

## SEMIOTIC VINIFICATION AND THE SCALING OF TASTE

Michael Silverstein

In contemporary life in the First World, people orient to commodities such as edibles and potables through normative cultural schemes that inform and shape their perception of the qualities thus rendered salient. In such terms they classify, categorize, and come to judge the good from the bad—not only the things they ingest but as well those they wear, drive, or make use of in other ways in their daily lives, and even, I suggest, those personae they vote for or vote against.

Wine in particular, among potables, has long ranged across many modes of judgment that differentiate categories of consumers. At one position in a space of use-value, it is a consumable commodity, whether accompanying food or not, a beverage providing the enjoyment of shared sociality, of (generally) mild inebriation, of sophistication, and sometimes of occasion. It is poised, along with wine-derived spirits, as an alcoholic beverage between beer and so-called hard liquor, which contrast along one or more of these dimensions of use-value. At another, more rarefied position of use-value, wine is less a beverage commodity and more an object of aesthetic valuation, of connoisseurship even. But even at the other extreme, something of the fact of the aesthetics of wine has long given it its contrastive position with respect to other potables—a position from which, and in the image of which, those involved with each of these other commodities have increasingly sought to duplicate a space of comparably distributed use-values.

Thus, the emergence of microbreweries of connoisseur-worthy artisanal beers and ales, and the emergence of microdistilleries of connoisseur-worthy gins, vodkas, (scotch) whiskies, bourbons, rye whiskies, and so on—all have come to be framed by an efflorescence of winelike semiotic activities. The process of creating these parallel spaces *in the image of wine*—a metaphorical or citational (cf. Nakassis this volume) vinification, to be sure—resituates these other commodities and transforms the overall envelope of institutionalized, connoisseurship-anchored taste, bringing new, intersemiotically structured nodes of consumer experience into this network. It also, I maintain, reanchors new prestigious and prestige-conferring commodities in the enveloping political economy of stratified consumption—that is, consumption bespeaking one's position in a stratified political economy.

Key to how this dynamic of reimaginative assimilation operates is the spread of the semiotic means provided to the consumer for engaging with things brought close to and especially into the human body, the very senses and naturalized aesthetic sensibility of which are mobilized to and in acts of judgment. In such judgment, language is central, in the form of what I term an aggressively cultivated *register effect*. Spreading like vines to encompass multiple foci of connoisseurship, it creates a scaled-up envelope of interdiscursivity (Silverstein 2005, 2013) in and by the process of semiotic vinification.

#### SEMIOTIC EVENTS AND INTERSEMIOTIC NETWORKS IN JUDGMENTS OF TASTE

In contemporary mass social formations, any semiotic event—for example, an event of verbal communication or any other social transaction—occurs within a phenomenal context defining its particular mode of social locatability. For example, we can recognize the primordial, spoken, face-to-face conversational dyad of interlocutors in bodily copresence; or the group-defining, web-mediated broadcast distribution (simultaneous or over an interval of availability) of pixelated text to multiple receivers' terminals; and as well the generalized circulation of commodities to a mass category of users through distribution sites like stores. Yet socioculturally considered, each such “local” event occurs and has effect only because it is linked by form and significance to other semiotic events as one site or node in which or at which intersect multiple networks—tendrils or vines—of connection to other semiotic events. Many such networks intersect in any particular event, of course. Each inscribes its own implied, if perhaps not locally experienced, order of chronotopic framing,<sup>1</sup> suggesting the dimensions of an immanent sociological envelope of its own making. In this way, analytically, we can see how particular sign-mediated events, multiply connected one to another in an encompassing socio-space-time, are rendered meaningful as instantiations of systems of values. Social institutionality in particular—such as the practices in the world of

wine—exists in this duplex chronotopic order: semiotic forms emergent at particular sites of social interaction (with their own local chronotopic character as events) are endowed with significance for social actors insofar they orient to and/or contest immanent normative defaults established in the implied chronotope of multiply interdiscursive socio-space-time.<sup>2</sup>

Every encompassing social formation of which social scientists (and laypersons) speak—think of “the state,” “capitalism,” “kinship”—is such a socio-spatiotemporal envelope manifest through events connected intersemiotically and thus implying chronotopic networks of social practice. Thus, to make visible this more abstract scalar order of institutionalized social life—here I concentrate on the contemporary, particularly North American (and Anglophone), cultural order of prestige comestibles—we must start within some genre of event-bound semiotic practice and attempt to trace its connections to other semiotic practices, both those that seem to have intersected in it so as to license it and give value to its semiotic forms, and those that it has come mutually to license and to valorize at a growth-edge of emergently grafted chronotopy. This brings me to the matter of wine itself.

Working on the semiotics of linguistic registers thirty years ago led me to discover that, indeed, *in vino veritas*; there is at least semiotic “truthiness” in wine—or at least a certain important culturally revelatory quality in the register of language in which American English speakers have learned to talk about it.<sup>3</sup> I dubbed the register *oinoglossia*, or “wine talk.” Understanding this phenomenon will help us recognize a general semiotic process that is all around us: how the generally verbally conveyed assertive projection of *qualia*—value-laden qualities or properties of things/people/experiences (see Chumley and Harkness 2013; Harkness 2015)—as discerned and communicated through verbalized assessment, further entails, via verbal enregisterment, a reciprocal positioning in social space of the one who discerns and communicates such *qualia*. This is true whether within a chronotopic envelope already established or one being created in and by this very enregisterment of judgment.

Our descriptions of things/people/experiences in the first instance index—they presume upon—the existence of shared conceptual schemes of *qualia*, differentiable values in quality-spaces (some even scaled) made relevant to the context of judgment in and by the act of evaluation or assessment. One’s description places the referent in a field of other entities all belonging to a relevant universe of differentiated, sometimes explicitly dimensionalized—even graded or scaled—value: “large, extra-fancy” versus [uncharacterized other] apples, or “plum” versus “beefsteak” tomatoes at the greengrocers;<sup>4</sup> “well-marbled” (“prime”) versus “lean” (“choice”) beefsteak at the butcher shop. The description-as-thought/communicated presumes upon (indexes) the existence of that which it evaluates in its relevant quality-space(s). But in and by this act of evaluating-by-describing, there is a counterdirectional (as I term it) “second order” indexical process (Silverstein 2003) that indicates—that “performs” or constructively entails—one’s very identity as an

evaluator so as to affirm or call into question one's license or claim to authority to construe what one is perceiving and about which communicating a judgment.<sup>5</sup>

Aesthetic response to, and in particular developed connoisseurship of, everything from plastic and graphic art to viniferous art has long been recognized in Euro-American ideologies of human "faculties" and their perfectibility; thus, not surprisingly, they are deeply anchored in institutions of our political economy of social stratification and prestige. The late Pierre Bourdieu, taking a cue from decades of nondisinterested market researchers, developed this point in *Distinction* (1984). It is important to see, however, that such a relationship is a dynamic emergent of a semiotics of enregisterment, of much, much wider and more fundamental nature in our contemporary sociocultural condition. It has been spreading or circulating in an ever more encompassing chronotope of its own making, seemingly emanating from oinoglossia and its descriptive object, spreading to an analogously "vinified" semiotics of register fashioned for describing other realms of comestible consumption. In turn, these come to presume upon quality spaces in wine's image as affordances of identity-conferring connoisseurship that can as well be communicatively performed.

One should note as well that this luxuriant growth of "vinification" frequently seems, to those inside the phenomenon, to depend directly on the human sensorium, rather than on multiple institutional orders that stabilize the semiotics of evaluational judgments and their reciprocal effects of positioning the judges. Here we claim the centrality of institutional processes of enregisterment to the upscaling of scaled-up regimes of commodity value, the tendrils of oinoglossia having crept into talk about such consumables as coffee, chocolate, beer, spirits, and so on. This growth means not only that winelike quality spaces have been extended and elaborated for an increasing number of comestibles but also that those who consume such comestibles have ever more opportunity to, as it were, climb multiple vines to higher elevations. Endowed with their own "wine"-talk, once lowly, humble consumables are felt to undergo an elevation in cultural taxonomies of relative prestige. This allows for the parallel elevation of consumers in the distinct but parallel domain of consumptive class stratification so widely naturalized as refinement of the sensorium. Recalling the reciprocal indexical effects of enregisterment, we will come to appreciate how such homologies develop as ideological cultural concepts of how the scaling of consumables into emergently more and less prestigious categories relates to scaling of humans into higher and lower class strata.

### THE AESTHETIC TALK OF THE TOWN

The verbal phenomenon of oinoglossia itself is widely recognized. For people with a certain wide experience of English prose, it is the register of an unmistakable textual genre.

TABLE 8.1 A Wine-Tasting Note by Sir Michael Broadbent, Formerly of Christie's

---

First tasted in 1963. Surprisingly soft and lovely on the palate even in the mid-1960s but the nose curiously waxy and dumb, developing its characteristic hot, earthy/pebbly bouquet only latterly. Ripe, soft, lovely texture, but not as demonstrably or obtrusively a '61 as the other first growths. Fine, gentlemanly, understated.

---

SOURCE: Broadbent 1980.

