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## The Taste for the Particular: A Logic of Discernment in an Age of Omnivorousness

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### **Abstract**

This article provides an analysis of two leading specialist wine magazines, *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*, and the codification and legitimation of a ‘taste for the particular.’ Such media of connoisseurship are key institutions of evaluation and legitimation in an age of omnivorousness, but are often overlooked in research that foregrounds the agency of tasters and neglects the conventionalization of tasting norms and devices. The wine field has undergone a process of democratization typical of omnivorousness more broadly: former elite/low boundaries (operationalized in the paper through the Old/New World dichotomy) are ignored, and a discerning attitude is encouraged for wines from a diversity of regions. Drawing on the magazines’ audience profile and market position data, and a content analysis of advertising and editorial content from 2008 and 2010, I examine the differences in the use of four legitimation frames (transparency, heritage, genuineness and external validation) for the provenance elements of Old and New World wines. The analysis suggests that the Old World—typically French— notion of *terroir*, on which the traditional Old/New World boundary rested, has been democratized through the particularities of provenance. Yet, the analysis also reveals continuing differences between the two categories (including greater emphasis on the heritage and external validation of Old World context of production, and on the transparency and genuineness of New World producers), and the preservation of established hierarchies of taste through the application of *terroir* to New World wines, which retain the Old World and France as their master referent.

### **Keywords**

Authenticity, democratization, distinction, legitimacy, provenance, taste, terroir, wine

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## Introduction

Reviews written for high status consumers provide an ideal entry point for examining the practice of discernment, and a critical opportunity for considering gaps in our current conception of taste and its reproduction. Such reviews suggest that 'good taste' today is far from straightforward. Serious critical appreciation is directed at what was once *déclassé*, as when a music critic reviews a heavy metal album: 'guitars are detuned so low that they sound like they're going backward' (Frere-Jones, 2005: 26). Transgressions of boundaries of taste are treated to knowing celebration, as when a restaurant reviewer praises a grilled-cheese sandwich (made with Calabro mozzarella, miso mayonnaise and ridged potato chips) as 'a peerless balance between high and low' (Paumgarten, 2011: 16). And, the prosaic is elevated to the status of the covetable, as when a fashion reviewer reports on £721 reproductions of early 20<sup>th</sup> century work boots: 'Recreated faithfully out of cordovan equine leather, it's a standout design for spring' (O'Flaherty, 2012: 74).

Such media reports are part of a contemporary taste pattern broadly referred to as 'cultural omnivorousness': a configuration of preferences that ignores traditional elite/low cultural divides and brings a discerning attitude to bear on multiple genres (Peterson, 2005; Peterson and Kern, 1996). This ostensible democratization of taste via the validation of the formerly lowbrow can also be found in the wine field, as a recent review (Beckett, 2014: 75) of Turkish wine suggests:

There was a time when you couldn't have sold a Turkish wine...for love or money...because people would have been embarrassed to put it on the table. These days, however, it seems to be a question of the weirder the wine, the better; and if only one barrel has been made, better still.

As even a casual reading of newspaper wine columns reveals, old assumptions about quality wine production no longer hold in an age of omnivorousness. Yet, the suggestion that 'the weirder, the better' is misleading: not all wines (or forms of weirdness) are equally legitimate. Democratization may change the stakes and strategies, but not the game of distinction; the need for logics of discernment persist. If wine is any indication, one such logic in today's marketplace is that of particularization: the minutiae of provenance (where, how, by whom, when an object was produced) have become a device for distinguishing what counts as good taste.

In this article, I aim to develop the understanding of the cultural production of taste. I part company with the typical approach to studying omnivorous taste, for which the unit of analysis has been individual tasters' participation in or knowledge of discrete genres of cultural activities. Such an approach is problematic on two fronts. First, as

the above examples suggest, the practice of taste lies as much in differentiating within, as it does between, genres (Wright, 2015). It is on the basis of the specific details of provenance (detuned guitars, miso mayonnaise, equine leather, single barrel production) rather than the genre per se (heavy metal music, white trash cooking, work boots, Turkish wine) that judgements of taste are made. Second, taste is as—or more—likely to be enacted as semi-automatic practice as it is a matter of conscious deliberation (Warde, 2014). Yet, the sociological understanding of the practice of taste lacks sufficient attention to the creation and conventionalization of norms and devices that reproduce hierarchies through habitual judgements of taste. As such, my concern is with the construction of a *logic* of taste and specifically, the codification and legitimation of a ‘taste for the particular.’

