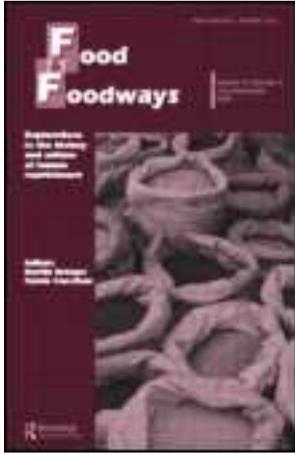


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### Tasting and Judging the Unknown Terroir of the Bulgarian Wine: The Political Economy of Sensory Experience

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# **Tasting and Judging the Unknown *Terroir* of the Bulgarian Wine: The Political Economy of Sensory Experience**

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*Some Bulgarian winemakers insist that their unique terroir (taste of place) and native grapes can deliver a “distinctive” product in the global market. Such beliefs are the driving force for marginal producers to continue with their wine production in a fiercely competitive global wine market despite the lack of brand equity and cultural capital compared to the world’s elite wines. How can the global consumer sense this unique “taste of place” which is itself an elusive culturally cultivated concept? What does gastronomic connoisseurship entail in a highly globalized world where knowledge of local products and taste are exchanged and experienced in a standardized way as a global foodway? Understanding these questions from the viewpoints of the Bulgarian wine sector, this article discusses the intersection of the sensory experience and the implicit global hierarchy of value that wine producers and consumers employ to objectify and communicate the subjective taste knowledge and identity of place.*

*“What makes a good wine? 3Gs: the Ground, the Grape, and the Guy.”<sup>1</sup>*

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THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE OF TASTE AND THE DISCOURSE  
OF *TERROIR*

Many wine aficionados will recall the historical wine event nicknamed “The Judgment of Paris” in 1976, which changed the fate of American and French wines (Taber 197–209).<sup>2</sup> The Judgment of Paris was a wine competition where a panel of renowned French wine experts blind-tasted French and American (Californian) wines. It was co-organized by Steven Spurrier, a British wine merchant then living in Paris. The French dominated the world of wine to such an extent that only a single journalist covered the event—few people imagined that Californian wines could possibly be “better” than a Bordeaux or Burgundy, arguably the best-known French elite wine regions! To wine aficionados’ shock, however, the Californian wines took the first prize in both the white and red wine categories. The event sparked a productive rivalry between the so-called “Old” and “New” World wines,<sup>3</sup> and American wines have gained in status for the past 30 years.

This historical wine competition brought into focus the question of *terroir*—the (cultivated) taste of place, a culturally embedded concept upon which the French wine industry has been developed (Colman; Demossier, “Contemporary Lifestyles,” *Wine Drinking Culture*, “Beyond *Terroir*”; Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Ulin, “Invention and Representation”). After the wine competition, the French jury, the members of which were renowned French wine experts at the time, was accused by the French public of failing to recognize the taste of French *terroir* and thereby “betraying” the mother country. Accounts from the tasters of the Judgment of Paris also suggest that they were confused as to which wines tasted “typically” French and reflected a distinctive French *terroir* (Taber 197–209). This event raised interesting questions in regards to the material qualities of the sensory experience and how they are articulated, exchanged, and recognized by wine aficionados. If these professionally trained palates, who believe in the importance of *terroir*, had difficulty identifying a familiar place-based taste, how can a global consumer-connoisseur recognize the unique taste of a particular *terroir*? How does an unknown *terroir* achieve a place-based identity based on its sensory qualities of taste? If sensory experiences are inherently culturally cultivated, what does the French concept of *terroir* mean to producers of place-based food products who feel compelled to adopt this concept to create a unique sensory identity for their commodities in the globalized world? (Sutton).

These questions were brought to light during my fieldwork in Bulgaria in 2008 when Steven Spurrier, who organized the 1976 Judgment of Paris event, came to Bulgaria to “judge” the local wines. As I describe more in detail below, these kinds of wine events highlight the value-added premium of place-based taste identities and the possibilities as well as limitations for marginal producers to engage with powerful, global taste knowledge to carve out a distinctive local identity in the competitive global marketplace.

Moreover, they highlight the articulation *between* local and global politics of taste in wine, which has largely been neglected in the discussion of *terroir*. Although the discourse of *terroir* has historically been organized in terms of hierarchical relations influencing the relative value of wine as a commodity, how this discourse plays out as a “global hierarchy of value,” namely a perceived universal commonality (Herzfeld), in light of the ever-expanding and highly competitive global wine trade has not been attended to thus far. Furthermore, why the discourse of *terroir*, among other discourses, has become the hegemonic standards by which unknown premium wines from marginalized wine producing areas are tasted and evaluated begs the question of the role and power of both local and global actors in the wine world as arbiters of taste and in the reproduction of a global wine hierarchy.

