

All that Glitters Is Wine? Viticultural Capitalists and the Creation of Britain's Colonial Wine Industry

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Article abstract

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Abstract

The mineral revolutions of the nineteenth century served as a turning point in the colonial wine industries of South Australia and the Cape Colony. The discovery of gold and diamonds not only facilitated early efforts of industrialization, but equally created a class of "viticultural capitalists," meaning settler colonialists who would invest their wealth into wine. This article will examine two case studies of viticultural capitalists who consolidated the processes of colonial wine production in the British Empire. These white settlers cultivated a space for corporate expansion, political "say" in management of each colony, and access to growing social and economic networks, which they used to import vines, technologies, ideas, and even people. Such privileges served to isolate small winegrowers and exploit viticultural labourers, especially individuals of colour. These viticultural capitalists and the creation of large-scale wine companies sought to transform wine into a colonial commodity for the empire.

Résumé

Les révolutions du minerai du XIXe siècle ont marqué un tournant dans les industries vinicoles coloniales de l'Australie méridionale et de la colonie du Cap. La découverte de l'or et des diamants a non seulement facilité les premiers efforts d'industrialisation, mais a également créé une classe de « capitalistes viticoles », c'est-à-dire des colons qui ont réinvesti leurs richesses dans le vin. Cet article examine deux études de cas de capitalistes viticoles qui ont consolidé les processus de production coloniale de vin dans l'Empire britannique. Ces colons blancs ont cultivé un espace pour l'expansion des entreprises, un « droit de regard » politique sur la gestion de chaque colonie et l'accès à des réseaux sociaux et économiques croissants, qu'ils ont utilisés pour importer des vignes, des technologies, des idées et même des personnes. Ces privilèges ont permis d'isoler les petits viticulteurs et d'exploiter les ouvriers viticoles, en particulier les personnes de couleur. Les efforts de ces capitalistes viticoles et la création de grandes entreprises visaient à transformer le vin en une marchandise coloniale pour l'empire.

In 1881, prominent Victorian winegrower Hubert de Castella called for more British investment in colonial wine, stating, “There is no better field for the safe investment of her stagnant capital.”¹ The mineral revolutions of the mid- to late nineteenth century provided an impetus and influx of wealth to encourage capitalist expansion of the struggling wine industries in Britain’s white settler colonies. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the British Empire relied heavily upon agricultural production as the principal source of revenue in its colonies in Australia and South Africa. Wool dominated colonial agricultural exports² but winegrowing and wine production were also significant in rural regions, from 1652 in South Africa under the Dutch in the Cape of Good Hope and from 1788 after British introductions to Australia. In 1860, however, the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty between Britain and France eliminated the preferential duties that colonial products had enjoyed and depended on for decades, while the 1870s ushered in a global economic recession. The discovery of copper, gold, and diamonds, and other extractable mineral resources altered the urban landscapes surrounding mining towns. It equally served as an impetus for the emergence of what I call “viticultural capitalists”: the large-scale winegrowers and producers responsible for restructuring the colonial wine industry in the late nineteenth century.

The broad category of viticultural capitalists refers to those who gave credence to the conceptions of wine as an elite commodity and sought to alter and monopolize the colonial wine industry, increase wine exports to Britain and Europe, and augment their own political influence in the process. However, this article focuses specifically on the group of viticultural capitalists who utilized the financial gains earned from mining speculation to reinvest in viticulture, as well as consolidate orders of operation, and corporatize the colonial production of wine in the late nineteenth century. This was effectively driven by settler interest in diversifying financial investments, environmentally reordering the colonial countryside, and participating in a growing global economic market where wine would be export-driven rather than domestically consumed. Through the examples that follow, I discuss the *British* viticultural capitalists who, in their own terms, as “Anglo-Saxons,” were “better equipped” to grow high-quality fruit.³ This falls into what James Belich refers to as “an incentive [by Anglo-Saxons] to embrace racial explanations of alleged group virtues.”⁴ While Belich’s *Replenishing the Earth* (2009) untangles the “booms vs. rushes” of colonial mining, this article seeks to examine

the transfers of capital from mining to wine in the afterglow of the mineral revolutions.

Linking viticultural capitalism to the nineteenth century mineral revolutions offers a new way to understand colonial capitalist development in general. This article focuses on South Africa and Australia to address capitalist development as a “connective, disruptive force.”⁵ The mineral revolutions were a global phenomenon historically discussed in broader public discourse, contributed to global migrations in labour (and ideas about labour), and eventually aided in capitalist expansion of local wine industries. The mining labour migrations would force colonial states to incorporate the influx of nonwhite miners (specifically Chinese) within contemporary colonial rural labour systems.⁶ Recent studies of the global gold rushes of the nineteenth century illustrate the broader economic and social impacts of mining and migration, including how such rushes “sparked entrepreneurship of all kinds; reordered production, trade, and labor; exposed humankind’s capacity to alter the natural world; and created new hierarchies of difference and disconnection.”⁷ Understanding connection and disruption falls within a broader historiography of networks, where in the British winegrowing world, capitalists utilized imperial networks to import vines, technologies, ideas, and even people.⁸ As Britain’s principal winegrowing colonies, but also two demographically different regions, the Cape of Good Hope and Australia shared imperial experiences in environmental extraction and capitalist accumulation, but also differences in racial politics and labour exploitation.