Support for my discussion is drawn from the field of wine. Fine wine is an elaborately stratified cultural field with a well-developed infrastructure of evaluation, and a global array of expert assessors, award competitions and specialist publications producing and circulating conventions for ranking quality and assigning prestige (Allen and Germov, 2010; Karpik, 2010). At the same time, fine wine and its associated hierarchies of esteem have undergone democratization (Howland, 2013), a process operationalized in this paper through an exploration of the representation of Old and New World<sup>1</sup> wines in specialist wine magazines. Historically, hierarchies of prestige in the wine field broadly conflated country of production with quality, resulting in a crude dichotomy of Old World superiority/New World inferiority. While subject to variation and contestation, the Old/New World categorization was nevertheless institutionalized via such mechanisms as pricing conventions, production regulations, wine marketing and wine education (Fourcade, 2012; Garcia-Parpet, 2008; Schamel, 2006). However, the assumed superiority of Old World—and especially—French wine has been eroded since the 1970s, while New World producers enjoy increasing credibility (e.g. Taber, 2005). These tensions between democratization and distinction make the wine field a useful case through which to examine dynamics observed elsewhere in relation to elitist egalitarianism (Ljunggren, 2015), changing repertoires of legitimacy (Lamont, 2012; Johnson and Baumann, 2007), and emerging forms of cultural capital (Prieur and Savage, 2013).

The article proceeds with an overview of key dimensions of cultural omnivorousness research. I then turn to an analysis of the two leading specialist wine magazines, *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*, drawing on audience profile and market position data for the two titles, and a content analysis of advertising and editorial content from 2008 and 2010 that examined how Old and New World wines were framed in terms of

transparency, heritage, genuineness and external validation. Examining how the taste for the particular is constructed and legitimated as a logic of discernment, the discussion focuses on the capacity of these magazines to categorize and legitimate; the democratization of *terroir* through the particularities of provenance; and the preservation of established hierarchies of taste through the application of *terroir* to New World wines. In conclusion, I consider what logics of taste do and why they matter.

### **Taste in an Age of Omnivorosity**

Examining data on US musical tastes and arts participation, Peterson and Simkus proposed in 1992 that Bourdieu's figure of the 'taste-exclusive highbrow' was obsolete. Instead, elite taste was becoming omnivorous: 'redefined as being an appreciation of the aesthetics of every distinctive form along with appreciation of the high arts' (1992: 169). Since then, research on the cultural omnivore thesis in various countries (for overviews, see Hazir and Warde, 2014; Peterson, 2005) has provided further support for the decline of univorous, highbrow snobs, the democratization of (some) previously elite practices, and the validation of (some) formerly denigrated cultural forms (e.g. Erickson, 1996; Ollivier, 2008; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Warde et al., 2007). There is an increasingly nuanced grasp of the intertwining of democratization and distinction, and of the continued significance of boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate culture for the reproduction of social stratification, both local and global (e.g. Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Smith Maguire and Lim, 2015).

Four dimensions of cultural omnivorousness research can be identified. The first two dimensions have received the most empirical attention: diversity of tastes ('likings that cross cultural boundaries'; Purhonen et al., 2010: 266), and volume of tastes (the 'sum of the likings of [different] genres'; Purhonen et al., 2010: 266). Such research has been disproportionately quantitative in approach (Hazir and Warde, 2014) and has revealed the unequal distribution of highly diverse/high volume tastes within populations along the lines of education, occupation, gender and age. Although omnivorousness is found across the class spectrum, it is a taste repertoire that concentrates in the elite (e.g. Katz-Gerro and Sullivan, 2010; Purhonen et al., 2010).

The third dimension of omnivorousness research relates to a 'particular discriminating orientation towards taste' (Warde et al., 2008: 149). Tastes are a matter of *how*, not *what*: they are 'ways of preferring' (Daenekindt and Roose, 2014). This omnivorous

orientation is especially marked for 'professional' omnivores who 'manifest discriminating preferences for both high and popular works, and a particular knowledge of differences within, as well as across, genres' (Warde et al., 2007:153; see also Peterson and Kern, 1996). More broadly, omnivorousness can be seen as part of a cultural repertoire that distinguishes contemporary elite class identities (Holt, 1997; Jarness, 2013; Lamont, 1992; Ljunggren, 2015; Prieur and Savage; Schimpfoss, 2014).

For Bourdieu, distance is central in the operation of discernment: distance from the instrumental constitutes a taste of luxury, as opposed to a taste of necessity (1984: 6); distance from aesthetic conventions constitutes a taste for the difficult, as opposed to the vulgar or facile (1984: 34, 536, *passim*). Recent research has identified other such oppositional dynamics at work in the construction of social distinction, such as boundaries between old and new/trendy (Bellavance, 2008; Taylor, 2009), modest and opulent (Daloz, 2010; Schimpfoss, 2014), and cosmopolitan and traditional (Cvetičanin and Popescu, 2011). Elite cultural capital consists not only of knowledge of highbrow culture, but of a 'knowing, distanced or verbalised, appropriation of culture' drawn from an expanded, cosmopolitan world view (Prieur and Savage, 2013: 263). Social status is reproduced not by simply liking the 'right' thing and having restricted knowledge of it, but by explicitly displaying and practicing such knowledge (Holt, 1997; Skeggs, 2001); or not simply by liking lots of things but using those likes and practices to acquire the prestige of being busy and diverse in one's tastes (Katz-Gerro and Sullivan, 2010; Gershuny, 2005). While this research offers a tantalizing glimpse of the logics that underpin good taste, the focus generally remains on the tasters, as opposed to the conventionalization of tastes.