In this paper, I engage with discussions about the sensory qualities of place, which go beyond the idea of the sensorial as indexing refined taste, a marketing strategy, or adding another case study about the constructed nature of taste (Paxson, “Locating Value,” *The Life of Cheese*; Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Weiss; Bourdieu; Laudan; cf. Wilson; Ulin, “Globalization and Alternative Localities”). The article does not discuss the nature, representation, or contestations over the idea and practice of *terroir* per se, which has been well documented in the literature on place-based commodities including wine (Demossier “Beyond *Terroir*,” “Following *Grand Crus*”; Daynes; Meneley, “Like an Extra Virgin”; Paxson, “Locating Value”; Sternsdorff Cisterna; Swinburn; Teil; Ulin, *Vintages and Traditions*; Wilson). Instead, I examine how a supposedly unique local taste experience such as flavors and other material qualities of sensory experiences rely on a standardized and globally sanctioned sensory experience and knowledge (cf. Herzfeld; Wilk).

In light of the idea that sensory experiences are culturally cultivated, meaning one’s senses are developed within one’s cultural environment (e.g., a person who has never tasted lychee before would not be able to associate the sensory descriptions in the way someone who has tasted it before would), it is interesting to think about how the “uniqueness” comes to be appreciated (Sutton). In other words, the legitimization of “uniqueness” occurs through standardized hegemonic taste knowledge. While the discourse of *terroir* seems to highlight the *unique* qualities of taste that derive from a particular place, I argue that it is not so much this uniqueness but rather the *discernible difference* sanctioned by professional tasters and aficionados that mediates and reproduces the sensory experience of a given place. In a globalized world, the recognition of discernible difference is the basis for a hegemonic taste knowledge of place-based foods. By hegemonic taste knowledge, I refer to the cultural authority that certain concepts such as *terroir* came to dominate in validating the taste experience of premium quality commodities (such as elite wines). In the era of globalization, the “taste of place” becomes only meaningful if it can be recognized as such by global tasters who rely on common sensory experiences to articulate and

exchange these experiences. I suggest the communication of taste experience is important in a globalized world with diverse foodways and is influenced by expert knowledge about the taste of place, regardless of whether this knowledge is constructed and contested. Such taste knowledge exchanges reproduce power relations based on a global hierarchy of value. According to Herzfeld, “the global hierarchy of value represents the most comprehensive and globally ramified form of common sense and creates a sense of universal commonality. It is promulgated worldwide by colonial powers of Europe—it is everywhere but nowhere definable explicitly” (3). This concept of a global hierarchy of value is instructive in understanding how *terroir* came to be understood and accepted as hegemonic evaluative standards for taste and premium quality because the authority of the global hierarchy of value stems from its vagueness (for example that it is from “the West,” or in the case of *terroir* narrative, from “the French”) that accounts for and protects itself vis-à-vis other value claims.

In what follows, I explore the intersection of sensory experience and the implicit global hierarchy of value that wine producers and consumers employ to objectify and communicate the subjective taste knowledge and identity of place. By attending to how wine tasters (experts and aficionados alike) experience, exchange, and articulate the material qualities of “taste” from particular locales, I examine two examples from the Bulgarian wine sector in regards to how Bulgarian wine producers engage in the discourse of “the taste of place” to market and elevate its standing in the global wine hierarchy. In particular, I focus on the following questions: How can the global consumer sense a *terroir* (“taste of place”), which is itself an elusive culturally cultivated concept? What does gastronomic connoisseurship entail in a globalized world where knowledge of local products and taste are exchanged and experienced in a standardized ways as global foodways (e.g., how to appreciate wine and organize the tasting experience; this can be seen in numerous wine classes offered across the world, which follow a standardized curriculum on wine tasting)? And finally, what is the meaning of *terroir* (taste of place) or “local” taste if taste knowledge relies on specific kinds of sensory experiences that are validated by the so-called global wine experts and hegemonic taste knowledge?

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Bulgaria (non-consecutively between 2008–2013) among Bulgarian wine producers and consumers, the ethnographic examples I present here are well situated to demonstrate how the taste of an unknown *terroir* (taste of place or “local taste”) is understood and evaluated in the competitive global markets, and how Bulgarian wine producers perceive and interact with a hegemonic *terroir* discourse that confers a sanctioned identity for a particular premium-quality wine from a particular place. This process shows how hegemonic taste knowledge and a global wine hierarchy based on such knowledge continues to be reproduced despite the prevailing emphasis on local uniqueness and

diversification within the global wine sector or growing internal contestations of *terroir*, as well as the accompanying AOC (Appelations d'Origine Contrôlée) system (Demossier, "Contemporary Lifestyles"; Campbell and Guibert; Anderson; Demossier, "Beyond *Terroir*"; Teil). At the same time, finding a way to articulate a discernible difference through the sensorial affords marginalized wine producers a space of agency to partake and shape the hegemonic taste knowledge.