By tracing the investment of mining money into viticulture—an endeavour that required a great deal of skill and capital upfront—we can better situate the impact of mineral rushes on local rural circumstances. While histories of mining and capitalism often fixate on the localized economic or environmental changes within urban spaces,⁹ this article, following the literature of commodity frontiers, relies on the idea that “it is impossible to fully understand capitalism without thinking just as much about the countryside as about cities, about agriculture as about industry.”¹⁰ Here, the extraction of minerals from the earth played an instrumental role in financing a new class of wealthy white settlers who would reinvest and reorder the colonial environment for increased agricultural production. Because of their wealth and participation in the industry, many of these white settlers cultivated a space for continued corporate expansion and a political “say” in the management of each colony. This tracks with studies of

capitalist accumulation that have found the “social power” of money motivates continual reinvestment and diversification.¹¹

James Simpson discusses how gold rushes “brought benefits in the form of capital investment.”¹² Increasingly, these viticultural capitalists possessed larger facilities to make and store wine, which produced more consistent products to be shipped to the metropole but also forced many small growers to entrust wine production to one source. As one author in the *Cornhill Magazine*, a monthly Victorian literary journal, posited in 1896, “The large capitalists have the best chance of success. It is they who are most systematic, most scientific in their methods, and having the most complete means at their disposal for turning out a wine free from imperfections, have also the means of making their results known to a world that is eager for the best of everything.”¹³ The circulation of substantial capital often acquired from mining, partnered with consolidation through larger commercial wine companies, reoriented the colonial wine industries toward an international export market. While in the early nineteenth century, Cape wines had been the premier colonial wine consumed in the British metropole, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was wine from South Australia and Victoria. In 1860, South Australia had 3,181 acres of vineyard under cultivation and produced 182,087 gallons of wine, while by 1910, those numbers had increased to 22,952 acres and 3,470,058 gallons of wine. More significantly, South Australia went from exporting 3,435 gallons of wine in 1860 to 449,673 gallons by 1910.¹⁴ Statistics are less reliable for the Cape Colony, but in 1859, the colony reportedly cultivated 25,000 acres of vines and produced 3,132,346 gallons of wine. By 1910, the number of vines under cultivation more or less remained the same, while wine production increased only slightly to 3,494,656 gallons, pointing more toward the consolidation of land under vines, rather than cultivation of new lands. Meanwhile, the amount of wine exported overseas increased from 554,459 gallons in 1859 to 576,569 gallons in 1910.¹⁵ Some of these numbers are more drastic than others and were certainly not comparable to the domestic production of wine in places like France, but what appears to be more significant, were the broader changes apparent within the colonial wine industry and among its makers.

Viticultural capitalists, as wealthy, white settlers, relied on coercive labour regimes and played a pivotal role in expanding the production of wine from a domestic market to an international one, often enhancing their local sociopolitical influence as a result. While

this article will briefly discuss several examples of Australian and South African viticultural capitalists, special attention will be assigned to two white British colonists who used wealth acquired from the mineral revolutions to grow and make wine. The first is Thomas Hardy, a Devon emigrant to South Australia whose initial wealth from the Victorian gold rush served to erect a winemaking empire that eventually granted him political sway and power within the colony. The second example is Cecil Rhodes, whose notorious and exploitative gains from diamond and gold mining he funnelled into supporting his burgeoning political career, was broadly supported by the *wynboers* (wine farmers) of the Western Cape. Rhodes then used his position of power to experiment with agriculture, including land consolidation to grow fruits and make wines. While Hardy's mining speculation enabled him to construct a winegrowing empire that eventually endowed him with political privileges, Rhodes's mining empire solidified his political career and gave him the freedom to pursue viticulture as part of a wider economic portfolio. Both settlers elevated their socioeconomic and political statuses through participation in the colonial wine industries, utilized their own privileges to continually invest and promote their crafts, and served as leaders in the process of the wine industry's consolidation. The networks created and operated by these individuals allowed for the movement of people, ideas, technologies, and wines, which aided the integration of Cape and Australian wine into an increasingly globalized marketplace. The corporate consolidation rooted in the creation of viticultural companies became the solid foundation on which the twentieth century wine industries would rest.

Creating "New Gold" in Australian Wine

An 1839 survey of South Australia described the land as "extremely rich in metals, particularly in iron, copper, and then gold."¹⁶ Shortly after this report followed the 1840s copper rush, starting with the Kapunda Copper Mine in 1842 and the Burra Burra copper mine in 1845, both of which spurred a steady flow of immigrants to the area.¹⁷ This flow of migrants would pale in comparison, however, to the migration brought on by gold. In June 1851, a miner named James Esmond, returning from the California gold rush, spotted gold in central Victoria. After the discovery of gold in 1851, many fled to the mines, attracted by the pipe dream that one could "strike gold" and return to their homestead to live fruitfully.¹⁸ The gold rush that commenced

drastically changed the demographics of the colonial population: estimates suggest that between 1851 and 1860, 500,000 emigrants left Britain for the Australian colonies, followed by 60,000 from Europe, 10,000 from the United States, and 42,000 from China.¹⁹ John William Knott estimates that in the case of Australia, “the vast majority of miners were lucky to make ‘wages’ (£1-£2 a week) and many lost money.”²⁰ Many migrant labourers, unable to afford passage back to their countries of origin, remained in the Australian colonies to work in other industries, including winegrowing.

In 1857, Australian colonist James King wrote optimistically that once the gold mines became unprofitable, “the thousands of emigrants who ha[d] been attracted thither by the magnetic influence of the gold, [lay] an extensive, unbroken, exhaustless, and profitable field of employment for all their labour in the production of wine.”²¹ In 1886, Australian colonist George Sutherland posited, “They [Chinese labourers] certainly are very careful market gardeners, and labour most assiduously at picking out grains of gold from places where Europeans would never think of finding them.”²² Here, the orientalist gaze of attention to detail proscribed to Chinese labourers in the goldfields could be easily applied to the garden or vineyard. In 1889, Irish settler William Barcroft Boake visited Fairfield Winery in Victoria and observed “a group of Chinese engaged in pruning,” while the vineyard proprietor apparently commented that “he found these people docile, sober, and industrious.”²³ In 1894, at a monthly meeting of the Viticultural Board of Victoria, winegrower Hubert de Castella disclosed that on his vineyard he “employ[ed] Chinamen to gather the caterpillars in dippers. The men made use of scissors made of hoop-iron in gathering the caterpillars.”²⁴ In such examples, the relegation of Chinese labourers to specific types of work in the vineyard revealed that they were assigned tasks based on perceptions of their “skills” as a collective race.