The fourth dimension of research relates to the structural factors underpinning the emergence of cultural omnivorousness. Key among them is the increased tolerance of difference and scepticism towards universalist value judgements, the roots of which are tied, variously, to globalization, migration and cosmopolitanism, generational shifts, postmodernism, social mobility and the spread of liberal education (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984; Ljunggren, 2015; Peterson, 2005; Prieur and Savage, 2013; Turner and Edmunds, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Another central factor is the production of a culture of abundance. The digitalization and circulation of cultural goods, global expansion and niche diversification of consumer brands, intensification of cycles of fashion and 'cool,' and legitimation of heretofore illegitimate genres (e.g. Frank, 1997; Peterson, 2005; Wright, 2015) lend themselves to the democratization of access to what was once elite, and to the valorisation of eclectic tastes as a mainstay of the economy. Central to both factors is the media. On the one hand, media are mechanisms of

democratization, disseminating knowledge of elite *and* popular practices and objects of taste, and collapsing the difference between mass and restricted culture (Peterson, 2005: 274; Taylor, 2009). On the other hand, elite cultural media circulate new discourses of legitimacy and conventionalize a cosmopolitan representation of good taste (Janssen, 2006; Janssen et al., 2008). Specialist wine magazines and the wider media genre of cultural review and criticism (e.g. Janssen, 2006; Janssen et al., 2008; Johnson and Baumann, 2007) are significant institutions of evaluation, framing goods for, shaping the perceptions of, and transmitting cosmopolitan capital to a cultural and economic elite.

Taking these four dimensions together, we find that the elite are most likely to be culturally omnivorous, which amounts to a reflexive, discerning mentality applied within and across genres. Structural factors have been identified to explain omnivorousness as a new form of 'good taste,' of which the media have been central. Nevertheless, this research has yet to give the structure of taste as much attention as the agency of tasters. Warde argues that studies of consumption generally neglect the normalisation of practices and 'pay little attention to the creation of norms, standards and institutions which produce shared understandings and common procedures' (2014: 295). This is a critical gap. As Lamont notes: 'the cultural or organizational dimensions of all forms of sorting processes' are significant to the 'processes that sustain hierarchies' (2012: 202). The discourses of legitimacy reproduced in elite media effectively facilitate a classed distribution of 'repertoires of evaluation,' which in turn contribute to processes of social closure, demarcating more or less exclusive status groups on the basis of taste (Janssen, 2013: 65, *passim*). Without a grasp of the conventions of discernment, an understanding of taste is reduced to the autonomous, reflexive individual, and a charismatic ideology of culture (Bourdieu 1984: 390). This allows the institutional, conventional and habitual bases of social reproduction to remain hidden from critical view.

Thus, a better understanding of the shared logics and devices of elite, omnivorous taste is required. A necessary step involves investigations of how conventions of 'good taste' and cultural legitimacy are constructed through valuation and evaluative practices (Lamont, 2012). Logics of taste exist independently of individuals, operating as shared and embodied frameworks for interpreting aesthetic content, and exercised as devices for making discerning judgements (cf. Calarco, 2014: 1016). Such logics and devices may guide the skills associated with enacting and performing taste (e.g. the reflexive judgement of the omnivore), but so too may they render judgements habitual and unthinking (and thus all the more powerful as a basis for social reproduction).

## Democracy and Distinction in the Wine Field

Wine has long been established as a field of connoisseurship, thanks in part to the institutionalization of various quality assurance systems that hinged on the designation and ranking of specific vineyards and wine-producing regions (Charters, 2006; Fourcade, 2012; Garcia-Parpet, 2008; Howland, 2013). Bound up with these classifications is the notion of *terroir*, a French concept that links wine quality to the environment (soil, climate, topography, history and culture) in which it was produced (Charters, 2006). Formed through historic, economic and sociological forces, *terroir* and appellation systems more generally were devices for securing competitive advantage and monopoly rents (Fourcade, 2012; Harvey, 2002) and continue to be significant in commanding a price premium (Beckert et al., 2014). As a corollary to the construction of *terroir* as an Old World—especially French—wine product attribute, New World competitors were excluded from making related quality claims; thus, *terroir* was regarded in the New World as anti-democratic (Fourcade, 2012; Guy, 2001).