## BULGARIAN WINE

While few people might be familiar with Bulgarian wine, Bulgaria has a long history of wine production dating back to the Thracians who lived around the Black Sea since 700 BC (Borislavov). During the 500 years of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, Bulgarians produced primarily homemade wines for ritual purposes and folk festivities. It was not until the communist period (1944–1989) when the wine sector industrialized and Bulgaria became the designated wine country in the COMECON (the economic alliance of the former Soviet allies in Eastern Europe). This turned the Bulgarian wine industry into a heavily export-oriented one (exporting 60–70% of their entire production) (Noev).<sup>4</sup> Most of the exports went to Soviet allies, but the highest quality wines were exported to Western European countries, including the UK, where they gained a reputation for "good quality for value" in the 1980s (Gilby). Japan also imported significant quantities of bulk wine from Bulgaria in the 1980s and 1990s. The collapse of the communist regime in Bulgaria in 1989 left the wine industry with a series of challenges to privatize the state-owned vineyards and wineries, which resulted in a loss of market share in the global wine trade compared to the 1980s (see also Moulton, Simova, and Young). Since the late 1990s, Bulgarian wine producers have been trying to regain and expand their global market share. After Bulgaria entered the European Union in 2007, the EU policies on wine and agriculture have posed additional challenges in marketing and elevating its standing in the global wine market (see Jung, "Traces of the Past").

The increasing emphasis on *terroir* and "placed-based" taste products in the global food market has compelled Bulgarian winemakers to engage more aggressively in the debate about "place and taste": Wine in particular became a hotly-debated placed-based commodity protected by PDOs (Protected Designation of Origin) in the EU (for a more detailed overview of the history of the Bulgarian wine industry, see Jung, "Partaking the Wine Lake," "Traces of the Past," "Globalization, Wine Classification"). My ethnographic examples will show the tension, driving force, and limitations for marginal wine producers who continue to produce wine in the fiercely competitive global wine market despite their lack of brand equity and cultural capital compared to the world's elite wines.

## THE SENSORY QUALITIES OF PLACE

In recent debates about food and foodways, the notion of particular locales or “place” has gained attention in the analysis of ethically and politically motivated food practices such as Slow Food, local food, and place-based food commodities (Guthman; Leitch; Paxson, “Locating Value”; Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Weiss). Along with popular alternative food movements and their critique against the perils of globalized and industrialized food systems, these debates have highlighted the social and cultural importance of preserving local heritage food and “local” taste (Pollan; Schlosser; Petrini). Taste here becomes an important quality and characteristic of a given place.

Taste in this context is understood as synesthesia (the union of senses), which addresses more specifically the sensory experience as a culturally cultivated phenomenon or as a complex “sensory field” including the material, emotional, and ecological experiences of the senses through which the taste of place is cultivated (Sutton; Weiss). Taste thus is not merely confined to the gustatory but embraces other elements that ultimately influence one’s taste experience, and more importantly, affirm a taste memory of a particular place. In other words, both material and immaterial factors play a role in the taster’s ability to remember and articulate the taste of a particular place through a food commodity.

On the other hand, taste has also been discussed in terms of connoisseurship as we commonly see with place-based commodities such as coffee or wine (Goldstein; Demossier, *Wine Drinking*). Here taste is experienced and articulated by means of sensory discernment which, according to the expert-tasters, is cultivated through the training of one’s palate: The more you taste something repeatedly, the more sensitive and discerning your taste becomes. “Taste,” in this sense, privileges the gustatory and becomes the basis of class differentiation or “distinction” associated with identity politics, brand equity, and socio-economic values (Bourdieu).

While these scholarly approaches to “taste” have greatly contributed to our understanding of the relationship between food, the senses, and cultural practices, they have been limited to analyzing the specifics of place such as its *uniqueness* and how such uniqueness comes about through social and cultural processes. Although these studies acknowledge the invented nature of a “unique” taste, little attention has been given to how the sensory discernment of *terroir* is articulated and communicated as taste knowledge (Ulin, “Invention and Representation”; Guy; Demossier, *Wine Drinking*).<sup>5</sup>

Brad Weiss’ recent work on North Carolina’s pasture-raised pork is a notable exception as it discusses the *terroir* discourse in relation to the sensory experience and “the production of space,” pointing to a connection between the larger political-economic restructuring of everyday life and embodied practices (Lefebvre). His argument revolves around how “a place’s tastes are cultivated within. . . a shared, if also contested, sensory field” (Weiss 441) and

identifies the experiential qualities that are embedded in the process of sensory discernment. Rather than assuming an inherent relationship between taste and place, as is often the case in *terroir* debates, he problematizes the link between taste and place, arguing that places are constituted by certain food commodities (such as “local” pasture-raised pork), and their taste also becomes one of place’s constituent qualities. In other words, characteristic dimensions of place such as taste “have been remade by remaking pig and pork” in Piedmont, North Carolina (Weiss 441).

This insight is particularly useful not only in understanding the process of (re)making place, but also in grasping the centrality of sensory experience in this process of identifying and discerning places. Cultivating sensory discernment has become important in articulating locality. Expressions of sensory discernments are not merely the index of refined taste, but are important components in constituting new spaces of knowledge (e.g., Silverstein). My argument builds upon this scholarship but attends more specifically to how these spaces of taste knowledge come about. I focus on how they become reproduced as hegemonic taste knowledge among marginal wine producers who are attempting to engage with and be recognized by this dominant *terroir* discourse in order to elevate their standing in the global wine hierarchy.