Table 8.1 displays what we recognize as demonstrably and obtrusively a wine-tasting note—in fact, one of the thousands published in 1980 by Sir Michael Broadbent, whose evaluations had for many years set price for Christie's auction house. English speakers outside of the social fields where such discourse is the norm can recognize the special quality, the “fine, gentlemanly, understated” quality, we might term it, of this kind of language, but only a much smaller number can actually produce equivalent prose in the register that would make sense to professional and serious avocational insiders of wine connoisseurship.

As a kind of text, a genred organization of language, the well-formed wine-tasting note is highly structured. Its narrative line follows what connoisseurs understand to be the event-dimensions of aesthetic experience and evaluation that serially or temporally give structure to one's perceptual encounter with the obscure object of oenological desire.

As seen in figure 8.1, the aesthetic encounter with wine is itself conceptualized as a phased space-time of dimensionalities to be focused on in serial order. Along each dimension of perception, the qualities—the qualia—that characterize the current object of evaluation can be denoted by using one or more from among a taxonomy of contrasting descriptors for that perceptual field, whether ready-to-mind simple words from the expert's lexicon or more complex phraseological expressions built around them. As is the case for so many areas of connoisseurship, such descriptions, as well, comparatively locate the current particulars in each of the phases of wine-as-experienced in relation to other occasions of comparable experience; one may have experienced this particular named wine in a different vintage or phase of its bottle life, or with other named wines one has encountered. Through such accumulated familiarity one can conceptualize a whole sensorial universe of possibilities aggregated across evaluational dimensions within which the characteristics of any one wine or any category of wines can be differentially imagined and, through language, communicated. A structured hierarchy of qualia emerges for each phase of evaluation in multiple intersecting qualia-spaces with their own possibly conventionalized descriptors. As well, this wine—say, a red one now being tasted—can be comparatively described in relation to others of its point of origin (vineyard, producer, region, etc.) in different years of production; it can be compared to other named wines of its locale; compared to other red wines with

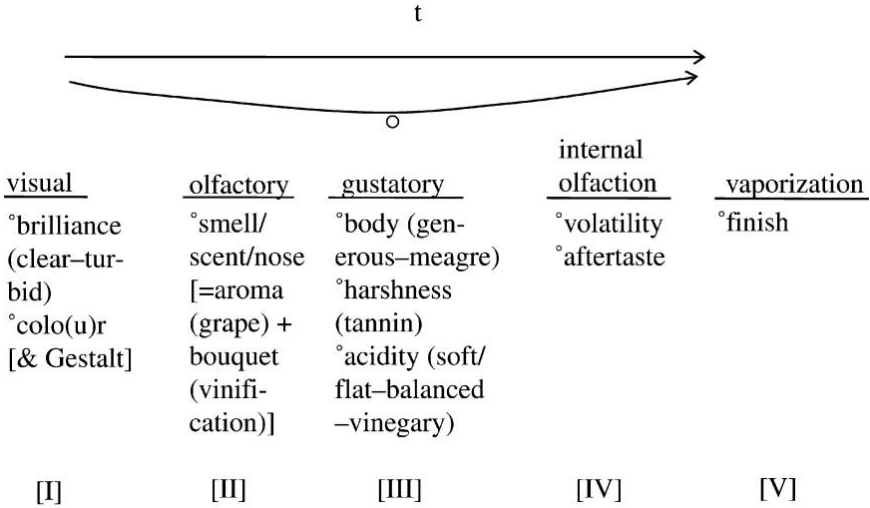


FIGURE 8.1. Evaluative dimensions of the serial phases of the aesthetic encounter with wine.

its predominant (or exclusive) grape type, no matter the locale of origin; compared to other red wines of other grape types; and so on.

A common mode of description is the use of multiple comparisons to other olfactory and gustatory sensations identified with substances other than wine—flowers that smell a certain way, fruits that taste a certain way, objects that give off pleasant or, as the case may be, unpleasant smells. (There is both a metaphorical or, as Peirce would note, an iconic predication involved in such comparisons, with wine the tenor, and the standard of comparison the metaphorical vehicle.) Another is a kind of ontogenetic identification of percepts with their presumptive origins in the production history of wine from vine to glass, such origins and developmental trajectories through time themselves contributing descriptive dimensions, such as one’s ability to discern in the beverage experience the pebbly soil in which the grapes had grown before harvesting and vinification as such began. (Imagine being able to discern what kind of chicken under what conditions produced the eggs in the omelet or soufflé you’ve recently eaten, just from its characteristics as a prepared foodstuff.)<sup>6</sup>

In fact, analysis of hundreds of such tasting notes allows us to organize in diagrammatic form what Sir Michael had to say about Château Haut-Brion, 1961, claret of the Graves district of Bordeaux, on tasting in November 1979. We can diagram the way the very orderliness of this “spontaneous” bit of English prose in fact follows its rigid structural pattern.

The diagram in table 8.2 separates on the right the phrases composed of the technical terms professionals use for each of the dimensions along which they evaluate the substance. For example, under stage II, *nose*, Broadbent was surprised

TABLE 8.2 Genre Structure of the Wine-Tasting Note of Table 8.1, Exemplifying Register Usage

Château Haut-Brion, 1961		
(A. Placement in history of acquaintance/connoisseurship)	First tasted in 1963.	
(B. Perduring characteristics of such occasions—summary note [stage III])	lovely	Surprisingly <i>soft</i> and on the <b>palate</b> even in the mid-1960s
(C. Tasting note per se) (II:)		but the <b>nose</b> curiously <i>waxy</i> and <i>dumb</i> , developing its characteristic <i>hot, earthy/pebbly bouquet</i> only latterly.
(III:)	lovely but not as demonstrably or obtrusively a '61  Gentlemanly, understated.	<i>Ripe, soft texture,</i>  as the other first growths. <i>Fine</i> [cf. <b>finesse</b> ],

to find the smell *waxy* and initially difficult to discern (*dumb*),<sup>7</sup> but later was reassured to experience the *hot, earthy/pebbly*-ness of the *bouquet* component of scent, the conditions of growth on hot, calcareous slopes presumably enhanced by the techniques of vinification of its particular grapes (merlot and cabernet sauvignon). As should be clear, there are what we term *taxonomies* of possibly discerned characteristics for each dimension through which the taster moves in cognizing the experience, among the members of which contrast-set at each phase or stage a taster distinguishes. A maximal note records values along all five phased dimensions, in their proper order; a more telescoped or minimal one generally concentrates on stage III, for which there are the most taxonomic differentiators, and perhaps as well stage II, since olfaction is so much a part of what is considered to be “taste” in the mouth.

Now, in addition to such highly organized technical terminologies of evaluative wine connoisseurship, there are other bits of prose, shown on the left of the textual diagram. These tend to be characterological, almost anthropomorphic, and bespeak, by their use, a kind of assumed social position on the part of the user we nowadays associate with the rarefied precincts of a now receding male preppy

and clubby culture in the city and, on weekends, with great estates and country clubs of toney suburbia and exurbia. My research reveals, however, that it is this vocabulary and these phrases that those who live socially distant from oenological pursuits actually identify as the shibboleths, the salient contributory elements, of the verbal register of wine talk, and about which there is the usual kind of class-associated anxiety peaking in the lower-to-mid-bourgeoisie—as is the case for many realms of connoisseurship. James Thurber catches this in his famous 1944 *New Yorker* drawing that pictures and quotes a dinner party host as he tastes the wine he has just served, noting for his guests, “It’s a naive domestic Burgundy without any breeding, but I think you’ll be amused by its presumption.” All of this talk is, as can be seen, characterological phraseology, all verbal material from the left-side of a would-be tasting-note diagram, to be sure. But it is richly communicative of the predicament of the anxious readership of would-be wine aficionados for whom Thurber’s joke still resonates. (There are still takeoffs of Thurber’s joke—interdiscursive *renvoi*, technically speaking—used in television sitcoms and other pop culture these days; recall the similar fate of Magritte’s “non-pipe” in his 1928–29 painting *La trahison des images*, parodied in visual text, even by its author, ever after. Both have become—to use the term—memes.)

And yet, this oinoglossic register continues to be the very medium of this particular area of connoisseurship, particularly at its professional peak top-and-center. Table 8.3 reproduces a couple of examples that came onto my desktop screen not long ago for a white wine from France’s Côte de Beaune region of Burgundy, Girardin’s 2007 Puligny Montrachet, Folatières.

The text genre and especially the register are unmistakable. We can render these two recent exemplars in precisely the same analytic framework as we were able to do with Sir Michael’s canonical prose.