The Old World monopolization of *terroir*-based quality claims has eroded since the 1970s (Fourcade, 2012; Garcia-Parpet, 2008; Taber, 2005). Howland's excellent account of the democratization of fine wine notes six interrelated structural factors underpinning that erosion (2013: 330-32). These are: easier to understand varietal labelling; more accessible information about wine (via, e.g., the web, wine classes); a proliferation of easily communicated quality assurances (e.g. wine awards, points ranking systems); more affordable entry points to fine wine; greater proximity to exclusive origins of wine via winery tourism; and greater ordinariness of elite winemakers (via, e.g., media profiles, public events). At the same time, New World producers' search for competitive advantage through 'criteria of speciality, uniqueness, originality and authenticity' (Harvey, 2002: 100) have given rise to quality claims based on place, regionality, tradition and small-scale production (e.g. Pinney, 2005; Resnick, 2008). The term *terroir* itself has been absorbed into marketing and broadened in scope to include notions of personality and identity (Charters, 2006; Fourcade, 2012). Thus, quality claims have undergone democratization in the sense that *terroir* has been joined by, or folded within, a more expansive notion of provenance that is linked to wider concerns with and desires for authenticity rooted in the particularities of production (Inglis, 2015; Smith Maguire, 2013).

If today there is no longer a pretence of a neat Old/New World divide with regard to legitimacy, wine nevertheless remains a highly stratified cultural field. My empirical entry point—specialist wine magazines—is drawn from the wine field’s array of taste-making media, including wine writer blogs, wine store reviews, elite restaurant wine lists and tasting notes from wine award competitions. Such media are significant ‘legitimizing institutions with the cultural authority to bestow symbolic capital’ and frame particular goods as ‘worthy choices’ (Johnston and Baumann, 2007: 170). Just as media forms are cited as central mechanisms of democratization (e.g. Howland, 2013; Peterson, 2005), so too do they function as mechanisms in the reproduction of distinction and construction of cultural legitimacy. The wider implications of such media hinge on their ability to ‘extensively contextualize the meanings and motivations’ underpinning consumption practices (Johnston and Baumann, 2007: 170) and to accomplish the ‘socialization of individual desire and the redefinition of appetite in collective terms’ (Ferguson, 1998: 600). These magazines form part of the institutional infrastructure through which particular logics of taste are legitimated and circulated.

### **Wine Magazines and the Taste for the Particular**

My focus now turns to an analysis of representations of Old and New World wines in *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*. The magazines offer the benefit of focusing attention *within* the category of the legitimate to allow exploration of differences, if any, between the representation of *terroir* and provenance for what were once highbrow/lowbrow choices (i.e. for Old and New World wines). The research entailed an analysis of the market positioning and readership profiles of the two magazines, and a content analysis of 2008 and 2010 issues of the magazines, focusing on advertising, regular wine columns (James Laube *Wine Spectator*, Steven Spurrier *Decanter*), and feature articles explicitly relating to provenance or *terroir*.<sup>3</sup>

A coding schema captured how provenance elements (related to the product, the producer and context of production) were represented in terms of four frames for cultural legitimacy. The first three frames (transparency, heritage, genuineness) pertain to authenticity, which is an established meta-frame for the legitimization of omnivorous choices (Johnston and Baumann, 2007: 179) and for wine in particular, especially authenticity derived from provenance attributes such as where a wine was made, by whom, when and how (e.g. Beverland and Luxton, 2005; Harvey, 2002; Inglis, 2015; Smith Maguire, 2013). The three frames capture common markers of authenticity identified in previous research, including geographic specificity, personal

connections, hand crafted-ness, tradition and historicism, simplicity, that natural, local or rural, and anti-commercialism (e.g. Beverland et al., 2008; Botterill, 2007; Fine, 2003; Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Zukin, 2009). The fourth frame, external validation, pertains to legitimation devices external to the wine magazine that provide ostensibly objective guarantees for the provenance and quality of the wines. Previous research has underscored such devices as significant in the valuation of wine, including appellation designations and wine awards (Beckert et al., 2014; Garcia-Parpet, 2008; Karpik, 2010).

The analysis identified the most common frames and provenance elements within those frames (generally, those that appeared in at least 25 per cent of the advertising and wine column samples), and any significant differences in the representations of Old and New World wines.<sup>4</sup> Below, I discuss three main dimensions of the magazines' codification and circulation of a logic of the taste for the particular: first, the magazines themselves as institutions of legitimation; second, the democratization of *terroir*; and third, the preservation of established hierarchies of taste via *terroir*.

### ***Specialist magazines as legitimating institutions***

*Decanter* has been published in the UK (though half of its distribution is outside of the UK) since 1975; *Wine Spectator* has been published in the US since 1979. Both are widely considered to be among the most influential specialist wine magazines. The magazines are categorization devices (Lamont, 2012) with the capacity to categorize wines (and wine practices, regions and so forth) as legitimate. Their authority as arbiters of legitimate taste is both self-proclaimed (*Decanter's* tagline is 'the world's best wine magazine'; *Wine Spectator* subscription advertisements promise 'all the information you need to make a great wine purchase'), and inter-textually constructed and confirmed. The magazines' writers also serve as judges of prestigious award competitions; their reviews are cited by retailers and other wine writers; they publish 'best of' guides that present themselves as definitive judgements of quality and value.