#### *TERROIR* AND THE PRODUCTION OF HEGEMONIC TASTE KNOWLEDGE

Anthropological fieldwork often comes with the charm of serendipity. Imagine my surprise when I learned during the first phase of my research in 2008–2009 that I would be meeting the high-profile British wine expert Steven Spurrier, who organized the “Judgment of Paris” wine competition that I discussed in the beginning of the article. In October 2008, I had an unforgettable encounter with Mr. Spurrier, who was invited to a Bulgarian wine competition to evaluate Bulgarian wines.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, his participation drew much attention from the Bulgarian media, which nicknamed the event “the Judgment of Sofia,” after the capital city’s name where the event was held. The larger public, for whom Bulgarian wine has been a source of national pride and beloved cultural heritage, was eager to learn what a renowned global wine expert had to say about the overall quality of Bulgarian wines. Needless to say, the material qualities of taste were considered a central element. The small but growing group of Bulgarian wine aficionados<sup>7</sup> as well as the Bulgarian winemakers were keen on learning specifically how Mr. Spurrier would appreciate (or not) and comment on the *terroir* (taste of place) of Bulgarian wines. Although the very idea of *terroir* and the ensuing legalized and bureaucratized system of AOC have been consistently contested in France since its inception, paradoxically they have been proliferating and actively adopted across the world as means of overcoming the

anonymity of mass-produced and globally circulating commodities and to protect local, regional, and national interests against the challenges of globalization (Demossier, “Beyond *Terroir*”; Teil; Black and Ulin). They validate higher quality amidst homogeneity. As Teil wittily puts it, the more AOCs are considered to be suspect in its place of origin, the more they expand to other countries and products! (253).

The globalized wine knowledge that is built upon the idea of *terroir* and reflected in the creation of various AOC systems across the world can be considered a form of hegemonic knowledge that validates premium quality.<sup>8</sup> *Terroir* both as discourse and practice has become an attribute of premium (high) quality wine and reflect “the global hierarchy of value” (Herzfeld). Indeed, the authority that the *terroir* discourse as a marker for premium quality conveys is illustrated by several ethnographic studies on wine regions in the “New World” such as Chile and Australia where *terroir* narratives have been central in elevating the reputation of their wines in the global wine hierarchy (Sternsdorff Cisterna; Swinburn). This is not to say that the *terroir* narrative is adopted by the global wine trade without contestations. Yet, as Teil convincingly suggests, global actors such as wine merchants, wine critics (e.g., Robert Parker) including the highly regarded Masters of Wine (MW), sommeliers, and high-profile elite connoisseurs have been influential (even as they are contested and contest amongst themselves) of reproducing the *terroir* narrative as hegemonic wine knowledge. Even as local actors in the Chilean and Australian wine sectors struggle to define what *terroir* means in their respective local context, they also understand that resisting this discourse would further peg them as price-for-value mass producers of wine. This is part of the global processes of producing power differentials, and as the concept of the global hierarchy of value suggests, resistance to these processes risks further marginalization because of the complex political economy attached to these global processes (Herzfeld 170, 209–210).

So, what implications does this kind of hegemonic knowledge of wine have on articulating the sensory experience of taste for marginal wine producers? What role does *terroir* play in cultivating sensory discernment, which, I argue, has become important in articulating a distinctive identity of premium quality wines?

Let me return to my ethnographic case of the wine competition to illustrate my points. The wine competition itself unfolded somewhat dramatically because of the tension amongst the domestic panels vis-à-vis the international panel, as well as what some people perceived as the flawed organization of the competition (this event is discussed in greater detail elsewhere [Jung, “Globalization, Wine Classification”]). Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged as the first wine competition that was not organized by the Bulgarian wine industry. Rather, it was organized by the only specialized wine magazine in Bulgaria, and the organizers worked hard to invite internationally recognized, high-profile wine experts including Mr. Spurrier,

a Portuguese wine critic, a Greek wine consultant, an Italian winemaker and consultant, as well as an internationally certified Bulgarian sommelier and a Bulgarian wine merchant/consultant who had the qualification of an expert taster having passed rigorous wine courses in Austria (similar to Masters of Wine).

In preparation of the wine competition, the main staff of the wine magazine traveled across the country to identify premium quality wines that would qualify for the domestic panels. These panels consisted of three types of jury: wine merchants and wine writers, winemakers, and wine aficionados (many of whom belonged to the wine club that the magazine organized). Each domestic panel was asked to evaluate the top 50 wines that the organizers qualified for the domestic panels. Mr. Spurrier and his fellow jury members who made up the international jury were eventually presented with the top 20 Bulgarian wines selected by these domestic panels. Unlike the 1976 Judgement of Paris, the competition included only Bulgarian wines (rather than being compared to French wines, for example). The international jury was assigned with two tasks: first, to rank the top 20 Bulgarian wines and second, to identify the top Bulgarian wine. Mr. Spurrier was the chair of the final international jury, and after the competition was over, I conducted an interview with him where I asked him about *terroir*, fine wine, and his thoughts about Bulgarian wine.

Author: What is your impression of Bulgarian wines?