Notice in the diagram<sup>8</sup> of the *Wine Advocate*’s tasting note in table 8.4 how remarkably active and agentive the aesthetic essence of the chemical substance seems to be, how almost like an encountered subject-alter in character to whom the taster develops an appreciative reaction! The aesthetic object presenting here “mingles” (active nomic); it is “vivacious” and “bright” in its brimming-ness; it “finishes with almost startling grip and tenacity”; and it “compensates for” what it seems to lack in the way of complexity. But it presents itself to us, as it were, phase by phase as a temporally organized aesthetic encounter through qualia-as-experienced: first in the *aroma* dimension “malt and toasted brioche” giving way to “sea breeze, fresh citrus, ripe white peach, floral perfumes.” Next, in the mouth it *tastes* of “primary fruit” and feels—its *texture*—“silken” on the tongue. And as it vaporizes as it is swallowed or expectorated, it still seems to be there, its *finish* in other words “tenacious,” in fact “startlingly” so. It’s an in-your-face wine, not a subtle one: full of “sheer energy and excitement” that makes up for lack—can you imagine, after all this verbiage!—of “complexity.” (Naive domestic burgundy, anyone?)

TABLE 8.3 Tasting Notes on 2007 Puligny Montrachet, Folatières

“93 out of 100. . . . Girardin’s 2007 Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières mingles aromas of malt and toasted brioche with sea breeze, fresh citrus, ripe white peach, and myriad floral perfumes. Vivaciously and brightly brimming with primary fruit, yet silken in texture and suffused with salinity and notes of toasted grain, this finishes with almost startling grip and tenacity. Anything it might lack in complexity today vis a vis the very best of the vintage it compensates for in sheer energy and in promise. Expect more excitement over the next 7–10 years.” —*Wine Advocate*

“93 out of 100. . . . Perfumed nose offers lovely lift to the aromas of flowers, violet and saline minerality. Juicy, stony and high-pitched, combining a strong impression of saline minerality with obvious chewy extract. Seriously sexy, precise wine, finishing vibrant and long.” —Stephen Tanzer

2007 **Puligny Montrachet, Folatières** (Girardin, Vincent) (750 ml)—\$49.50 per bottle

TABLE 8.4 Genre Structure of the *Wine Advocate* Wine-Tasting Note of Table 8.3, Exemplifying Register Usage

Overall Point Evaluation		93 out of 100. . . . Girardin’s 2007 Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières
II. Olfaction	mingles . . . with . . . and myriad . . .	<i>aromas</i> of malt and toasted brioche . . . sea breeze, fresh citrus, ripe white peach, . . . floral perfumes
III. Taste and Tongue-Feel	Vivaciously and brightly brimming with . . . and suffused with . . .	. . . primary fruit, yet silken in <i>texture</i> . . . salinity and <i>notes</i> of toasted grain
IV. Finish	. . . almost startling grip and tenacity	this <i>finishes</i> with . . .
Overall Comparison and Futurity	in sheer energy . . . more excitement . . .	Anything it might lack in <i>complexity</i> today vis a vis the very best of the vintage it compensates for . . . and in <i>promise</i> . Expect . . . over the next 7–10 years.

*Wine Advocate* on 2007 **Puligny Montrachet, Folatières** (Girardin, Vincent) (750 ml)

TABLE 8.5 Genre Structure of the Stephen Tanzer Wine-Tasting Note of Table 8.3, Exemplifying Register Usage

Overall Point Evaluation		93 out of 100
II. Olfaction	. . . offers lovely lift to . . .	Perfumed <i>nose</i> . . . the <i>aromas</i> of flowers, violet and saline minerality
III. Taste and Tongue-Feel	. . . high-pitched, . . . combining a strong impression of . . . obvious	Juicy, stony and . . . saline minerality with . . . <i>chewy extract</i>
(2) IV. Finish	. . . vibrant and . . .	<i>finishing</i> . . . long
(1) Overall Impression	Seriously sexy, precise . . .	. . . wine, . . .

Stephen Tanzer on 2007 **Puligny Montrachet, Folatières** (Girardin, Vincent) (750 ml)

The shorter note by Stephen Tanzer, too, as diagrammed in table 8.5, constructs an aesthetic object in waves of pleasurable sensation-inducing qualia as described in the rightmost column of my chart; it is so pleasurable an aesthetic object, apparently, as to render itself “lovely . . . high-pitched . . . vibrant . . . [and] seriously sexy!” One blushes to think of the even metaphorical tingling bodily reaction of the taster, and yet here we see illustrated the important notion that the event of tasting is an encounter with a virtually living structure of qualia—rendered into a verbal report—to which the sensitive, indeed, the hypersensitive aesthete responds with unmistakable affect, even emotion, all the while able to cognize, to verbalize, the experience.

If such tasting notes are truly authoritative—think of those of Sir Michael Broadbent or of the American Robert Parker of the *Wine Advocate*, eagerly sought out by aficionados—they become normative standards for other tasters to share the experience, indeed to *have* the experience *or at least to aspire to have it* in the same way and with the same degree of subtlety and multidimensional elaboration of a structure of qualia as the wine authorities manage to convey in their tasting notes published as beacons of aesthetic orientation for the wine-consuming public. The tasting note becomes a verbal component of a normative cultural schema for experiencing and enjoying the object of aesthetic contemplation. It authoritatively constructs that aesthetic object as one that will, in phases, reveal its dimensionalized qualia to the experienced sensorium of someone who purports to construe it, to interpret it with appropriate descriptive verbalization (whether thought to oneself or uttered or written).

Taken all together, the aggregated dimensions of evaluation, particularly considered against certain reference benchmarks for the qualia generally associated with type, terroir, vintage, and so on, give way to a summary judgment of aesthetic value in the instance, as in any field of connoisseurship. (“It’s definitely a Monet, but not a particularly good example of his production at the height of his imaginative and technical powers.”) The French government already in 1855 established an outline rubric of grades of distinction—first growths, second growths, and so on, they are termed—for the then notable château wines of the Bordeaux region (since expanded and revised). The concept of comparative ranking on various encompassing scales has widened and scaled up in all sorts of ways: scales of five degrees of distinction, scales of twenty degrees of distinction (though rarely does one see a number below twelve), scales of one hundred degrees, as in the *Wine Spectator* (where ratings below 80 are rare indeed, for why even note such products!). Speaking of scales, such evaluative numbers—“92 points”; “\*\*\*”—are prominently displayed in signage in a wide variety of retail outlets, perhaps along with some minimal tasting note, so that the would-be consumer encountering a new wine from afar need pay attention to nothing but the ratio of price to numerical rating to calculate against desired optimal value in advance of purchase of a bottle. Such a consumer wishes to trust the experts quoted by retailers, who have thus made it easy to drink by number.

## OUR REGISTERS, OUR SELVES

As a linguist, I am of course concerned with the forms and meanings of words and expressions by which people communicate with one another, in the instance about their experiences as users and judges of commodities. In such communication, even the same word form can be associated with many different conceptual schemes depending on degrees of socially recognized shared expertise; think of what we term the technical meanings of otherwise ordinary words, like lattice (algebra), or bouquet (wine tasting), and contrastively think of words even the forms of which are known only among those with certain technical knowledge, such as muon (particle physics) or climat (viticulture).

In effect, then, using a word or expression in a certain way in an event of evaluative communication frequently does double classificatory work. A word used in a certain descriptive way categorizes or classifies both things-in-the-denotable-world (whether “real” or fictive/imagined/theorized), to be sure; it indexes—makes immanently relevant in the communicative here and now—one or more schemata of qualia, as I have noted, of which the distinctive value is differentially signaled by that particular word or expression. But additionally, the particular differential application of the word at the same time reveals—it points to, or indexes—the social identity, the category of person, who would stereotypically invoke such a use of the word, aligning or figurating the user with respect to that category. This is an example of what, as adumbrated above, is a *dialectically duplex indexical register effect* built into the use of such linguistic material (an effect that is, by the way, universal in all known language communities).

Verbal registers, let us recall, constitute a particular kind of sociolinguistic fact.<sup>9</sup> For language, the idea is that there is a mode of folk consciousness (an ethno-metapragmatics) of “superposed” (Gumperz 1968, 383–84) indexical variability that posits the existence of distinct, indexically contrastive ways for a speaker to convey what counts as “the same thing”—that is, to communicate the same denotational content over intervals of text-precipitating discourse that differ as to their appropriateness to and effectiveness in conceptualized contexts of use. These contexts may be defined along any of the usual sociolinguistic or social anthropological dimensions describing who normatively communicates with what forms to whom about whom/what, where, and under what institutional conditions.

So registers emerge from the interaction of the inherent indexicality of linguistic form—how forms of language signal their contexts of use—and the very particular folk understanding of that indexicality as grasped by native speakers, who conceptualize indexicality as alternate ways of being able to communicate “the same thing” in more than one way. That is, for the nonsemiotician native speaker, using the proper register means representing or describing—referring to and modally predicating about—something in the usual sense, only with a sensitivity to the

message's appropriateness to and effectiveness in context, for which one chooses the "just right" linguistic form. For a semiotic like language *enregisterment*—the quality of being differentiated into registers—is organized around certain key *register shibboleths*, such that the overall compatibility of the other linguistic material in a text containing the shibboleth seems to guide native sensitivities to understanding what register the text is in. It is very much like the way the eye alights on certain parts or features of a painting before moving on to others that it tries to encompass in a single coherent whole, comprehended variously in generic, thematic, and stylistic modes. Here, in verbal communication, we seem to operate conceptually in terms of the indexical salience of the shibboleths that in the first instance enregister a text in which, then, the other forms of the message are evaluated for compatibility.