The magazines' audiences also affirm their legitimacy as categorization devices. *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator* readerships<sup>5</sup> differ in terms of gender (59 per cent of *Wine Spectator* readers are men, versus 87 per cent of *Decanter*), but otherwise share the characteristics of the upper middle class. Both audiences consist of a majority of professional/managerial individuals with an average annual income of approximately US\$150,000, whose consumption patterns confirm their high levels of economic and cultural capital. For example, 86 per cent of *Decanter* readers have been on a wine-related holiday and 59 per cent have been on a wine course; 70 per cent of *Wine*

*Spectator* readers have travelled outside of the US in the past three years, and at least 60 per cent claim attending live theatre, museums and attending wine and food events/festivals as passions and hobbies.

Despite their similar readerships and shared focus on fine wines, *Decanter* is more Old World-focused: 77 per cent of *Decanter* advertisements focus on Old World producers (compared with 48 per cent in *Wine Spectator*); 45 per cent of Spurrier's *Decanter* columns are Old World-focused, compared with only four per cent of Laube's columns in *Wine Spectator*. Meanwhile, 54 per cent of Laube's columns, and none of Spurrier's, focus on US wines. Parallels can be drawn here with Janssen et al.'s (2008) observations regarding the inverse relationship between a country's centrality to global cultural production and the internationalization of their cultural reporting. However, the lower degree of international coverage in *Wine Spectator* is not only a symptom of the ascendancy of American (especially Californian) wine making, nor is *Decanter*'s more international content necessarily a sign of Europe's decline and thus more pronounced cosmopolitan outlook. The content also reflects the political economy of the magazines: unlike *Wine Spectator*, *Decanter* is aimed at a UK consumer with ready access to Old World (and especially French) wines but for whom American wines are scarce and heavily burdened by import duty—the reverse of the situation for the US reader of *Wine Spectator*. Caution should thus be exercised in seeing these differences as simply an expression of cross-cultural differences in omnivorousness (or a preserve of snobbishness in the UK). While these magazines have international readerships, their primary market is one that will set constraints upon editorial and advertising content.

### ***The democratization of terroir through the particularities of provenance***

The magazines' *raison d'être* is to construct legitimacy. The content analysis examined the relative presence of four legitimacy frames, all of which appeared in at least some of the advertisements and articles.

The most common legitimation frame was that of transparency, found in 82 per cent of the advertising and 74 per cent of the columns. Through representations of geographic and biographic specificity, the wine magazines construct some wines' provenance as transparent. Common examples included mention of the specific geographic location of the winery and pictures of, or quotes from winemakers. On the one hand, the origins of particular wines come to seem known or knowable (Trubeck, 2005) and thus trustworthy and credible (Sassatelli and Scott, 2001). On the other, wine in general is reproduced as the object of intellectual and aesthetic discernment—

an object for which origins matter. Moreover, transparency as a legitimizing frame offers a potentially high volume of diverse choices: all wines have some form of geographic or biographic specificity, and thus all wines theoretically can, by virtue of transparency, be legitimate (whereas heritage may be more difficult to claim for newer producers, and genuineness more difficult to substantiate).

Although transparency was the most common frame, the provenance elements through which wines were framed as transparent were more and less common for Old and New World wines. In terms of a more inclusive notion of *terroir*: elements linked to geographic specificity (specific references to the context of production, such as region, country of origin, time of production, location of vineyard or winery) did not differ significantly between advertising representations of Old and New World wines. Whereas, elements linked to biographic specificity did: New World wine advertisements were far more likely to include a visual image of the producer. Similarly, feature articles focused on New World wines were more likely to discuss, quote and depict the specific winemaker or winery owner. However, there is no New World monopoly on the cult of the winemaker: wine columns did not differ with respect to discussions of biographic specificity for Old and New World. Thus, the taste for the particular involves the construction of new boundaries between the legitimate and not-yet-legitimate (from Old vs. New World wines, to geographically- and biographically-specific vs. mass, standardized wines) and the categories that sustain those boundaries (from *terroir* to provenance).

The legitimation frame of heritage was found in 35 per cent of the advertising and 39 per cent of the wine columns. By providing visual and textual information on heritage, the wine magazines add value through links to tradition, historicism and an anti-modern nostalgia (e.g. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Peñaloza, 2000; Zukin, 2009). The most common provenance element to be framed in this way was the producer, via references to the history behind the winery, winemaker, wine brand or region. However, there were some significant differences: heritage frames were far more likely for Old World wines in terms of regional heritage (in the wine columns) and heritage of the style of winemaking (in the advertisements). While Old World regions have, on the whole, longer-term histories of winemaking, heritage is not exclusive to the Old World. There was no significant difference in frequency in advertising representations of heritage of the winery or brand (the most common form of heritage) between Old and New World wines, and the heritage of the winemaker (e.g. being a second or third generation winemaker) was included in the feature articles

more frequently for New World wines (a point of difference confirmed above with regard to biographic transparency).