SS: Well, I don't really have an answer to your question because I have only tasted 20 wines and it would be presumptuous of me to induce a general impression of all Bulgarian wines. From what I have tasted, however, I do have an impression and that is that they are good. They certainly don't have problems with getting the fruitiness and aroma. Perhaps they pick the grapes [when they are] overripe. There is little acidity.

Author: What about minerality? I heard that was a distinctive characteristic of a fine wine. Could you detect any minerality?

SS: No. No minerality.

Author: In all of the 20 wines you tasted?

SS: No.

Author: Can a young wine be a fine wine?

SS: No. It can be called good but it won't qualify as fine wine. In the wine culture, "fine" is also determined by its aging capability. According to the EU standards, a premium quality wine cannot be released without being aged for over two years.

Author: Why is this so?

SS: Our winemaking history and tradition has proven that to get the complexity [of flavor] of a living product such as wine, you need time.

Author: What makes a good wine to you?

SS: I call it the 3Gs—ground (soil), grape, and guy (winemaker).

Author: Why are they the most important elements?

SS: Because the identity of a fine wine is expressed through these three elements.

According to Mr. Spurrier, none of the top 20 Bulgarian wines he tasted exhibited “minerality.” In the wine world, minerality is one of the main characteristics that links “taste” and “place” because the material qualities of taste are articulated through the sensory experience of the minerals that the wine taster is supposed to detect from a *terroir*-distinctive wine. Granted, minerality is not the only quality that is associated with “place,”<sup>9</sup> but because much discussion on *terroir* focuses on the climatic and geological conditions that affect the soil where the grapes are grown, minerality is considered an important characteristic in understanding the taste of a given *terroir*.<sup>10</sup>

One of my key informants, Zvetan,<sup>11</sup> a veteran winemaker with over 30 years of winemaking experience in the state-owned wineries and who now owns a boutique winery in Bulgaria, repeatedly emphasized that minerality is key in making “fine” wine that reflects the distinctive *terroir* of the locale where the grapes were grown. He said that minerality reflects the taste of the soil which came about from multiple geological factors such as wind, moisture, soil composition, and so on. “Do you know why this is so?” he asked me once. “It’s because fine wine comes from grapes that struggle, like in the midst of gravels and rocks—fine wine doesn’t come from rich soil.”

In the interview, Mr. Spurrier also stressed the importance of “ground” for a good quality wine. His position clearly represents the hegemonic wine knowledge where the taste of place is centrally positioned in evaluating the quality of wine. But how do marginal winemakers present the taste of an unknown ground? What does it take to be recognized as premium wine producers coming from unknown grounds in terms of a distinctive sensory/gustatory experience?

Unlike other food commodities like American artisanal cheese, Vermont maple syrup, Tuscan olive oil, and North Carolina pork (Paxson, *The Life of Cheese*, “Locating Value”; Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Menneley, “Like an Extra Virgin,” “Extra Virgin Olive Oil”; Weiss) which adapt to the specific cultural and social contexts to “invent” local taste and generate taste knowledge, wine has been the model in creating added value from the taste of place. In other words, many place-based commodities adopt the “wine speak”<sup>12</sup> in generating a discourse about the taste of place to promote the distinctive value and identity of the commodity (Silverstein). As discussed earlier, the *terroir* discourse was the basis of the appellation model of the French wine industry and this model has influenced the entire global wine industry producing fine and distinctive wine, as demonstrated by global wine expert such as Mr. Spurrier and by local winemakers of marginal wine regions (Colman; Demossier, *Wine Drinking*; Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Ulin, “Invention

and Representation as Cultural Capital.”). *Terroir* is undeniably one of the sanctioned forms of hegemonic taste knowledge regarding fine (premium quality) wine.

While Bulgarians see themselves as old producers of wine, Bulgaria's standing in the global wine hierarchy has been low. They are neither represented as Old World producers nor New World producers. Much of what the Bulgarian wine industry produces has been considered mass-produced “commercial” wine with little distinctive characteristics that would fit in the taste-of-place discourse. It is important to emphasize that the taste-of-place discussion applies primarily to premium quality wines. The discourse of *terroir* has little resonance for table wines. Although Bulgaria is always mentioned as one of the world's wine-producing countries, it is a marginal player in the world's wine industry both in terms of overall production and quantity/distribution network, as well as its limited reputation among the world's premium (elite) wines (Robinson; Johnson and Robinson). The debates concerning how to cultivate and market the “Bulgarian” identity of Bulgarian wine have become central to Bulgarian wine producers of premium-quality wine since the collapse of the communist regime when Bulgaria's wine industry faced a different and more competitive global market. Because Bulgaria exports a high proportion of its wines, wine producers feel compelled to engage in the hegemonic wine knowledge such as the discourse of *terroir* to sell their wines not only for their price value but for premium quality as well. At the same time, they find it challenging to be evaluated by it, as I will demonstrate below.