Language users thus evaluate discourse with intuitive metrics of coherence of enregistered features of form that co-occur across relevantly cohesive stretches, generally focusing on highly salient register shibboleths that reveal a basic register setting around which cluster other aspects of usage whether compatible or lacking compatibility.<sup>10</sup> "Standard" registers, too, within fuzzier margins of performance, set up a gradient of expectation for adherence and thus for indexical self-identification. One's usage is recognized as standard when marked by the coherent co-occurrence of a sufficient number of prescriptive standard shibboleths (English: use *he and I* in Subject position) and the nonoccurrence of the preponderance of proscribed nonstandard ones (English: don't use *him and me* in Subject position; never use *ain't*) under the cultural order of institutionalized standardization. Enregisterment of standards of this kind produces both a conscious and an unconscious anxiety in speakers about conforming to them. As William Labov's work of fifty years ago (1966, 1972) classically demonstrated, the acuteness of such anxieties also has a profile of social differentiation within the population comprising the language community. Linked to such demographic characteristics of speakers as socioeconomic class, ethnicity, age, and sex, speakers' orientation to—and hence anxiety about—use of standard register is a metasemiotic framework that gives indexical potency to the very prescribed and proscribed forms. They become guides for interpretation of who (sociologically speaking, what category or kind of person) is speaking and under what conditions of social context (sociologically speaking, at what site of using language where normative demands for inhabiting a role challenge the speaker to succeed in navigating these demands). A speaker successfully or not so successfully doing so places himself or herself within relevant orders of stratification.<sup>11</sup> Both registers as such and manifest orientations to/from such enregisterment thus socially position the people who use them in relation to those who take note of them.

Now, what is interesting about wine talk is certainly not its being a register phenomenon as such but the curious bidirectional and tiered, dialectical indexical

## The “Eucharistic” Quality of Qualia-fication

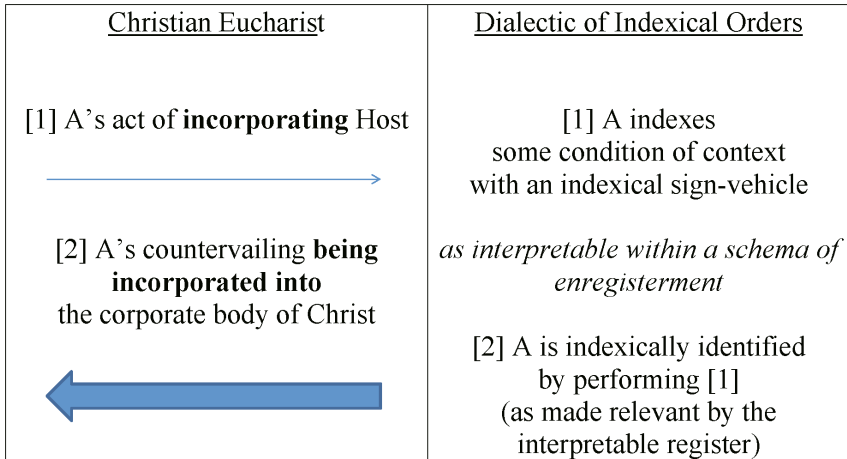


FIGURE 8.2. The “eucharistic” semiotics of aesthetic evaluative discourse.

character—I like to call it, appropriately enough for wine, eucharistic—of this kind of aesthetic and evaluational discourse, as shown in figure 8.2. For if, as we’ve seen, it is the case that, in using oinoglossic register in the well-formed, genred tasting note, one is engaged in an activity of *construal* of the aesthetic object, interpreting and ultimately evaluating it in terms of certain dimensions or qualities manifest to the discerning taster, one is, in and by this act of construal, at the same time performatively *constructing oneself*, making one’s social identity salient within the macro-order of prestige consumption. One is then not only characterizing the aesthetic object but also, in effect, placing or locating oneself socially with respect to a “community of practice,” those “in the know”—or not—about matters oenological within the complex intersection of institutionalized practices that bring the aesthetic object and the judging aesthete together.

To be sure, all discursive manifestations of so-called expert knowledge inevitably suggest both directions of such tiered indexicality (Cf. Carr 2010). In the aesthetic realms its deployment grounds the authority of professional or avocational connoisseurship. Expert discourse is denotatively *terminologized*: its lexical forms—its set words and expressions—as we’ve already seen, index specific points of conceptual distinction in the normative ontologies of such expertise; their use perspectively reveals how the world is structured so as to produce the referent one is differentially describing and thereby evaluating along its presenting dimensions.<sup>12</sup> Expert discourse is, furthermore, *genred*: one must use the words and expressions just so, in a highly policed cotextual organization of discourse,

coherently to communicate all the relevantly conceptualized dimensionalities of the object one is describing and how they interrelate in the expert ontological perspective. Thus, thinking and talking like—or, in varying modes and degrees of fault, unlike—an expert positions an individual, associating him or her with the societal places where experts ply their trade. Moreover, convincingly expertlike talk endows such an individual's views with a certain degree of authority in the particular realms of expertise, even by those who can do no more than identify that an expert register is in use.

This should remind us of Thurber's wine-serving and -evaluating host, who, no doubt socially situated far from the precincts of Sir Michael or Robert Parker or Stephen Tanzer, knows there is an oinoglossic register and perhaps genred discourse in it. He constructs his own "tasting note" to alert his guests to what they are about to imbibe, entirely out of the characterological fluff of the genre. It's an attempt at oinoglossic enregisterment at an anxious, if therefore somewhat bombastically snobbish, distance from the authorizing center of semiosis.

#### OINOGLOSSIA'S INSTITUTIONAL MATRIX—INTERSECTING CHRONOTOPES

Every encounter of a wine drinker and wine, and in particular every aesthetic-evaluative encounter of a wine taster and wine, exists within an abstract envelope projected by the fact that wine is an agricultural product rendered into a marketable cultural commodity at the retail level. There are multiple versions of wine's course from grape to enjoyed beverage that depend on, and result in locating it in, distinct segments and sectors of its ultimate retail market. Such alternative chronotopes are shaped by processes and operations that run along a cline from industrial agribusiness through degrees of artisanal and ultimately exquisitely artistic technique. Given these, as it were, multiple "biographical" trajectories of wine, institutional factors associated with one or more of the phases of its life apply to it according to, and determinative of, its various gradations, all intersecting to affect the way wine—and its drinkers—are classified and scaled.

One such institutional factor is that of applied science, in particular oenological and viticultural sciences such as geomorphology, soil and climate science, and botany, on the one hand, and on the other the organic chemistry of esters, aldehydes, and alcohols, and human psycho-physiology, sciences of olfactory and gustatory perception. A second shaping factor emerges from the institutions of aesthetic connoisseurship in the organized world of collecting, auctions, and "capital appreciation" of heirlooms and the like, central or peripheral in the cline ranging from the professional through the serious avocational to the rank amateur or even happenstance wine drinker. Yet a third arises in the institutional world of retail marketing of commodity circulation, in particular of so-called lifestyle

commodities—that is, personal-value-conferring commodities of domestic consumption, in some of which, for example, brand has become very important as an index of distinction. Each of these institutions, organized via networks of nodes of social practice, endows the experience of engaging wine and, in particular, of verbally engaging with it with a distinctive effect on enregisterment that has been spreading from wine to other comestibles.

First, from the applied science institution, anchored in organizational sites in schools of oenology and viticulture and industrial research laboratories, emerge guidelines on everything from horticultural interventions suitable to vines of particular ecologies to methods of maceration, vinification, blending, barreling, and bottling with specific biochemical (and ultimately aesthetic) goals and ends uppermost. At the receptive end of these processes, tasting can be seen as a kind of psychophysical response to the raw, biochemical data of empirical reality in ways that can be isolated and terminologically standardized by laboratory methods.

A particularly interesting and influential example is the “standard system of wine aroma terminology,” from the University of California, Davis, Department of Viticulture and Enology, as shown in figure 8.3. The circular visual array notwithstanding, it depicts the conceptual classification of aroma in the form of a taxonomy with three degrees of inclusive specificity, locating each ultimately terminologized aroma lexeme in a pie-shaped area at the circumference of the circle. Each of these specific lexical forms was operationalized in the laboratory with reference standards of olfactory percepts, based on putting certain precise amounts of some substance into a precise amount of a reference white wine in a covered test tube, waiting a precise amount of time, and then uncorking and smelling. The idea is to establish a reference standard for use of each of the descriptive terms. The center point of the circle represents undifferentiated aroma and the intermediate inner circle’s circumference labels clusters of aromas into affinity groups of what the researchers presume are substantively similar kinds.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly in the consumer environment of a trained and credentialed bourgeoisie (physicians, lawyers, business executives, academics, etc.), a class fraction in which serious wine tasting or at least interested consumption is notable, the suggestion is appealing that our olfactory sensoria respond psychophysically to aroma in much the same way as our visual sensoria respond to dimensions of hue, saturation, and brightness organized into a psychophysical perceptual space of what is commonly termed “color.” The human perceptual acuity for color is such that every non-color-blind human organism can differentiate somewhere in the range of  $7.5$  to  $10 \times 10^6$  j.n.d.s measured in the three-dimensional psychophysical color space of stimuli in the visible spectrum. Looking at the verbalizations of aroma in wine-tasting notes (such as the ones quoted above), it appears that people at the professional end of the wine-tasting cline experience waves of precise simultaneous and serial reactive olfactory percepts of the substance they are encountering.