Locally expressed interests in using Chinese labourers appeared to model the experiences of Australia’s Californian counterparts, who had also faced a similar gold rush, subsequent wave of immigration, and a settler wine industry. In 1889, of the 5,000 vineyards in California employing around roughly 30,000–40,000 men, “a significant part of this labour force was provided by the Chinese.”²⁵ In a report from 1881, there were as many as 500 Chinese employed in Sonoma County vineyards and fruit farms. Prominent winegrowers readily admitted to the extensive employment of Chinese labourers in their

vineyards, claiming that “cheap labor” was necessary if they were to ever economically compete on the global market,²⁶ while others articulated they had no other options because they “could not get white labor to do this kind of work.”²⁷ The discourse of “utility” of Chinese immigrant labourers in vineyards furthered this connection between mining speculation and colonial viticulture through the matrices of labour exploitation and racialization.

Wine production and gold mining were inextricably linked in the Australian colonies. In 1873, colonial writer Anthony Trollope credited gold as the impetus to all beneficial changes in politics, population, and agricultural and technological development in Victoria.²⁸ Even Hans Irvine, one of the more successful Victorian winegrowers reflected in 1892 that once the gold mining regions had been “thoroughly prospected, [they would] be thrown open for cultivation, and [settled by] men of experience, pluck, and foresight, who will speedily convert the wilderness into flourishing, picturesque and thriving vineyards and orchards.”²⁹ Former Victorian gold towns, like Bendigo, Great Western, and Rutherglen eventually became important winegrowing areas, demonstrating how “the relationship between gold and wine was a vital ingredient in the good start given to Victoria’s nineteenth-century wine industry.”³⁰ In occasions of speculative success, the mineral revolutions also created a class of capitalist growers who used their newfound wealth to increase property ownership and vine cultivation. This occurred throughout the Australian colonies, with examples like Lindsay Brown in Gooramadda and many of the participants in the gold mining field of Rutherglen, in the northeast of Victoria, who “failing to find gold, took up land to plant vines.”³¹

In South Australia, George Fife Angas, British merchant, landowner, director of the South Australia Company, and in some circles referred to as “the Father and Founder of South Australia,” was one of these individuals.³² Angas threw “all his energy, business tact, and religious enthusiasm into the earlier efforts to found a colony in South Australia,” which was created as a slave-free, convict-free colony that would sell land in parcels to emigrant settlers.³³ When gold was discovered in Victoria in 1851, Angas commented, “The discovery of gold has turned our little world upside down.”³⁴ But it was also Angas who happened to “discover valuable mineral treasures in his extensive property, and leased the mines on advantageous terms to mining associations.”³⁵ This lucrative discovery allowed him to purchase a sizeable amount of property, which he used to plant his own vineyards, and to

rent out land to German immigrants, who would eventually do the same. Angas personally sponsored the immigration of many German winegrowing families to Australia, some of whom were Protestant, religious refugees.³⁶ He coordinated passenger ships, managed German missionaries to serve as intermediaries, and frequently utilized back channels in English and German politics to make such immigration possible. German communities flourished in the Adelaide Hills and Barossa Valley and included villages like Klemzig, Hahndorf, Lobethal, Bethany, and Langmeil (many of these became principal wine regions as well).³⁷ By 1862, government statistics recorded 8,863 German-born residents living in South Australia.³⁸ Many settled in the Barossa Valley, which by 1911, was called the “The Australian Canaan.”³⁹ This characterization indicated the Barossa Valley’s place as a “promise land” for religious refugees and viticultural prosperity, and demonstrated how Angas’s role in South Australian colonization also created a substantial base of small-scale German winegrowers. Thus, Angas’s participation in the mining of minerals also contributed to broader capitalist transformation of the South Australian winegrowing industry through migration of future winegrowers and land settlement.

Within the Barossa Valley, in the village of Angaston (named for Angas), Samuel Smith built a small wine cellar that he would call Yalumba in 1849.⁴⁰ Smith had migrated with his family from England to Australia two years prior. In the “early days,” the Smiths journeyed 400 miles to drill holes in the gold mines of Ballarat and Bendigo, Victoria, which ultimately yielded financial success.⁴¹ As May Vivienne, a visitor to South Australia commented, the seventeenth hole “struck rich” and yielded Smith gold in “sufficient quantities to make him and his family rich beyond the dreams of wine-culture.”⁴² But it was precisely the dreams of viticultural success that framed Smith’s investment in and establishment of S. Smith & Sons family wine company, demonstrating that without substantial upfront capital or outside investments, colonial winegrowing was nearly impossible. By 1891, on a visit to Yalumba, Robert H. Caldwell observed “two large open cement troughs, capable of holding about 1,500 gallons each.” The cellars were “well arranged” and the ports of “high excellence.”⁴³ Moreover, Fred Smith, of S. Smith & Sons, wrote to the *Australian Vignerons* in February 1892 to report that he was hosting British colonists from India for four to five weeks and felt this would eventually result in more settlement and investment in the Barossa Valley.⁴⁴ Thus,

Smith's viticultural empire also sought to attract even future financial investment for the colony. Most significantly, however, was Fred Smith's interest in the wine export overseas, specifically to Britain, which he considered a mechanism of "knitting the great dependencies and independent Colonies to the Mother Country."⁴⁵ He advocated for an increase in tariffs on non-imperial goods, which he felt would "vastly simulate" the planting of fruit trees and grape vines.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most prominent example of viticultural capitalists in Australia was Thomas Hardy, the English-born settler from Devon, who arrived at the colony of South Australia in August 1850. He initially worked as a farm labourer for John Reynell, the earliest vigneron in South Australia, where Hardy tended sheep, cattle, and the vineyard.⁴⁷ Reynell's farm also actively relied upon systems of white and nonwhite agricultural labour, including the use of Aboriginal Australians in grape harvests.⁴⁸ After six months of work at Reynella, Hardy moved to Cudlatiyunga Station in the southern end of the colony for higher wages and proximity to family.⁴⁹ It would be not long after this move, however, that Hardy would leave for the gold mines of Victoria. While the details of his departure are uncertain, it was reported that he emerged from the mines "with a fair amount of success."⁵⁰ Hardy accumulated money to also establish a successful butchering business, which profited from the large market of hungry miners.