While other food commodities can adapt to their particular circumstances emulating the French wine model, wine producing countries' wine hierarchies have adopted the standards of the French model with few adaptations. These hierarchical models reflect national interests in protecting the origin and quality of premium products. Every major wine-producing country has a hierarchical model that categorizes their wine in terms of quality. Quality, here, is intimately related to “taste” and “place.” These standards include an assessment of the material qualities of the sensory experience reflected in the given “place” (or *terroir*) that have been developed over many years. Furthermore, they have become the sanctioned evaluative standards through which wine as a food commodity is assessed not only in the local level but also at a global level.

How can an unknown *terroir* such as Bulgarian wine enter the hegemonic wine knowledge, thereby creating a path that allows global wine connoisseurs to recognize the “taste of Bulgaria” in a Bulgarian wine or, more specifically, the taste of a particular place (i.e. a particular wine region) in Bulgaria? Is it possible for an unknown “ground” (as Mr. Spurrier called it) to be judged and appreciated by global wine aficionados in terms of the hegemonic wine knowledge, thereby entering the ranks of globally recognizable premium wines? The following section discusses two local strategies that are

at the center of the debate among Bulgarian wine producers regarding how to cultivate a Bulgarian wine identity to boost sales based on the sensorial characteristic that stem from the taste of place.

ELEVATING THE GLOBAL STANDING OF BULGARIAN WINE  
THROUGH THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE OF DISCERNABLE  
DIFFERENCE: TWO TALES OF THE “TASTE” OF BULGARIAN WINE

During my fieldwork in Northwestern Bulgaria, I often heard my key-informant winemakers explain how their wines differed from other regions in Bulgaria or elsewhere in the world because of their *unique* place. Some vineyards around the small town of Belogradchik where I did my fieldwork, for example, were nestled on red sandstone soil located between rock formations millions of years old. The area was also situated by the Western slopes of the Balkan Mountains and just south of the Danubian Plains, which offer particular climatic and geological conditions that ought to influence the *terroir* expression of grapes grown there. These winemakers fully embraced the concept of *terroir* and suggested that their Pinot Noir, for example, tasted very different from ones produced in Southern Bulgaria (a bigger and more popular wine region), and one could notice the sensorial difference because the wines from the south were considered more fruity (fruit-forward) and with little acidity compared to the wines produced in the Northwestern region.

As Maria, an experienced winemaker, put it:

The global wine consumer gets bored of drinking a Bordeaux or Burgundy, or a Napa Cab [Cabernet Sauvignon], or an Australian Cab for that matter and want something different. Some winemakers here say that's why we should focus on making wine from our native grapes...you know like Mavrud...but, how often do you think the global wine consumers want to drink Mavrud? Yes, it is exotic, so they will try it once or twice, but I think we will have a better chance of showing the unique qualities of Bulgarian wines through the unique place where we grow our grapes. Because wine lovers in the world know how a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa or how a Bordeaux tastes like, it is easy for them to discern the difference in a Bulgarian Cab—or they ought to be able to do so more easily, don't you think?

Maria was clearly advocating for the idea of *terroir* and believed that the discerning sensorial qualities can allow Bulgarian wines to be identified and recognized differently. At the same time, many other Bulgarian winemakers embraced the idea that the taste of place was not just reflected in the *terroir* of a given place but could be sensed through the native grapes that were unique to Bulgaria. They also added that these different varieties were more easily

discernible sensorially. What is noteworthy here is that both the discourses of *terroir* and the native grapes resorted to the discernible difference of the sensory experience of wine to articulate a unique identity within the global wine hierarchy. Both narratives reflect how the politics of taste in wine are central to constituting and reproducing the global hierarchy of value.

According to the discourse of native grapes, the sensory experience of Bulgarian wine could be articulated by marketing the uniqueness of Bulgarian native grapes such as Gamza, Mavrud, or Melnik (Shiroka Melnishka). Wines in Bulgaria have been made from internationally popular French varieties (*vitis vinifera*) such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Chardonnay, which were heavily promoted during the communist era when Bulgaria developed its wine as a major export commodity. They have also been made from native wine grapes such as Gamza, a red wine grape which was also known in Hungary as Katark; Mavrud, another red wine grape considered by Bulgarians as *the* national wine grape that is only cultivated in Bulgaria; and Melnik, also a red wine grape grown only in Southern Bulgaria in the Melnik region close to the Greek border, and supposedly Churchill's favorite red wine. While there were also some native white grapes such as Misket, Ottonel, and Dimiat, they were blended with popular European varieties rather than produced as single varietal wines. In addition, the export wines from Bulgaria concentrated on reds, which were in high demand during the Cold War period. Among many Bulgarians there was also a tendency to identify red wine as their cultural heritage. As several Bulgarian friends jokingly told me: "There is only one folk song about white wine in Bulgaria and it goes, 'White wine, white wine, why are you not red.'"