# Research Note

## Modification of a Standardized System of Wine Aroma Terminology

A. C. NOBLE<sup>1</sup>, R. A. ARNOLD<sup>2</sup>, J. BUECHSENSTEIN<sup>3</sup>,  
E. J. LEACH<sup>4</sup>, J. O. SCHMIDT<sup>5</sup>, and P. M. STERN<sup>6</sup>

A modified version of the wine aroma wheel has been constructed to clarify and improve the proposed list of standardized wine aroma terminology. The order of terms has been reorganized to facilitate its use. Terms describing the "nutty" aromas in wine have been added. In addition, reference standards are suggested to define

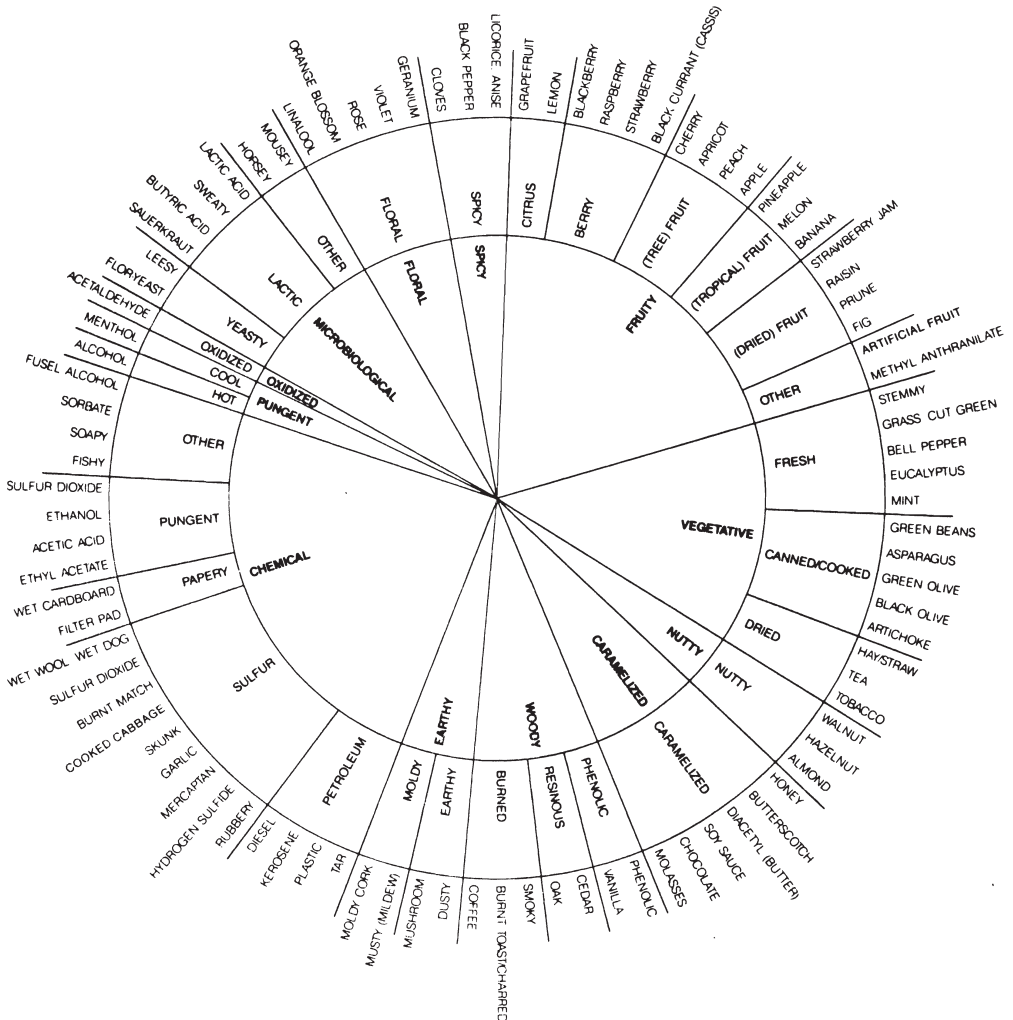


Fig. 1. Modified ASEV Wine Aroma Wheel showing first-, second-, and third-tier terms.

FIGURE 8.3. The "aroma wheel" of Noble et al. (1987).

So to the interested layperson in the target category of advanced-degreed consumers, the idea is inherently appealing that such degrees and admixtures of precise, verbally realized connoisseurship can in fact be substantiated by laboratory calibration. This was, in fact, the presentation of the aroma wheel in upscale print media, as scientific backing to the enregistered genre being inculcated by professionals through wine-tasting educational outreach. And, perhaps like colorimetric psychophysical training, one can, through guided practice, become a more acute and accurate perceiver of aroma as of other characteristics of wine. Such acuity or refinement of palate, in other words, could as well be confidently acquired as a kind of aesthetics backed by applied science—like acquiring an additional quasi-professional degree or certificate of aesthetic competence (compare art- or music-appreciation courses in secondary schools and colleges as opposed to studio art and music performance).<sup>14</sup>

The second institutional realm we should consider is aesthetic connoisseurship as such. The analogue is, of course, connoisseurship in plastic, graphic, and performance arts, and in matters of “collectibles” of all kinds with pasts and futures in chronotopes of fluctuations in value. There are professional connoisseurs whose expertise and judgment set price in the art and collectibles markets, and these people are valued for the subtlety of their judgment in discerning inherent aesthetics, historicity, and so on, and in projecting stable or volatile futurities, as the case may be, amid all the risks to collectors and other avocational enthusiasts. In such matters not only is professional status and authority associated with fineness of aesthetic sense (and sensoria!), but it is also dependent on a wide, cumulative familiarity with histories of production, circulation, and consumption/possession of objects, genres of objects, styles and registers of material aesthetics, and so on. Art critics need to have examined the pen-and-ink drawings related to paintings and sculptures, the chalk cartoons related to grand frescoes, and so on, to know the history of how and to whom they circulated as instruments of process, then as objects of possession, and the values, pecuniary and otherwise, attached thereto. The authoritativeness with which such aesthetic acuity is combined with fingertip knowledge of a work’s historical minutiae, and mobilized in evaluative discourse, undergirds the authority with which a connoisseur commands respect for—and confidence in—his or her informed judgment.

Among comestibles, wine seems to have been the first, and remains the *primus inter pares*, of those where such connoisseurship is now highly developed. It is surely the case that wine as an aesthetic experience is associated first and foremost with people in those sectors and segments of the population where aesthetic connoisseurship in realms of “[high] culture” and collecting have long been highly developed. And as the very notion of oenological connoisseurship has become linked to class mobility, anxiety has developed about the register with which one verbalizes the rationale of a perhaps ultimately scalar judgment—and,

of course, through which one is, conversely, judged as to position in a political economic and cultural scale. And from wine, the process continues to other comestibles made to be worthy of association in its image. There have long been published print runs of the *Wine Spectator* and the *Wine Advocate*; and, according to Google (queried on June 1, 2014), no fewer than 18,600,000 sites on “wine appreciation” and 819,000,000 on “wine terms” are accessible to search, all part of a thriving industry-supporting oenological avocationalism and oinoglossic enregisterment. But so also do we now have the *Beer Advocate*, the *Malt* [i.e., whiskey] *Advocate*, the *Cheese Advocate*, and so on, both in print and online. The imitative parallelism—how these forms of avocational fandom mimic that of wine—is quite extraordinary.

The third institution is mass lifestyle retailing, which relies on the existence of the first two and brings them together. What you are in consumption class is what you eat, drink, wear, and so on—and what you discover you have to say about the experience or reveal in other cultural modalities makes others aware of your consumptive patterns. In such retailing, a product that can be a performative emblem of distinction always hovers between total individuation (one-of-a-kind artisanal and artistic achievement) and brand dependability (label, logo, insignia on the display/package of the very object), of course. Total individuation in wine gets down to the level of the individual bottle tasted on some particular occasion; the best oenological connoisseurs facing the most rarefied of wines, operate at this level. (Note how this cultural concept of distinctiveness informs the practice, at serving, of never filling a glass with fluid from bottle number  $n+1$  if there is still present in the glass some of wine of bottle number  $n$ , for example. Even where it is ridiculous not to do so, it is a gesture of interdiscursive reference, a little performative nod to, an imitative figuration of, the top and center of viticultural distinction.) At the other extreme, it is brand, brand, brand that is the principle of marketing, like the mass-produced couturier-authorized lines that self-advertise on the products themselves. At the middle ranges of the wine market in the United States, brandedness is the key to marketing; the consumer must be made to feel the equivalent—for wine, certainly anchored in France and things French—of prominently showing off a Prada article of clothing on the body, or a Miele dishwasher in the fabulously up-to-date kitchen.