The third frame, genuineness, was found in just over a quarter of both the advertising and columns. Previous research links authenticity to economic disinterestedness, the hand-crafted, a lack of artifice or homogeneity, and an opposition to the mass market (e.g. Beverland et al., 2008; Fine, 2003; Johnston and Baumann, 2007). This took various forms in the magazines. Most commonly, genuineness was used as a frame for the producer: 29 per cent of wine columns mentioned the producer's character or philosophy. Also common was the genuineness of product attributes: reference to a wine's genuine expression of where it is from appeared in 26 per cent of wine columns, and 17 per cent of the advertising sample. However, advertising for New World wines was significantly more likely to use genuineness as a frame in this way. In the feature articles, discussions of wine as genuine (commonly in relation to being innovative) occurred only in relation to New World wines.

Besides authenticity frames, the fourth legitimation frame for provenance was external validation. Devices such as lists, wine awards and reviews (Allen and Germov, 2010; Karpik, 2010) remain central for rendering provenance credible and valuable for both Old and New World wines. However, there were two major points of difference. Firstly, external validation of the context of production (reference to registered designations of origin, such as *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*, or AOC status) was found in 52 per cent of the advertising, but was present in significantly more Old World wine advertisements (68 per cent, compared with 26 per cent of New World ads). Similarly, 36 per cent of the columns on Old World wines referred to official designations of origin, but no columns on New World wines did so. This likely reflects the more established geographic indication systems within the Old World (although clearly it is not universally applied). While similar systems are now being institutionalized in other regions of the world (e.g. the promotion of regional geographic indicators in Australia), there is likely to be a credibility gap. Secondly, wine reviews were cited in significantly more advertising for New World wines; this difference was also found in the feature articles. Interestingly, references to wine awards appeared in only 19 per cent of the advertising sample, with no significant difference for Old and New World wines (cf. Allen and Germov, 2010).

In summary, all four legitimation frames were used for both groups of wines in both the editorial and advertising content. The logic of discernment does not operate along an Old/New World opposition, confirming a democratization of fine wine production.

For both Old and New World wines, geographic transparency and winery heritage are deemed credible criteria for evaluation and guarantors of quality. It is through the particularities of provenance (product, producer, context of production) that *terroir* is effectively democratized, becoming a seemingly universally available quality claim for all wines, regardless of region of origin. At the same time, there remain differences: regional heritage, winemaking style and the winemaker's personal biography are three provenance elements through which a wine may be framed as a worthy choice, but they are also vectors along which Old and New World differences continue to be articulated. The hyper specification of provenance—*terroir max*—retains its capacity to serve as a device for discernment, implicated in the categorization and legitimation of some wines as fine wines.

### ***The preservation of established hierarchies of taste***

The analysis found no strict Old/New World divide in the wine magazines with regard to where *terroir* could be found. The specific term '*terroir*' appeared in two-thirds of the feature articles, twice in reference to Old World wines, and six times in reference to New World wines. (Whereas, the specific term was used infrequently in advertising and wine columns, with no great difference in application to Old and New World wines.) However, the democratization of *terroir* is accompanied by differences within the category of the legitimate, as the previous section explored: there is a greater emphasis on heritage and external validation of the context of production for Old World wines, and a greater emphasis on transparency of the producer and genuineness of producer and product for New World wines.

The construction of distinction-within-democracy and reproduction of boundaries between Old and New World wines becomes apparent through a close reading of the *terroir*-focused feature articles. On the one hand, Old World wines can 'double dip' into the repertoires of *terroir*-based legitimacy. For example, an article discusses the pinot noir wines of an estate in Burgundy, France<sup>6</sup> (where *terroir* is referred to as *climat*):

The domaine's wines...transmit a sense of place, the fundamental notion of *climat* that is central to the character of great Burgundy. As such, each vineyard has its own distinctive character, structure and style. [The wine's] magic lies partly in its rarity and its history; however, when you taste the wine, its pedigree is immediately evident.

The link between the featured wine's quality and *terroir* are presented as self-evident, as would be expected given the legal protection that renders the region's name interchangeable with that of the wine (pinot noir made elsewhere cannot be called

Burgundy). Nevertheless, other legitimation frames are also in use in the article: transparency (the writer standing among the actual vines); heritage (pedigree); genuineness (the wine's magical style). Even in an article on a region considered the benchmark of *terroir*-led winemaking there is evidence of an expanded, democratized notion of provenance.