An interview I had with a former employee of Bulgaria's state wine monopoly (VINPROM) illustrated the strategy of cultivating the taste identity of Bulgarian wine through native grapes particularly well. A man in his 70s, Ivan spoke with a passionate voice regarding how sad it was that the Bulgarian wine industry did not come up with a clear vision when de-collectivization happened in the early 1990s. Bulgaria could have served an important niche market in the global wine industry, which he believed Bulgarian wine always had. He recalled the heyday of the Bulgarian wine industry in the 1970s and 1980s under the leadership of Stoyan Kindekov (Director of VINPROM, the Bulgarian state-owned wine enterprise under the communist regime; Kindekov served in this position from 1976 until 1991) when they produced both huge quantities for export mainly to the Soviet Union and also focused on smaller quantities of higher quality wine to be exported to the West. Ivan recalled how well Bulgarian wines, especially Mavrud (the iconic national wine of Bulgaria), were received in England, Germany, BeNeLux (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg), and Japan. He said, "The Western consumers loved Mavrud—it tasted different from anything they had tasted before. And it was good. I can say that we probably exported most of our Mavrud production to the West. . . It was difficult for Bulgarians to taste the real Mavrud because they all left the country. . .

(laughter). What I want to say is that the different taste from our unique grape is a differentiating identity of Bulgarian wine.”

When I asked Ivan whether the idea of soil and climate played a role in differentiating the taste of a Bulgarian wine compared to French or American wines, he responded: “But our unique grapes come from a unique soil or climate only from here [Bulgaria].” I further inquired whether it would be possible to cultivate the taste of Bulgarian wine through the French concept of *terroir*, meaning a Bulgarian Cabernet Sauvignon would taste different from a Bordeaux or a Napa Cabernet Sauvignon. Ivan shrugged his shoulders and said: “But how many consumers in the world would really notice a difference?”

Clearly there is a tension between people like Ivan, who casts doubts in the globally dominant *terroir* discourse, and people like Zvetan or Maria, who actively embrace it as means of carving out a space for Bulgarian wine in the global wine market. While both sides acknowledge taste as an important marker of the identity of wine, Ivan’s opinion on the sensorially discerning qualities of taste of a Bulgarian wine was only mediated through the taste knowledge of a unique Bulgarian grape rather than through the idea of *terroir*. The native grapes represent the locality. To him (and to many other Bulgarian winemakers to whom I have spoken), the taste of place came to be appreciated by marketing the *unique taste* of the native Bulgarian grapes. He was less skeptical about how the unique taste of Mavrud would be discernible by wine aficionados because he believed the uniqueness stood out as “it does not taste like anything else on the market.” What is interesting here is that the discourse of the “quality” of wine is not explicitly articulated, as is the case in the discourse of *terroir*. Ivan’s position on cultivating a “Bulgarian” wine identity reflects a large majority of voices in the Bulgarian wine industry today. Interestingly, there were no other noticeable discourses or practices to forge a counter-hegemonic stance. While natural/biodynamic wines were mentioned by some Bulgarian wine producers, the majority of them considered them more like a marketing tool than something that validated premium quality or “uniqueness.” The continuing mission for the Bulgarian wine industry is how to market the uniqueness with the hegemonic wine knowledge and be recognized in these terms. But how do they make an imprint in the hegemonic wine knowledge? What does this process of “recognition” involve? The following section discusses the process by which these unknown tastes of unknown places enter or are limited by hegemonic standards.

#### “FINE” WINE, *TERROIR*, AND HIGH-PROFILE EXPOSURE

According to winemakers and wine distributors, the world of wine is broadly categorized in two camps: fine (premium/elite) wine and table (everyday

wine) wine. The former is the so-called premium wine that has distinctive sensory characteristics and adds value through its material and symbolic qualities deriving from *terroir*. The latter, on the other hand, is produced for mass and everyday consumption, and is largely evaluated by its minimum material quality. In particular, it does not have any technological defects, is “drinkable” (e.g., not oxidized or corked), and/or presents representative material sensory characteristics of the grape varietal (e.g., a Cabernet Sauvignon typically exhibits notes of black fruits and pepper, a Pinot Noir exhibits notes of cherry, raspberry, etc.). My key informants-winemakers described the latter as “good but generic” wines, by which they meant that even an experienced wine connoisseur would not be able to identify a table wine in terms of its geographical origin. This differentiation of fine wine versus table wine privileges the taste of place among other taste profiles (such as fruit flavors associated with grape varietals or flavors of spices that are associated with the oak barrels) discernible by trained palates. In other words, a wine aficionado might be able to identify the grape of a table wine (if it was a single varietal, one could tell whether it was Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay etc., or if it was blended, one could identify the varietals in the blend) or whether the wine had quality defects but would not be able to tell where that table wine came from. The *sensorially discernible difference* deriving from the taste of place, in this context, would not be noticeable even with a trained palate.

A fine wine, on the other hand, is supposed to have a balanced taste (acidity/sugar) and reflect its specific *terroir* that makes it distinctive from other wines from different *terroirs*. The distinctive taste of place should be discernible by trained palates in blind tastings. According to this hegemonic wine knowledge of *terroir*, if a wine aficionado with a trained palate blind-tastes a number of premium Burgundy wines (Pinot Noir) with a number of premium Willamette Pinot Noir (Oregon), one would/should be able to differentiate sensorially the two different *terroirs*. One could take this further by demarcating *terroir* in smaller spatial boundaries to the extent that nowadays, an increasing number of fine wine producers across the world claim the distinctive identity of a single-vineyard (in the wine world, this is referred to as *micro-terroir*).