It is in this institutional framework that we can see how the above-named publications and websites are not simply providing connoisseurs’ tasting notes and other such evaluations to consumers that would guide them in wisely using the financial resources they devote to consumable comestibles. They are providing, through a rhetoric not unlike that of fashion (Barthes 1983), images of a life built around focal interest in the comestible and all that goes congruently along with it. These have become vehicles of total personal self-fashioning, as it were, no different in genred appeal from the gendered appeal of the obsessively bodily focused

magazines and websites like *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, and so on for (young) women and *Details*, *Men's Health*, and so on for (young) men, mirror images across the gender line. Garments, gadgets, gizmos, things with which to surround oneself corporeally and in life and leisure activities, training regimes and tips for everything from abdominal musculature to sexual experiences, and so forth, are the repetitive content of each issue of the latter. In like form, the connoisseurship-focal publications also market through imaging as well as verbiage how to devote oneself, to whatever degree, to wine, to beer, to whiskey, or to whatever as a lifestyle totalization. Vacation in a wine-producing region; see how the stuff is made and purchase it. Remodel your kitchen not with any old ordinary appliances but with a special wine refrigerator. Here is the perfect wine glassware for each of your favorite kinds of wines. Wear our *Wine Enthusiast* T-shirt to inform others of your life's passion. Why drinking wine is ultimately superhealthy and compatible with your exercise regimen to keep fit.

All of this cyclically produced as a guide to the good—no, a better, more accomplished—life that becomes, in each of these aspects, more of life's "work" even in one's so-called leisure.

At the culminating moment of consumption, the tasting and evaluation of the experience, the wine consumer is poised in a place where all these institutions have intersected with distinctive shaping influences.

### "VINIFYING" PRESTIGE IN COMESTIBLES AND BEYOND

But now we can move beyond wine to think about parallels to the oinoglossic phenomenon that seem to emanate from it and project an expanding chronotopic space of iterative parallels in the wider universe of consumption. The mechanism of such iteration has been the strength and institutional entrenchment of the doubly indexical—the "eucharistic"—oinoglossic register and associated nonverbal semiotics that continue their spread or emanation to other realms of would-be prestige in the universe of potables and comestibles. Indeed, each of these areas of lifestyle has come to prestige fruition as a branch of the growing semiotic vine of oinoglossia.

Wine's prestige as a comestible manifests its well-developed register effect, not only in language, but also in a large number of penumbral sign systems that frame the production, circulation, consumption, and memorialization of this substance and people's relation to it. And, this register effect is spreading, or has been spreading, from the domain (the *domaine*, if you will!) of the oenological to draw in any comestible that aspires to distinction—that is, any comestible that as well aspires to confer distinction upon its consumer. In terms of the framing of myriad other comestibles undergoing stimulated stratification by prestige, a kind of semiotic vinification, turning them into metaphorical wine, has been taking place both in

TABLE 8.6 Wine-Note-Like Coffee-Tasting Notes from a 1991 Starbucks Customer Flyer

---

*Mocha Sanani*: “Properly brewed [as espresso, it] . . . combines unrivalled intensity of aroma with thick, creamy body and bittersweet chocolate finish.”

*Ethiopia Sidamo*: “. . . a delicate yet sprightly new crop coffee. . . . Flowery bouquet (with a hint of eucalyptus), light and elegant body, and a honeyed natural sweetness. . . . [O]ne of the most seductive of all African varieties.”

*Kenya “AA”*: “At the very top of the mountain (literally and figuratively) [t]his coffee, like a fine Bordeaux, balances heft and heartiness with bell-like clarity of flavor and blackcurrant fruitiness.”

*Ethiopia Harrar*: “. . . a carefully cultivated coffee with a flavor that’s usually anything **but** cultivated! The Chianti-esque, slightly gamy aroma gives Harrar a certain rustic charm that has family ties to Mocha Sanani (though it usually lacks that coffee’s complexity, balance and breed). It is . . . ‘a coffee for people who like excitement at the cost of subtlety.’”

*Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi*: “. . . better used in blends than as varieties, since their flavors, while pleasant, are much less clearly delineated.”

---

the language surrounding them and in the other sign systems by which we make their virtues known—for example, in the visual codes of advertising.

In other words, the institutional world of wine as a node has itself become a center point of “emanation” of ways of constructing prestige throughout a whole world of construable comestibles, edible and potable commodities that are brought into the stratified precincts in which wine has long had a social life. So today, just as one can be admired/reviled and imitated/shunned for being a “wine snob” (a folk term of opprobriousness from outside the fold, note), so also can one find a parallel place in the social world of those seeking to experience coffee, beer, cheese, ice cream, olive oil, vodka, and so on—examples in my data of all those things that through artisanal labor represent nature turned into culture. Let me illustrate this process of value-emanation, which transfers the register effect of bidirectional, thing-human cocategorization to any such commodity for which interested parties now wish to claim the possibility of stratified prestige. We will see that we are—sociologically speaking—what we communicate about what we eat or drink.

An early 1990s corporate flyer from Starbucks, for example, displays the distinctive oinoglossic register in discussing its beverages. Observe the way the tasting note genre in table 8.6 is used first off as a way to make the implicit argument that at least Starbucks coffee and wine are consumable commodities of comparably complex dimensionality in qualia space. We may observe in particular the dimensionality of coffee qualia here revealed and even the characterological anthropomorphism we have come to expect in the tasting note: “Seductive” Ethiopia Sidamo has “flowery bouquet (with a hint of eucalyptus), light and elegant body, and a honeyed natural sweetness”; Harrar’s “Chianti-esque, slightly gamy

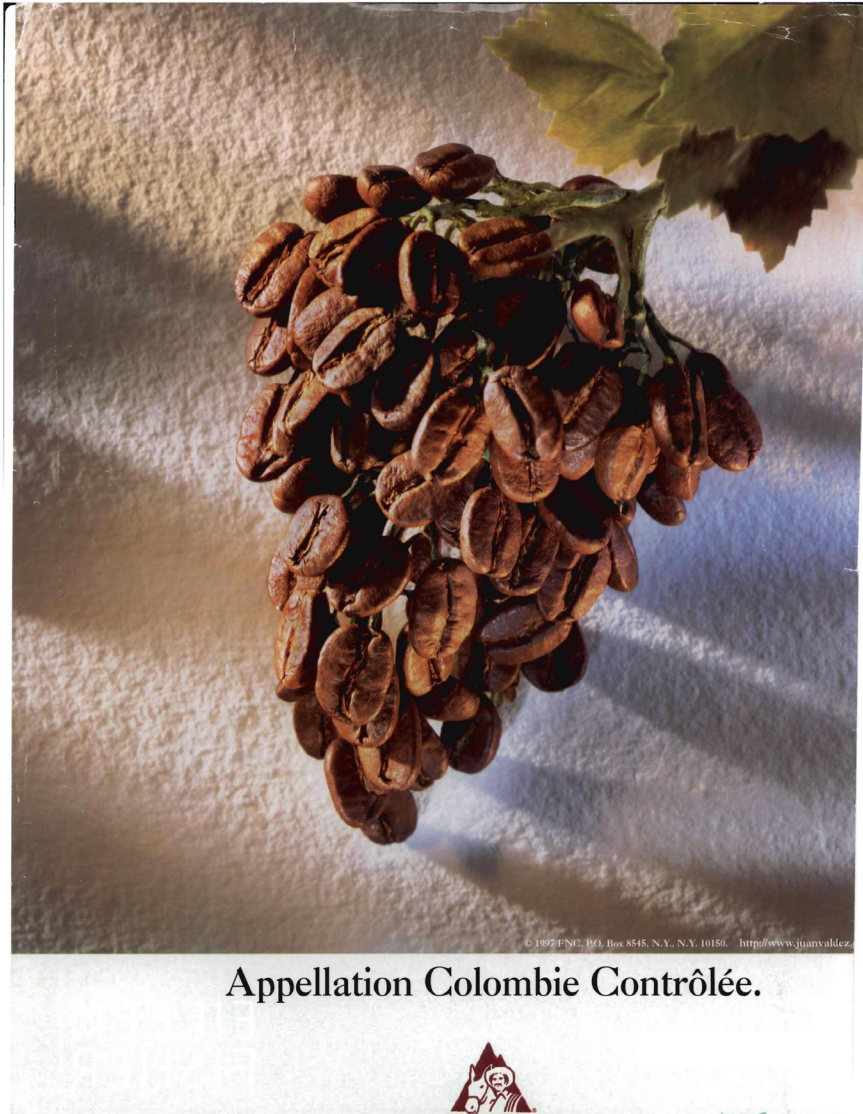


FIGURE 8.4. Advertisement for Colombian coffee growers.

aroma” gives it “a certain rustic charm” as “a coffee for people who like excitement at the cost of subtlety.” The explicit comparisons to (high-value) Bordeaux and (lesser-value) Chianti should be noted. But more importantly, these tasting notes put the consumer on notice that, in learning to experience coffee-as-drunk in this

TABLE 8.7 Starbucks' Explanation of "Barista Talk" for Its Retail Customers

If you're nervous about ordering, don't be. There's no "right" way to order at Starbucks. Just tell us what you want and we'll give it to you. But if we call your drink in a way that's different from what you told us, we're not correcting you. We're just translating your order into "barista-speak"—a standard way our baristas call out orders. This language gives the baristas the info they need in the order they need it, so they can make your drink as quickly and efficiently as possible. "Barista speak" is easy to learn. It's all about the order of information. There are five steps to the process. (Starbucks 2003, n.p.)