While it is also unclear how much wealth Hardy acquired from mining speculation and meat production before he returned to South Australia in 1853, it was enough to purchase land along the River Torrens, outside of Adelaide, where he began to plant grape vines. Hardy produced his first vintage at Bankside Winery in 1857, and he sent two hogsheads to England, illustrating his early interests in the export market. By 1863, Hardy produced 1,500 gallons of wine and bought more land, extending his vineyard to thirty-five acres. By 1866, his winery operations boasted five cellars and a storage facility able to hold 20,000 gallons of wine.⁵¹ In 1878, Hardy expanded his properties again by purchasing Tintara Vineyards and, less than a year later, bought and converted a flour mill in McLaren Vale into a "wine manufactory" so that he might purchase grapes from his neighbours to press into wine.⁵² In that same year, the vintage produced about 60,000 gallons of wine and required the employment of eighty people.⁵³ Such growth incentivized Hardy to erect a four-story building on Currie St. in downtown Adelaide as a depot for wine distribution in 1881, which by 1889 held 400,000 gallons of wine.⁵⁴ By 1893, Hardy and his three

sons formed a partnership company, called Thomas Hardy & Sons, Ltd. Their empire had enlarged to the point that they were purchasing many of the grapes from small vineyards across South Australia to produce their own brand of wines, including grapes from Reynella, the farm that had given him his initial start.⁵⁵ Hardy's success reveals the importance of upfront capital—provided in this case by the mineral revolution—and consistent reinvestment into land and winemaking operations. He was also a major proponent of pushing the export market to Britain.



Figure 4.1. Thomas Hardy Wines on Display at Exhibition. Source: Hardy's wine display, exhibition, 1912. State Library of South Australia, Searcy Collection, PRG 280/1/6/167.

Australian producers and merchants knew the export market of wine was crucial, acknowledging that they did not possess a widespread demand for wine consumption at home. There was an interest in exporting Australian wines to China, India, and Japan, where “the value of the outlet to viticulture in these colonies would be considerable.”⁵⁶ The interest in Britain as the target consumer audience, however, rested on the racial and cultural ties to white colonists in England. This falls well into what Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre has called “close cultural bonds” between Britain and Australia.⁵⁷ The 1880s and

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Figure 4.2. View of Thomas Hardy and Sons Limited Wine Manufacturing (pictured right) on Currie Street in Downtown Adelaide, South Australia
Source: Currie Street, 1936. Photographed by Jack Riatta. State Library of South Australia, Adelaide Views Collection, B 69010.

1890s were a moment of great expansion for South Australia wine, with major merchants like P. B. Burgoyne & Co. and W. W. Pownall handling exports of wine to London.⁵⁸ In 1901, out of the 800,000 gallons of Australian wine sent to England, 550,000 gallons were handled by Burgoyne & Co. directly, meaning that one merchant firm was responsible for importing nearly two thirds of all Australian wines to England.⁵⁹ Burgoyne & Co. once even filled “an order from Her Majesty the Queen for a supply of red and white Australian wine,” demonstrating both that his marketing of the commodity had reached the dining table of the monarchy and that the empire could be promoted through the monarchy in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁰

Hardy’s capital acquired from mining speculation was foundational to the creation of his viticultural domain. But he also used his financial prominence to invest in “wine tours” overseas that were crucial in his personal success and the wider development of Australian wine. As a British colonist, Hardy possessed certain privileges, which, as Brian Galligan states, “included a certain status and various entitlements that flowed from membership in a global empire, especially for those who could afford to travel and engage in more cosmopolitan activities.”⁶¹ He consistently travelled to Great Britain, as well as winegrowing regions throughout Europe, Africa, and the

United States. Hardy's financial wealth, which made these tours possible, allowed him to observe systems of labour, new technologies, and new techniques for growing grapes and making wine firsthand. This included observations of Chinese and other nonwhite labourers in Californian vineyards, which he subsequently reported on in many of his travel writings and monthly journal articles.⁶² Hardy turned the notes from his travels into books, with the intention of making the methods used abroad available to the growers at the local level in Australia.⁶³ Through features in agricultural journals and magazines, he relayed his observations in the most "practical" rhetorical form and established himself as an equal to educated viticultural experts. He valued the skills that could be acquired from spending extended periods of time in superior wine-producing regions and continually encouraged others to follow suit.⁶⁴ Such mobility, control, and access allowed him to become a trusted authority on all things relating to wine, which he leveraged to increase his political status in the colony.

The enlarged role of agricultural associations served to enhance the political influence of viticultural capitalists in the colony of South Australia. In 1887, a "newly reconstituted" South Australian Vinegrowers' Association (SAVA) was founded, which aimed to improve the colonial wine industry and secure overseas markets for their exports.⁶⁵ Their first meeting in March of 1888 prioritized lobbying political legislation favourable to the wine trade and encouraging foreign expertise to assist in local cultivation and production.⁶⁶ The association saw themselves as the intermediaries between local farmers and the colonial government and used their socioeconomic privileges to maintain this position of power. Not only did they carve out a political space for key viticultural capitalists in South Australia, but they also aided in the prevention of a phylloxera outbreak in the colony.

