. Stanzianni, *op. cit.*
43 By contrast, in France the multiplication of texts and magazines is only seen from the 1980’s, with an acceleration in the 1990’s. Garcia-Parpet, M-F, *op. cit.* 2003.
with each other, each one in their category. In this new conception of the world of “remarkable” wines, the newcomers were favoured because the new criteria allowed them to erase to a certain extent that which history had taken several centuries to put in place. Producers could, according to their position in the social sphere, in the oenological field and in their orientation, increase their standing through this plurality of classifications, and further still contribute to the establishment of more favourable classifications.

Appendix

The Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée

The institutions progressively established in France at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century have resulted in an economic organisation which follows two specific forms of logic. On the one hand, the organisation by the State of the market of mass produced wine, concerning specifically wines for daily consumption, being subject to the structural imbalances of the supply which rests upon a tight control of market supply (control of market supply, obligations concerning stock and distillation). On the other hand, an institutionalisation which has led to the creation of a situation of privilege based upon the appellations of the more reputed vineyards by the creation of the AOC, a form of corporatism in which the professionals control the conditions of access to the label and the regulation of the conditions of production without direct state intervention in the organisation of the market. Arising from a context of fraud and reaction against commercial interests, the legislation governing the AOC and the vins de table would create two strictly hierarchical markets. The Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée established by law in 1935 have led a certain number of producers to produce a category of wine which is legitimised by the State, under the authority of the Comité national des appellations d’origine which became the Institut national des appellations d’origine contrôlée in 1947 (INAO). The principle of selection rests for the large part upon the basis of the location of the vineyard.

The dispositions for recognition which have been elaborated by expert commissions and approved by the Comité national des appellations d’origine contrôlée define the right of entry into the market of quality production by limiting the number of appellations, the areas acknowledged potentially capable of producing AOC wines and those which are in fact planted with the appropriate vines.