On the other hand, New World wines' claims to legitimacy remain reliant on the traditional, exclusive notion of *terroir* as their master referent—as the following three examples suggest. First: an article on Washington, US<sup>7</sup> suggests that the wines are remarkable because of 'the *terroir*—the land and the climate,' and singles out the winemakers who 'follow the estate model, with a winery in the same place as the vineyards.' The sommelier of an award-winning restaurant is quoted: 'For me, Washington state is the second-best place in the world for Syrah, after the Rhône Valley.' Second: an article on Chinese wine producers<sup>8</sup> focuses on those 'eagerly trying to prove that China has the right *terroir* to produce great wine, rather than just great amounts of wine.' The author highlights a young Chinese winemaker, a graduate of Bordeaux University's *Institut d'Oenologie*, who cultivates 5 acres of land on the slopes of a mountain range and whose '500 cases of Bordeaux-style wine are snapped up quickly. Luxury hotels...buy 60 percent, the Beijing government buys 20 percent and private clients buy the rest.' Third: an article on the wine regions in Victoria, Australia<sup>9</sup> focuses on small wineries producing 'exciting wines that are at once pure and Australian yet somehow European in style.' Highlighting Victorian Shiraz, 'often tellingly labelled as Syrah,' the author likens it to the style of the northern Rhône. A transplanted Rhône winemaker describes the diversity of soil in Victoria as 'amazing, like a second France.'

These examples echo the multiple frames found in the Burgundy article, yet with a marked difference. Unlike for the established legitimacy of Burgundian *terroir*, the representations of New World *terroir* invoke multiple forms of external validation: the sommelier who prefers the Washington Syrah, the luxury hotel that buys the Chinese Bordeaux blend, the French winemaker who considers Australian soil to be on par with that of France. In all three examples, credibility for New World *terroirs* is transferred through external validation—not simply through reference to protected designations of origin or wine competition awards, but through association with the established legitimacy of France and French winemaking. Legitimacy is derived in terms of terminology (e.g. '*terroir*'), grape varieties ('noble' Syrah grapes), style of winemaking (e.g. 'European' style; Rhône Syrah), and culture of production (e.g. the 'estate' model, France-trained winemakers). These examples suggest a shift from a stark contrast

between Old and New World to variations in degrees of legitimacy, and increasing diversity of the category of legitimate taste (Elias, 1994). These findings offer contextualizing insight into discussions of the decline of deference for high culture—and French culture in particular—in the contemporary period (Janssen, 2006; Janssen et al., 2008; Prieur and Savage, 2013). The case of fine wine suggests that European culture retains its master status in terms of cultural cachet and the power to legitimate, if not in terms of the material production of culture.

### **What Do Logics of Taste Do?**

Bourdieu's account of the interweaving of habitus, capital, field and practice (1984) invites an examination of the creation and habituation of logics of taste: shared schemes of perception and appreciation that mobilize individual dispositions and preferences. Such conventions tend to operate through oppositions; they are principles of division (Bourdieu 1984: 479) that reduce complexity and make selection and categorization a manageable—even unthinking—exercise. Logics of taste are powerful mechanisms of social reproduction: inexorable forces (that push and pull, enable and constrain) through which certain ways of thought, desire and embodied action appear not only reasonable but natural.

My focus has been on specialist wine magazines as mechanisms of categorization and legitimation, through which a convention (the taste for the particular) is made explicit and circulated as an accepted part of an upper middle class consuming habitus. Several limitations of this approach bear mention. I have paid only cursory attention to the political economic and institutional forces shaping the production of the magazines' content, while neglecting both the subjective dispositions of their contributors (cf. Smith Maguire, 2013) and the other mediated forms that contribute to the institutional infrastructure for the conventionalization of good taste in the wine field. And, while previous research suggests ways in which readers *might* utilize the magazines as pawns in games of distinction, as they do wine itself (e.g. Jarness, 2013), the negotiated understandings of the readers are excluded from this analysis. I have also bracketed off questions of how logics of taste take shape over time; whether and to what degree legitimation frameworks form meaningful conditions of existence that are embodied in the habitus of individuals; and what other logics of discernment overlay and compete with an opposition between the particular and the mass for different habitus formations. These remain pressing questions for the community of scholars studying consumption.

In closing, let me suggest three implications of the taste for the particular, vis-à-vis the question of what logics of taste do. First, the taste for the particular is a logic for coping with the conditions of existence in a culture of abundance: amidst proliferating consumer choices and information about those choices, it is a logic that reduces complexity. While the taste for the particular resonates with the high involvement connoisseurship of reflexive omnivores, it is also—via media such as specialist wine magazines—a logic of discernment by proxy: a nuanced evaluation of options can be delegated to the wine review or the simplified opposition of wine from *somewhere*, versus wine from *anywhere*.