Because the insect invader phylloxera was discovered in Bendigo, Victoria, in 1877 — not to mention in hectares of vineyards across the world — it had become a constant concern in South Australia.⁶⁷ In an effort to be proactive, SAVA drafted the Phylloxera Bill, which would implement severe quarantine restrictions on all fruits and vegetables, tax winegrowers to create an insurance fund for potential vineyard eradication and compensation, and elect a governing board that would oversee and enforce these decisions. Hardy himself observed the phylloxera along his global travels, which motivated many of these political actions. As Government Viticulturist Professor A. J. Perkins (another avid wine traveller) remarked, "We insure our buildings, our

crops, our lives, why not our vineyards?"⁶⁸ The size of individual vineyards determined the number of votes in the election for governing board members, which many small winegrowers viewed as an affirmation of control of the industry by wealthy, elite, colonists.⁶⁹ This was telling even when the bill passed, as the provisional board consisted of Thomas Hardy and some of the most prominent viticulturists in South Australia at the time. The Phylloxera Board possessed a great deal of power as a nongovernmental body in that it maintained the ability to fine farmers up to fifty pounds for failing to report phylloxera or impeding inspectors.⁷⁰ Such stipulations, which maintained power and decision-making for the many in the hands of the few, were undoubtedly not always welcomed by small growers.

At a reading of the bill to the House of Assembly in August 1897, proponents "regret[ed] that it [had] not had a more cordial reception."⁷¹ Opponents described as "German vigneron in Tanunda," signed several petitions against the bill, citing the imposition of a taxation created by the wealthiest winegrowers in the colony.⁷² Other adversaries accused the leaders of the organization of pushing the Phylloxera Bill "for their own benefit."⁷³ While small growers felt they were disproportionately served, trade journals touted the bill as "an honest attempt of earnest businesslike self-reliant men to seek legislative sanction to provide in advance an insurance fund against the most terrible scourge which has ever attacked any single agronomical industry."⁷⁴ Thomas Hardy and other proponents of the bill dismissed any expressed concerns, arguing that if those who had signed the petitions "properly understood" the bill then "none of them would have signed the petition,"⁷⁵ suggesting that he, and his peers knew what was best for the entire winegrowing community. There was a two-year delay in the bill's passing, which occurred on December 31, 1899. The document was not signed at a legislative building but at the home of the late Dr. Christopher Rawson Penfold (another viticultural capitalist), a move emblematic of the creators' political and economic autonomy.⁷⁶

Despite these preparations, South Australia never had to compensate for phylloxera-destroyed vineyards, as the stringent quarantine regulations and surveillance by the Phylloxera Board ultimately prevented the introduction of the disease into the colony. Even today, South Australia remains one of the few regions in the world untouched by phylloxera. While in some respects, the passing of the Phylloxera Bill demonstrated the political clout that viticultural capitalists enjoyed in colonial spaces, it also revealed deeper-rooted tensions present between

small farmers and large-scale commercial producers. Agricultural organizations and major companies maintained a status quo of keeping rich white capitalist settlers, like the ever-romanticized Thomas Hardy, in positions of political and economic authority, and reaffirmed capitalist motivations to exact order over colonial environments.

Diamonds, Mines, and Wines of the Cape Colony

The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold in the Witwatersrand in the 1880s not only incited an industrial revolution, but in some regards equally “resuscitated the colonial economy.”⁷⁷ Historian Timothy Keegan argues that the economic opportunities of the mineral revolutions provided the necessary momentum for policies of conquest and capitalist expansionism.⁷⁸ The increased immigration and industrialization brought on by diamond and gold mining also precipitated the swift construction of railways, which facilitated faster transport of fruits and wines and ultimately “ordered” the native lands of the interior. The railway also created new opportunities for the sale of colonial wines, as passengers increasingly consumed it to pass time on board. Agricultural labourers of both “Coloured” and Indigenous African identity migrated from the Western agricultural provinces of the colony eastward to work in the mines.⁷⁹ At the Cape, the labouring population consisted of those from either of local Indigenous groups, descendants from colonial slavery, or migrants from neighbouring African colonies, and the racialized labour systems in place maintained low wages and poor working conditions in both the mining compounds and vineyard plantations. Mining compounds, supplying their workers with “dops” of alcohol multiple times throughout the working day, also eagerly absorbed the surplus production of Cape wines and brandies, which had for decades, failed to secure demand in foreign markets.⁸⁰

The mineral revolutions in South Africa produced settler capitalists of “new money,” who monopolized the trade by buying up multiple farms to establish their viticultural empires. These capitalists were, perhaps not coincidentally, *British* colonists. Politician and winegrower John X. Merriman was one of these capitalists, immigrating to the Cape Colony in 1849 with his parents from Britain at the age of eight. Merriman entered politics in 1869 and throughout his career served as a member of the Legislative Association, treasurer of the Cape Colony, the commissioner of lands, mines, and agricul-

ture, and eventually prime minister at the Cape. To supplement his bureaucratic income and using "capital gleaned from investment in mining companies and transport contracts,"⁸¹ Merriman bought the Stellenbosch wine farm Schoongezicht in 1892.⁸² To do so, however, Merriman drew on a well-rehearsed practice of employing government-subsidized prison labourers.⁸³ He employed nine to ten convict labourers from Elsenburg Convict Station.⁸⁴ These labourers were predominantly men of colour, who, according to Australian observers in 1904, were "controlled by warders armed with loaded rifles."⁸⁵ In his own words, Merriman claimed to supplement his vineyards with convict labour "owing to the absolute impossibility of getting reliable labourers."⁸⁶ It was from this operation that Merriman exported fruit to Covent Garden in London and produced high-quality wines.