(1) cup (a cup for hot, cold, or "for here" drinks), (2) shots and size, (3) syrup, (4) milk and other modifiers, to (5) the (kind of) drink itself.

"I'd like to have an

ICED,	DECAF, TRIPLE,	CINNAMON,	NONFAT, NO WHIP	MOCHA."
CUP	GRANDE, SHOTS AND SIZE	SYRUP	MILK AND OTHER MODIFIERS	THE DRINK ITSELF
1	2	3	4	5

fashion, he or she will become defined by refined tastes that learn to discern and thus to favor this or that among the offered possibilities. Note how the Bordeaux comparison goes with the highest-end coffee varietal, and that of Chianti with the "coffee for people who like excitement at the cost of subtlety." Speaking of the "vinification," as it were, of coffee, figure 8.4 displays one of the most extraordinary visuals in this tenor—could it be less subtle in analogical form as a full-page glossy advertisement?—on behalf of the producers of Colombian coffee.

In its corporate heyday in shaping a prestige coffeehouse-like image, and concerned about the total contextualization of their products in relation to those who drink them, the Starbucks firm licensed a certain persnickety attitude on the part of its retail vendors, the baristas and other faces of the corporation in sales, who insist on having would-be customers use the corporate-specific formulaic genres in ordering their drinks when they belly up to the coffee bar. Paul Manning (2008) has written brilliantly about Starbucks barista register and its realization in the stylized genre of the drink order. Material excerpted from the corporation's own guide to ordering (see table 8.7) avers that of course there is no "right" and "wrong" way to order; it is just that "barista talk"—that is, the actually preferred and normative register and constructional genre—seems to impose itself as the rationalized, precise, and efficient verbal currency in such establishments.

And this verbal currency is again one that constructs the commodities for purchase at a Starbucks location as cells within a whole multidimensional matrix of complex objects defined by substances primary and secondary, shapes, sizes, and

TABLE 8.8 Barista “Rant” about an Encounter with a Noncompliant Customer

---

Me:	Hi, what can I get for you today, sir?
Man:	A small.
Me:	You would like a tall what sir?
Man:	I said I want a small.
Me:	Would that be a tall coffee sir?
Man:	No I want a small regular, I don't want to supersize my drink.
Me:	No sir, tall is small. Here at Starbucks small is tall, medium is grande and large is venti.
Man:	Well what I want is a small.
Me:	Okay, tall traditional it is. *grinding teeth* *get him the drink and give it to him*
Man:	*Takes off the lid* I thought I told you I wanted a small regular. This is just black.
Me:	Sir, you can find milk and sugar for your coffee over at the condiment bar. We have various types of dairy for your coffee and also many different types of sweeteners.
Man:	What I want is a regular small coffee. Why can't you do this for me? Is that too hard for you? At what I am paying for a cup of coffee you should be able to put the milk and two spoonfuls of sugar in for me.
Me:	Well sir, here at Starbucks we feel that you are better served by arranging your coffee however you like. That will be \$1.52.
Man:	Are you sure? I can't get this for free being that it has taken over 5 minutes just to get me a small coffee and ring me up?
Me:	I am sorry that took so long. That will be a dollar and 52 cents for your TALL TRADITIONAL cup of coffee.

Why oh why do we have to go through this EVERY FREAKING DAY!!!

Why!!!!

---

SOURCE: Manning 2008.

so on as it purports to be the most accurate description (i.e., construal) of them. Thus customers' violations of bellying up to the coffee bar with the proper formula trippingly articulated stimulate barista rants on the employees' website. Table 8.8 reproduces one of my favorites—and demonstrates the venomous condescension toward those who apparently pretend to the value of the Starbucks experience but who are thought by the service personnel to be distinctly unfit to consume Starbucks liquids, since they have not yet learned or—can you imagine?—they actually resist learning the rarefied uniqueness of genre and register for ordering them.<sup>15</sup>

There is revealed here a socio-spatiotemporal distance-from-the-authorizing-center involved for those failing the test as consumers no different from the distance indexed by inability to experience and properly notate oinoglossic aesthetics in the act of drinking wine. The totalizing corporate enregisterment of verbal style, both as a way to present and construe/construct that which is proffered for sale and as a way to present oneself in the saying as a consumer desirous of purchasing the comestible, constitutes in essence the imposition of a conical structure of the familiar kind in regimes of enregisterment. At the top and center are those “of” the lifestyle; at the down-and-out circumferential edges are those against whom

baristas rant. Such a sociology—and sociolinguistics—distinctly reinforces the semiotics of what we term consumptive class, the key kind of class distinction in late capitalism, the one that drives people’s anxieties of identity manifest by the second-order indexicals of verbal enregisterment insofar as this indexes the very conceptual framing of their approach to consumption.

But the mechanism of self-definition by virtue of projective construal of objects is certainly not limited to wine and prestige- (or at least class-) conferring coffee. It has come to encompass much in the contemporary world. Not long ago I was reading the automotive supplement to one of my city’s newspapers, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and noted this automobile connoisseur’s excuse in a review of a 2014 Infiniti: “From my point of view, exterior looks are not the M56’s strong suit. *There are really no distinguishing characteristics that immediately conjure up a specific feeling or thought or an attitude of excitement.* With the competition in this class incredibly strong when it comes to looks, approaching the exterior from a different direction is a great strategy to try to get noticed. However, if you miss the mark, you will limit your appeal” (John Stein, automotive editor, *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 15, 2012, emphasis added). If we think a bit about this, the point is that the qualia-as-apprehended of the Infiniti vehicle are supposed to resonate with a feeling—an affective or emotional interpretant, Peirce would say—in the reviewer, who confesses not to feel much of anything (except perhaps disappointment) as a response to the styling of this new vehicle. (One can, of course, find views of the very vehicle online, so as to gauge for oneself if one resonates with it in properly enregistered evaluative commentary.)

In conclusion, I suggest that there is an institutionalized social semiotic at work here, one that is perhaps clearest for commodities, since culturally these exist at the intersection of our ideas about the sensorium, our anxieties about the political economy of class, and our responsiveness to how marketing is integrated into every organized form of modern life. To be sure, Marx, one of the nineteenth century’s great semioticians, already wrote illuminatingly of commodity fetishism, in which what he saw to be macro-socioeconomic structures of production, circulation, and consumption get projectively misrecognized as essential qualia of the very commodities that come to people in a market and are used by them. In some sense, a transformational skewing of the commodity form can be seen even in regimes of aesthetic connoisseurship, where value rests on the commodity’s scarcity, historical uniqueness, and so on, as well as on “inherent” objectual properties. Wine as a fetishized commodity is thus closer to the extreme of fine art along such a scaled continuum of relevant gradations that runs from the absolutely unique all the way to forms of Benjaminian “mechanical reproduction” (of “brand,” for example) in a variety of areas of circulation and consumption. The other potables I have mentioned above in their own ways imitate wine, particularly by making their own claims to bestow second-order

indexical distinction on those who know how properly to fetishize them, how properly to project construable qualia discernable in them. For each, one does so by constructing appropriately enregistered language as legitimated by an authorizing center, whether corporate or—as for wine itself—in a more abstract intersection in socio-space-time.

But the emergence of such qualia driven by the duplex indexical processes discussed here has scaled up; it has become a ubiquitous phenomenon in our world of consumption. Why? Clearly, since even before the Lockean Enlightenment in western Europe, people have had ethno-psychological ideas of the sensorium, the faculty underlying the ability to discern and to judge properties or qualities of the individual persons, things, and so on of experience. With the institutionalization of Enlightenment ideas, sensory data—especially as extended by epistemic prostheses, especially those, like gauges, that render and calibrate qualia as numerical or scalable in type—have been moved to the very center of both professional and lay cultural ideas of rational response to the universe. So all of our evaluative projections of qualia deep down suggest to us the potential for an applied science, for an objective, even numerically gradated equivalent of the “aroma wheel.” We train our sensoria and use epistemic prostheses emerging from the laboratory to extend our sensoria, calming ourselves in relation to the significant properties of things “out there” and thus “objectively” anchoring our ontologies within our worlds of experience.

The very capacity for ever finer human discernment of qualia as, itself, a capacity or a quality of one’s sensorium intersects precisely with notions of personal “distinction,” as, noted earlier, the late Pierre Bourdieu elaborately wrote about some years ago (1984). It is swept up into the political economy of class insofar the sensorium can be educated and trained as a mechanism of class mobility—as certainly can be one’s facility with the registers and genres of reportage that we’ve seen exemplified in wine, coffee, and so on (and of course any technical registers—even those of semiotics!). There thus develops a kind of anxiety in those most aspiring to class mobility, as though the finer the discernment—reported in such registers as oinoglossia—the more distinguished one’s consumptive class affiliation. Thus the phenomenon of wine-tasting seminars and practicums for the aspiring bourgeoisie, such as the noncredit course at my university’s Graduate School of Business keen to provide its MBAs with the cultural wherewithal (cultural “capital,” indeed!) to have an interview dinner that reveals their fitness for career placement in middle management. Think also of the idiot-savant sensorial monster, who, without explicit training of the sensorium in such modes, manages to have a refined taste articulated in proper genre and register (Robert Parker of the *Wine Advocate*, by reputation).