Second, the taste for the particular is a logic for preserving the game of distinction in a culture of democratization. In part, this entails inscribing distinction within newly legitimate areas (e.g. Chinese fine wine), and reintroducing aesthetic distance for that which has become conventional. For example, *terroir max* is a way to rehabilitate French wine, which risks becoming too ‘obvious’ in a field that espouses messages such as ‘the weirder, the better.’ A corollary of this logic is the prolific generation of further potentially worthy choices. Seemingly any cultural practice, object or field becomes ‘available’ as an arena for the hyper specification of provenance and exercise of discernment.

Finally: while it might potentially disrupt the established cultural hierarchy of what counts as good taste, the taste for the particular is ultimately a conservative logic. Bourdieu suggested (1984: 480) that logics are formalized as classificatory schemes only when the established order is threatened; their codification is a device for assuring the continuation of the social order by objectifying and institutionalizing the dominant group’s taken-for-granted habitual codes and imposing them on others via collective representations. The media of connoisseurship is such a collective representation. Specialist wine magazines are part of a transmission belt pulling the rising new elites into an established order, so that the established stakes continue to count. Rather than a single criteria—*terroir*—there are now multiple provenance elements through which the legitimacy of wines may be represented. And, while *terroir* is extended to include New World wines, it retains the Old World and especially France as referent.

The taste for the particular is thus a preservation mechanism. As the hallmarks of elite taste become readily available to all, such a logic is a way to exercise modesty and discernment (e.g. by choosing the small-scale over the mass). This is a logic for coping with the changing terrain of social stratification as the membership of the elite

diversifies (e.g. to include Chinese fine wine investors and Australian *terroirists*). The dominance of the European bourgeois cultural canon and the established values of restraint and foresight as hallmarks of civility (Bourdieu, 1984; Elias, 1994) are reproduced, in a manner that doesn't jar against liberal values in a globalized world. Taste remains a process by which social distance and distinction can be maintained, albeit through narrower margins and more elaborate codes.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Old World wines are primarily considered to be those from France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Austria; New World wine producers include Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, the United States and Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu's account anticipates the generational shift towards cultural tolerance: the new bourgeoisie reject the 'aristocratic stiffness' and social distance of their bourgeois progenitors (1984: 311, 315); the new petit bourgeoisie's 'controlled transgressions' of cultural hierarchies were attempts to 'rehabilitate and ennoble' not-yet-legitimate cultural forms, and thus monopolize them as their own (1984: 326). Increased tolerance can thus be seen as an engine for (not the death knell of) the dynamism of taste regimes through which successive groups distance themselves from their predecessors.

<sup>3</sup> The advertising sample (n = 124: 65 from *Decanter*; 59 from *Wine Spectator*) consisted of all full page or larger advertisements from four 2010 issues each of *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*, for red and white still and sparkling wine and their producing regions, excluding fortified wine, liquor or non-drinks advertising and duplicates. The wine column sample (n=31) consisted of the 2008 and 2010 monthly columns of James Laube (*Wine Spectator*) and Steven Spurrier (*Decanter*); this

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produced 50 items (28 from Laube; 22 from Spurrier), which were then reduced to only those columns that focused explicitly on Old and/or New World wine. The sample of feature articles (n = 12) consisted of all features from 2010 issues for which provenance, heritage, *terroir* or regionality were explicitly mentioned in the table of contents description.

<sup>4</sup> The relative presence of the legitimization frames was assessed as follows. Frames that appeared in at least 25 per cent of the Old or New World portions of the advertising or wine column samples for any provenance element were noted as common, and differences between framings of Old and New World wine were assessed via Pearson's chi-squared test (results of  $p < 0.05$  were noted as statistically significant and are reported in the findings).

<sup>5</sup> Information on magazine readership composition was obtained from the magazines' media kits (available online:

<http://content.yudu.com/A1qxf/DecanterMediaInfo/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.decanter.com%2F>;

[http://www.mshanken.com/winespectator/ws/WSM\\_Reader11.pdf](http://www.mshanken.com/winespectator/ws/WSM_Reader11.pdf)), which cite the

following sources for their information: NOP 2009 for *Decanter* readership

demographics and IPC Media Insight Decanter survey, January 2010 for *Decanter*

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reader hobbies; and MRI Fall 2010 Survey for *Wine Spectator* readership demographics and Mendelsohn Affluent Study 2010 for *Wine Spectator* reader hobbies.

<sup>6</sup> Sanderson, B. 2010. 'Terroir and transparency.' *Wine Spectator*, 31 May.

<sup>7</sup> Steiman, H. 2010. 'Washington an open secret.' *Wine Spectator*, 15 December.

<sup>8</sup> Graham, M. 2010. 'Finding China's terroir.' *Wine Spectator*, 31 October.

<sup>9</sup> Catchpole, A. 2010. 'Victoria: Cool climate, diverse *terroirs* and elegant wines.'

*Decanter*, 8 January.