Merriman once called the diamond "the staple which has given South Africa new life, and enabled it to enter on the course of material improvement," and it remains clear that he used his mining profits to reinvest and "materially improve" viticulture in the Western Provinces, an enterprise dominated by Afrikaner wynboers.⁸⁷ This attitude of British economic improvement was rooted in an ethnic chauvinism toward Cape Dutch winegrowers, who for years, had been denigrated by British settlers and missionaries as "the Bushmen of the English."⁸⁸ In a speech on "The Commercial Resources and Financial Position of South Africa" delivered to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1884, Merriman argued that language and civilization are inextricably linked to economic enterprise. He argued that the absence of "energy and enterprise" in the Dutch population at the Cape stemmed from "the dead weight imposed on the Dutch Boer by the difference of language, which prevents him from enlarging his ideas."⁸⁹ He even argued that the French Huguenots, who immigrated to the Western Cape in the late seventeenth century, bringing with them years of viticultural skills and experience "had their own mother tongue crushed out of them by the tyrannical rule of the Dutch East India Company."⁹⁰ To Merriman, speaking the English language meant absorbing English ideas and ways of thinking, which were far more industrious and civilized than Dutch experiences. Merriman suggested that it was up to growers and producers to make a better product in demand in the British market, which could be accomplished through experimentation and new methods. He even proposed the Cape should look to "our sister colonies in Australia, where capital and intelligence are devoted to this subject."⁹¹

Merriman's protégé Cecil Rhodes (both individuals would eventually serve as prime ministers of the Cape Colony), is perhaps the most notorious example of viticultural capitalists involved in mining. Arriving in Natal in 1870 at the age of seventeen to grow cotton, Rhodes eventually left after a short two years to "take his chances" on mining, though in this circumstance it was diamonds in Kimberley. In 1873, Rhodes took the £1,500 he made in speculation to buy claims in De Beers' mines, a process he repeated to acquire more and more stake.⁹² Rhodes quickly secured income from growing financial investments, including the notorious exploits of De Beers Mining Company, established in 1880. Though he had little exposure to winegrowing, Rhodes would prioritize securing economic and political power prior to his entry into the winegrowing world.

After returning from Oxford with a degree in 1881, Cecil Rhodes sought a career as an entrepreneur and a politician. In April 1881, he secured a seat as an elected member of Parliament in the Cape of Good Hope House of Assembly, serving under Prime Minister Sir Gordon Sprigg. Over the previous decade, Sprigg ignited tensions with a large population of Cape wynboers after repeatedly attempting to pass an excise tax on spirits produced from grapes. Rhodes catered to the political opponents of such a tax, cognizant that one third of Cape Parliament members represented districts where grape growing was the primary industry.⁹³ In his own words, Rhodes stated, "I represent a farming community. Yes, it is so; I have an interest in and represent farming."⁹⁴ The staunchest opponent to Sprigg's policies was Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, the editor of *De Zuid Afrikaan*, leader of the Afrikaner Bond political party, and eight years Rhodes's senior. In 1878, Hofmeyr formed the Boeren Beschermings Vereeniging (Farmers' Protection Society) to oppose Cape Governor Sprigg's excise taxes on wines, and a year later, won the political seat for Stellenbosch, one of the principal winegrowing regions in the colony. By 1883, Hofmeyr folded the Farmer Protection Society into the Afrikaner Bond political party, "emerging as the unquestioned leader."⁹⁵ Rhodes soon followed Hofmeyr's suit, advocating for protections and calling for repeals to excise taxes on locally produced brandies. He even wrote to colonial departments in London to reestablish preferential duties on Cape wines, which he felt was a crucial step in reorienting the wine industry to an export market.⁹⁶ In 1885, Hofmeyr and Rhodes's coalition successfully repealed the excise tax on Cape brandies and both were honoured by wynboers at a luncheon in Paarl.⁹⁷ Such support from

the Western Cape agricultural population ultimately secured Rhodes's political rise, culminating in his succession to prime minister in July 1890. This expedited political climb revealed the connections between winegrowing, capitalism, and mining.

Rhodes and Hofmeyr also "sought to restore to the Cape countryside the kind of reactionary personal rule that the master class had known under slavery."⁹⁸ This restoration of personal rule manifested through attempts to expand the authority of wynboers over their nonwhite labourers in an amendment to the Masters and Servants Act. Infamously referred to as the "strop bill," the amendment would effectively grant farm managers the right to flog their workers. In an 1889 Select Committee hearing, wine farmers adamantly insisted that they *needed* to use the "cat-o'-nine-tails" as a form of punishment. Farmer P. J. Kruger stated, "I think the cat-o'-nine-tails is the best instrument, and the man can never be injured with it as with another instrument."⁹⁹ Such testimony was not unlike the justifications for whipping enslaved workers with similar devices in the years prior to emancipation. What it boiled down to, as the interview of Magistrate A. Douglas suggested, was that "a master must use a different mode of dealing with those [native] servants than if he had European servants."¹⁰⁰ Rhodes and Hofmeyr, along with the entire Afrikaner Bond party, supported the "strop bill" and while the bill never passed, the political alliance between the two men¹⁰¹ was widely celebrated by wynboers across the colony. Rhodes's participation was not simply strategic political cooperation with wine farmers; it was also rooted in fully fledged racist convictions. In his own words, Rhodes felt that Black labourers in South Africa were "children ... just emerging from barbarism," and that white colonists needed to "maintain their position as the supreme race."¹⁰² This political collaboration affirmed the nascent violence within Cape vineyard labour and cemented Rhodes as a historical oppressor of nonwhite peoples.¹⁰³

Like the case of Australia, the gold and diamond rushes of South Africa equally lured immigrant labourers from parts of Asia. On a visit to the Cape in 1880, John Nixon commented on the wide variety of labourers seeking work on construction and canal projects, including white, Malay, Chinese, and Black South Africans.¹⁰⁴ As Rachel K. Bright has documented, "numerous Chinese drifted into factories, railway construction, and farm work (where continual labour shortages and the prevalent misconception that Asian labour was cheaper meant they were always desired by a few)."¹⁰⁵ However, in a meet-

ing of the Stellenbosch Fruit-Growers' Congress in 1900, the "bulk" of speakers "strongly opposed importation [of labour], the most emphatic protesters being those who had seen Chinese labour in California and elsewhere."¹⁰⁶ The winegrowing world was quite small, and so ideas about cultivation, production, and consumption of wine, and the persons employed in doing so, spread quickly. John X. Merriman addressed labour concerns in a meeting with the members of the Stellenbosch Fruit-Growers' Association in 1897, stating that "coolie" labourers — which he defined here as "natives of India, China, and Japan" — "are obviously convenient, but as colonists they are objectionable." Merriman claimed to object to Asiatic labour on "social rather than on economic grounds."¹⁰⁷ In the eyes of Merriman, and other colonial petitioners, Chinese labour was a direct threat to white colonization and settlement. Low wages paid to Chinese labourers by European companies only reinforced their presence as a "collective threat" to European labour.¹⁰⁸