Such anxieties of self-identification are, of course, the very semiotic grist of advertising as a communicative institutional form. After all, the very essence

of advertising semiosis consists of conveying the second-order indexical connection between the addressee's identity and his or her discerning—or at least assenting—projection of particular qualia of things and services and corporate identities for sale. As Richard Parmentier (1994, 151–153) has pointed out, in the United States, since circa 1976, because of Supreme Court rulings advertising has significantly shifted from explicitly rendered statements about products—predicating propositions about them—many of which were understood to be “puffery,” exaggerated claims about the benefits of soap A or cigarette B. Advertising semiosis has shifted to nonpropositional “qualia-fication” of the product, service, corporation, and so on relative to which the hearer or viewer of the ad is positioned in, in the best of cases, the receptive would-be second-order indexical position. How one feels about imagining the qualia of the object-as-obtainable (the “obscure object of desire”) gets projected onto the hearer or viewer, so that the latter's personal biography—one already lived or merely imagined—can be aligned with whatever is being marketed. Even American political campaigns, the central method of which is marketing a politician's “message” (see Lempert and Silverstein [2012]), are strategically organized around the second-order indexicality of identity politics. For this, a constantly updated quasi-biography of the candidate is the semiotic medium, a composite of certain qualia of personal biography and alignment or association with issues, so as to stimulate imaginative affiliation or disaffiliation—of the voters/consumers and ultimately result in their votes.

So the semiotics of qualia-fication are all around us, I would claim, and we experience “selves” that reflect at second-order indexical remove the sum total of the various institutionally relevant qualia projectively construed—that is to say, constructed under authority—by us and for us in our daily lives. And that is why oinoglossia thrives as a generative semiotic cultigen in its chronotope of identity-making.

## NOTES

1. A *chronotope*, a conceptualization of M. M. Bakhtin (1981), is a space-time-like envelope in which characters and presumed others who populate narrated worlds are understood to interact according to emplotted trajectories of their unfolding interests as social beings in that fictive world. It can be seen that insofar as events of experienced social life, too, are understandable and narratable in the plotlike cause-and-effect terms of “realism,” they, too, lend an inherently chronotopic character to each individual's real-life semiotic experience—sometimes one revealed only through careful tracing of multiple trajectories of connection that may not have been clearly conceptualized by the very protagonists themselves (ourselves).

2. Institutional defaults for how social relations are to be engaged in are, of course, not so much binding norms as value-conferring *affordances*; they can just as well be creatively violated and/or transformed in local practice as straightforwardly instantiated—as they regularly are!

3. A *register* of a language is, for its users, a contextually distinctive and formally contrastive style of communicating a message (denotational content) that could be more or less equivalently com-

municated in another, at least partially contrasting, way. A register setting thus provides a distinctive coherence to verbal communication over a stretch of discourse—a verbal *text*—as being appropriate to and indicative of (that is, it functions as an *index* of) the particular interactional *context* in which it occurs or, normatively, should occur. Contrast two possible forms of report in English of the same event: He went to see the eye doctor, in everyday lexical and syntactic vernacular, and He consulted his ophthalmologist, which includes at least two medical-technical terms, consult (cf. the billing term consultation) and ophthalmologist, a professionally dubbed medical specialist. Any and all planes of linguistic form may be “enregistered” in this way, and registers tend, as well, to be associated with particular communicational genres, socially deployable textual forms, and thus stereotypically with types of social beings who are thought characteristically to engage in using such communicational genres in particular loci of social life. Nonlinguistic culture, too, comes to be enregistered through the mediation of the discourse associated with it.

4. Decades back, the *New Yorker* had a “drawing” showing two carts stacked high with this vegetable, the one labeled “tomatoes 39¢” the other “tomahtoes 89¢,” the joke turning on the two register variants (for most American English speakers) of the word, one with stressed vowel [e-ʏ], the other with stressed vowel [ɑ:]. These two pronunciations of the word tomato—enregistered respectively as vernacular versus snooty; cf. the Gershwin song of 1937—would also be simultaneously seen as appropriate to small, irregularly shaped tomatoes versus large, beautifully rounded ones, I should think.

5. Linguists would as well observe that this reciprocally stacked or tiered indexicality in the social act of evaluation is independent of systems of so-called grammatical evidentiality and inferentiality, themselves deictic (indexical-denotational) markers that indicate, in the act of someone’s communicating a proposition, his or her presumed license or authority so to do by virtue of (a) having been the addressee of the information in a prior communicative event (“hearsay evidentiality”); or (b) having been an observer via the senses of the factuality of what is currently being communicated-as-true (“eyewitness evidentiality”); or, contrastively, (c) communicating a proposition indexing that one has merely inferred its truth, or even just the possibility of its truth (“inferential” and “potential” epistemic grounds) on the basis of a cognitive operation.

6. Summerson Carr (personal communication) calls my attention to a scene in the American television spoof *Portlandia* in which the would-be diners in a restaurant are riven with just such anxieties about a menu item involving chicken, available for viewing at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErRHJLE4PGI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErRHJLE4PGI). We see here anxieties of a more generalized “vinification” still!

7. Forms denoted as forms (not sense-bearing signs) are underlined.

8. Here and in table 8.5 the text is still to be read, as in table 8.2, from left to right and top to bottom. But in these two representations I have used three dots to indicate that the next phrase is the next-occurring in the other column. Thus “mingles . . .” in the left text-column indicates that the phrase “aromas of malt and toasted brioche,” the first in the right column, occurs next in the *Wine Advocate* text. A phrase in the left column preceded by three dots occurs after one without them in the right column.

9. See now Agha 2004 for an extended discussion. The term, building on the Reid (1956)—McIntosh—Halliday et al. (1964) precedent in the use of the term, alludes to the pipe organ, where different registers manipulated by stops provide distinct timbral envelopes for what is otherwise precisely the same melodic sequence of pitch-over-time.

10. For users of European languages, consciousness of “honorification,” how one pays deference to Alter’s relative status, for example, has long focused on saliently enregistered second-person personal deictic usage (think of saying German *du* as opposed to *Sie* as the Subject of a statement about—as well as to—an addressee); on form of terms of address (think of addressing someone in English as “Liz” rather than “Your Majesty,” or as “Pops” rather than “Sir”); and on certain formulae for mands (in French, asking someone to sit down by using *Veillez, s’il vous plaît, vous asseoir* versus *Assois tu!*). But co-occurring with these salient shibboleths, many other indexically loaded variants within their own

paradigms of contrast concurrently operate at many different planes so as to differentiate such deferential uses so long they compatibly co-occur with the more salient shibboleths noted here.

11. Registers, it should be noted, have all the properties of languages as structures immanent in denotational discourse; since registers are, however, indexically particular to context, whether by positive or negative stipulation, the set-theoretic union of the elements of all registers in a community, sociolinguistically viewed, thus constitutes the inclusive envelope of what can be termed the community's "language." Note also that most languages of the world do not have standard registers in the way the modern languages of nation-states do, even if they have valued registers of one or another sort—for example, for ritual use.

12. It is useful to compare medical diagnosis, which, as a procedure, begins from a cluster of "presenting symptoms" and a medical history that might be compatible with a number of possibilities regarding a patient's medical condition. In diagnostic intervention the goal is to produce a "differential diagnosis" that can be precisely described and thus indicate a course of therapy, perhaps even what is termed in the vernacular a "cure." In frustrating instances, the differential diagnosis emerges only after the fact, when a specific course of therapy has "worked" or when multiple ones have failed, eliminating all but one possibility.

13. See Noble et al. 1987. Of course, one would want a hierarchical cluster analysis or an analysis of common "errors" of labeling of a sufficiently large number of trials with each of the olfaction stimuli to extract inductively based groupings at this intermediate level, which would probably not lend themselves to representation around the circumference of a circular array.

14. See Silverstein (2013, 351–55) for a discussion of the influence of the Noble et al. aroma wheel as it has "emanated" from wine to other beverages and beyond.

15. I use here the "ethnographic present," though it is arguably the case that, since the expansionist corporate heyday of Starbucks represented in these ethnographic and text-artifactual materials, there have been reactions, especially among the fashionable urban young, of two sorts that have moved this brand into a different market image and space. One is the realignment of customer loyalty to down-market coffee, as for example that available at Dunkin' Donuts—earnest and genuinely "of the people." The other is to shun Starbucks as tantamount to the McDonald's of café experiences and to seek out, particularly in gentrifying urban enclaves, truly local, truly artisanal, truly unique and non-corporate "un-brands" of coffee at small internet cafés, and so on. The widespread emergence of the latter, ironically enough, no doubt depends on the prior brand history of Starbucks' success.