Thus, while Cape winegrowers conceived of Chinese immigrants as a cheap, controllable labour force, they struggled with the thought of incorporating nonwhite peoples into colonial society, especially given the African majority in the Cape Colony. Ulrike Linder points out this contradiction, stating, "While European companies, planters, and many colonial experts ... wanted to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalized Asian migration, local colonial administrations and settlers often insisted on maintaining a strict policy of regulation, which was strongly associated with anxieties related to racial difference."¹⁰⁹ In other words, while winegrowers considered the employment of Chinese labourers in their vineyards, based on racially conceived stereotypes about them as workers, they could not reconcile the incorporation of such a growing population as a settled community. Moreover, the continued reliance on Coloured and Indigenous labour in the vineyard reinforced the conceptions of white master to Black servant.

Like Thomas Hardy, Rhodes also became very involved in the response to the invasion of phylloxera in Cape vineyards, which began in 1886. He advocated for adoption of the only known "solution" to phylloxera: the grafting of grape vines to phylloxera-resistant rootstocks from the United States. Moreover, he suggested that the colonial government send wynboers to institutions in Europe to learn about phylloxera eradication and best practices for cultivation and production.¹¹⁰ These measures mirrored Hardy's interest in looking beyond

the colonies for viticultural knowledge. From 1890, Rhodes also petitioned the government to pay wine farmers three times the amount the British government had deemed appropriate for compensation of destroyed vineyards by phylloxera.¹¹¹ In an effort to merge his support from Western Cape wynboers, “disarm Bond antagonism to Kimberley and diamond profits,” and support the burgeoning rail network with cash crops, Prime Minister Rhodes also delved into entrepreneurial agriculture of his own accord.¹¹² He even recommended that fruit farms be established along the new rail lines to increase productivity. Seeing agriculture as an important foundation to empire, Rhodes as prime minister sought to bolster its profits. He established the Cape Department of Agriculture, implemented government schemes for scientific agriculture, and established government farms.

In 1897, Rhodes hired Harry Ernest Victor, who had experience in Canadian and American fruit growing, to serve as an extension agent and purchase farms throughout the Western Cape. Rhodes bought twenty-nine farms around the winegrowing areas of Stellenbosch and Paarl worth £250,000, planting 250,000 fruit trees and over 500,000 vines.¹¹³ The establishment of Rhodes Fruit Farms, as Pamela Scully writes, “confirmed the ‘invasion’ by capitalist agrarian entrepreneurs.”¹¹⁴ While some small-scale wine farmers tried to challenge Rhodes’s monopolistic acquisitions, many were too financially depressed from the ravages of phylloxera in the 1890s to put up a fight.

Similar to Thomas Hardy, whose privileges as a British colonist allowed him to travel across borders, visit distant winelands, and observe the latest in winemaking methods, Rhodes sought to incorporate outside expertise. He brought in “expert” growers from Britain and the United States, imported new vines and machinery, and integrated new methods of cultivation. Like Hardy, Rhodes had the financial capital to support his viticultural interests. In 1902, Rhodes brought in De Beers Consolidated Mines as a shareholder to his fruit farms, estimating the new partnership could support the cultivation of 778,000 grape vines, reaffirming the relationship between the mineral revolutions and the Cape wine industry.¹¹⁵ Eventually Rhodes entrusted the management of the vineyards to “an energetic nurseryman with California experience,”¹¹⁶ and the viticultural labour to exploited Coloured workers — not unlike his winegrowing counterparts in the Western Cape and his own diamond mines in the East. Rhodes even constructed a worker’s village for his fruit farms aptly



Figure 4.3. View of Black Labourers Planting Trees on Cecil Rhodes' Fruit Farm "Blauw Vlei," located in Wellington, Western Cape. Source: View of Labourers planting trees on Cecil Rhodes's fruit farm, "Blauw Vlei" in Wellington. Undated. Western Cape Archives and Records Service, AG 7483.

named "Languedoc" (after the French wine region) to house primarily Coloured labourers.¹¹⁷ Photographs of Cecil Rhodes's wine farms reveal the presence of the men, women, and children of colour, who laboured under the violence of white overseers and enabled these massive, consolidated vineyards to produce export goods.¹¹⁸ Like Hardy, Rhodes kept his attention on exports of his fruit and wines to the London market, much to the chagrin of his skeptics, who felt that the British were not "a fruit-consuming people."¹¹⁹

Like in Australia, the socioeconomic power of viticultural capitalists at the Cape manifested in the form of wine and brandy companies. By the twentieth century, there were several vineyard companies in place at the Cape. In 1908, there were eight vineyard companies in operation, constructed with the combined capacity to hold 1.5 million gallons of wine.¹²⁰ Groot Drakenstein Vineyards Company was one of these eight, and could hold 125,000 gallons of wine alone. Management of this company professed that their ultimate goal was not just to improve Cape wines but to induce "some form of cooperation, in which the neighbouring growers will participate to their own benefit and to the lasting benefit of the industry."¹²¹ In this sense, regional companies producing in one central winery strove to improve the rep-



Figure 4.4. View of the Vineyard on Cecil Rhodes' Fruit Farm, "Weltevreden," located in Groot Drakenstein, Western Cape. Source: View of vineyard on Cecil Rhodes's fruit farm, "Weltevreden." Undated. Western Cape Archives and Records Service, AG 7489.

utation of colonial wines with more consistent quality products. The Cape Town Wine Export Syndicate, for example, was interested in "improving the wine culture and resuscitating the wine industry of the Colony by purchasing wines manufactured upon improved principles and exporting them to Europe and other foreign markets."¹²² Of the twenty-five member signatures, two included none other than Cecil Rhodes and Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr.

The participation of these elites in agricultural associations in South Africa was just as consequential as in Australia. The Cape Colony's United Vine and Fruit-Growers' Congress, formed at the turn of the twentieth century, was an explicitly political organization, convened to improve the colonial wine industry. The congress involved itself in the consumption of wines by "natives" and Coloured labourers, an act which confirmed how the settler capitalists might exercise control over the nonwhite populations.¹²³ It also appointed a committee to examine "a licence apart from the ordinary licence for the sale of Cape wines only; to grant bonuses for wine exported; to introduce a wine-adulteration bill on the lines of the bill adopted by Victoria; and means and ways to assist the formation of co-operative wineries."¹²⁴ The committee's first charge, lobbying the colonial government to

pass beneficial licensing agreements, defined the congress as a political organization. The monetary bonuses would incentivize Cape wine farmers and merchants alike to look *outward*, rather than relying on subpar products intended for domestic consumption. Looking to a sister Australian colony for comparison on wine adulteration bills reiterated the proximity of wine-producing colonies in the imperial commonwealth, the argument being, if Australia can export wine to Britain in significant numbers, why can't we?²¹²⁵ The politicization of agricultural organizations, coupled with Rhodes's own individual political career, highlighted the social and political powers benefitting the viticultural capitalists in South Africa, typically at the expense of the colony's nonwhite and Indigenous inhabitants.

Conclusions

This article has shown how the emergence of viticultural capitalists transformed the British colonial wine industries in South Africa and Australia. The restructuring of colonial lands themselves, into consolidated, large-scale operations with neatly ordered rows of vines, altered the environmental landscapes of formerly small wine farms. This connected the drastic environmental and economic upheavals of the mining districts to reconfigurations in the rural colonial spaces. The increased reliance on centralized wineries ran by fully funded companies made it financially possible to adopt new technologies and hire expert winemakers to produce consistent, high-quality wines in large quantities. Political influence utilized by these viticultural capitalists resulted in legislation that would protect winegrowers at home, promote their products overseas, and dispel a global vine disease. Such legislation, however, also kept small-scale growers at a disadvantage and, more importantly, preserved coercive conditions that left labourers of colour in positions of violent subordination. These were all instrumental in colonial wine's development. Such restructuring would be critical in the future of South African and Australian wine in the twentieth century.

When the lustre of gold faded, capitalist expansion necessitated diversification and reinvestment — in this case, to an industry producing a luxury product: wine. By following the money and, in this article, its handlers, the case studies of Thomas Hardy and Cecil Rhodes emphasize the entangled processes of mining speculation, wine production, and political power. The viticultural capitalists in

this story existed as a brand of settlers who relied on their privileges as white, British colonists to extract financial capital from mining and contribute to an industry that exploited racialized systems of labour to acquire economic profit. It is true that these two individuals participated in the colonial wine industries to varying degrees, with Hardy gaining economic and political power from his wine empire, and Rhodes using such power to preserve interests for wynboers and eventually pursue winegrowing himself. Their case studies provide a useful starting point for further historical examination of racial capitalism in Britain's winegrowing empire.

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de connaissances pratiques et scientifiques entre l'Afrique, l'Australie, l'Europe et les Amériques à l'ère de la mondialisation. L'insecte phylloxera offre une occasion importante d'examiner l'agentivité d'acteurs non humains et de suivre la mobilité du matériel et des logiciels dans des contextes culturels. Ce projet donne la priorité à l'histoire des acteurs locaux, dans un cadre comparatif, avec des implications impériales et mondiales. Ses recherches portent sur l'histoire coloniale, l'histoire du travail et l'histoire des sciences et de l'environnement.

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- 82 List of Principal Cape wine farmers, 1903, Agricultural Papers (hereafter AGR) 682-35, WCARS. See also Lars Olsson, “Capital, Market, and Labour in the Western Cape Winelands, c. 1900: Agricultural Capitalism?,” *International Social Review* 63, no. 1 (2018): 37. The original vineyard was called Rustenberg and dated back to 1682. In 1800, Rustenberg was divided by its owner Jacob Eksteen, with one portion given to his son-in-law, who named it Schoongezicht, from the Dutch meaning a “beautiful sight.” The vineyards fell into a state of disrepair and disease until 1892, when Merriman and his brother-in-law bought both Schoongezicht and Rustenberg.

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- 90 Merriman, "Commercial Resources," 8.
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- 96 Speech made at Paarl, April 23, 1891, in Vindex, *Cecil Rhodes*, 280.
- 97 J. H. Hofmeyr, *The Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr (Onze Jan)* (Cape Town: Van de Sant de Villiers Printing, 1913), 268.
- 98 Wayne Dooling, *Slavery, Emancipation, and Colonial Rule in South Africa* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007) 215.
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- 101 In a letter, Hofmeyr referred to Cecil Rhodes playfully as "a regular beefsteak John Bull Englishman." See Hofmeyr, *Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr*, 376.
- 102 "On Second Reading of Glen Grey Act in Cape House of Parliament, July 30, 1894," in Vindex, *Cecil Rhodes*, 372–83.
- 103 The Glen Grey Bill of 1894 is another example in which Cecil Rhodes aligned with the Afrikaner Bond party and Western Cape winegrowers. Rhodes refused to close any canteens selling to Indigenous Africans or

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- 105 Bright, *Chinese Labour*, 131.
- 106 "Horticulture: Fruit Growers' Congress," *Agricultural Journal for Department of Agriculture, Cape of Good Hope* 16 (Jan-June 1900): 678.
- 107 Circular addressed to the Members of the Stellenbosch Fruit Growers' Association.
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- 109 Ulrike Lindner, "Indentured Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa (1880-1918): Circulation of Concepts Between Imperial Powers," in Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf et al., eds., *Bonded Labour: Global and Comparative Perspectives (18th–21st century)* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 78.
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