This kind of wine-tasting knowledge has had an enormous impact in the discussion about the taste of place and place-based food commodities. But to what extent does this discourse of *terroir* have discernible material qualities that can be shared as a sensory experience among diverse global wine aficionados and by local food advocates stressing the “taste of place”? Is it really a matter of “training your palate,” thereby acquiring the taste and the ability to taste, so to speak, or is it simply a commodity fetishism where *terroir* is more like a central element in a marketing and branding fad?

Here I return to the wine competition event with Steven Spurrier. After the final international jury identified the top ten wines from the 20 with which

they were presented, their task was to rank these ten wines and announce the winner. Not surprising to many Bulgarians, none of the top ten wines included a white wine—they were all red wines, reflecting the reputation of Bulgarian reds. Although only a couple of them were exported and marketed in the lower-priced category in the UK or Germany, all ten wines were marketed as premium wines in the domestic market. When the jury revealed their ranking, two wines received identical high scores. The two wines were tasted again to identify the final winner. After another round of blind tastings, the winner turned out to be a red wine blend which included the native Bulgarian grape Mavrud. The jury was excited and Mr. Spurrier, who chaired the jury, commented how delighted he was that the jury identified a wine that had the Bulgarian native grape variety “Mavrud” in the mix. Perhaps, he added, that showed “the potential of *creating* a Bulgarian wine identity” (emphasis is mine). Other members of the jury nodded in agreement. No discussion occurred regarding *terroir* during the entire tasting. The jury was only presented with the vintage (year) and the retail price of the wines. The international group of tasters did not inquire about the place where each wine came from—they strictly relied on their sensorial discernment (trained palate) to judge these unknown Bulgarian wines.

This episode revealed two things that are relevant for the discussion on the intersection of sensory experiences and the implicit global hierarchy of value. First, it appeared that few of the members of the international jury tasted these wines looking for *terroir* because they did not consider Bulgarian wines in terms of “fine” wine. Partly this was due to the ways in which the organizers presented the wines. There was no information regarding the place where they came from (other than they were *Bulgarian*, and obviously not all Bulgarian wines come from the same *terroir*), and the wines were not presented against each other within a regional category so that the jury could try to identify regional commonalities.

At the same time, the jury also never brought up the question of *terroir* during the competition. When I asked one of the jury members, Jose, after the competition was over whether he thought of *terroir* while tasting the wines, he replied with a surprised look and said that he only thought about the sensorial quality of the wines—the color, the balance of taste (acidity/fruit), flavor notes, the mouth feel, the legs, the finish, and so on. “I wouldn’t know anything about the Bulgarian *terroirs*, even if they would have some *terroir* characteristics.” He added that all the wines he tasted were from new(er) wineries and there was not enough vertical history that allowed the wines to express common features from a given *terroir*. The Bulgarian wine industry was making good steps, he added, but it needed to prove itself with consistency and show the characteristics and potential for different Bulgarian *terroirs* at the premium wine level. While the local organizers presented these wines as the premium Bulgarian wines with distinctive qualities, the international jury did not seem to have evaluated

them from the same standpoint. Rather, they commented at the end of the competition, after the winner was announced, that they picked the wine with the most distinctive taste because the others seem too similar to each other even though they were all very good quality (but obviously not “fine”) wines. Most of them just were not sensorially discernible from each other, another member of the jury commented. As my Bulgarian friend/wine aficionado Yana, who heard about this entire episode, bluntly put it, “it means that our so-called premium wines taste too generic. Good but not very interesting so that it can be sensorially discerned. That’s it.”

The second point that this episode brought to light was the difficulty in partaking in the hegemonic wine discourse of *terroir*, even though many of the top 20 wines tasted by the international jury were marketed as showing a “unique taste of place.” To be able to engage and be recognized within this discourse, Bulgarian wine producers had to rely on so-called “high-profile exposure” (such as the international jury including Steven Spurrier<sup>13</sup>). The power dynamics are clearly present in the global wine hierarchy, and it is not simply marketing or a fad that creates this hierarchy. The *terroir* discourse is part of the hegemonic wine knowledge in the wine world that continues to have evaluative power on unknown wines. And this concept of *terroir* in the wine world is understood as an identity that can be differentiated through the human palate or simply “taste.” According to Weiss, “discernment is critical to the relationship between consumers and producers, and further grounds qualities of taste in a material landscape, and specific places. . . discernment is objectified and subjectified” (452–453). The sensory discernment, in this sense, is a process of cultivation, and it is not so much to construct a *unique* sensory quality as much as to persuade and be persuaded by a sensorially discernible difference between producers and consumers. As I illustrated with the case of unknown Bulgarian wines, the consumers, namely the international jury, were not persuaded to discuss Bulgarian wines in terms of *terroir*—or at least, not yet.

When I discussed the competition with my key-informants winemakers such as Zvetan, Maria, or Stoyan, who embraced and practiced the idea of *terroir* in their winemaking, they expressed a sense of disappointment that the international jury would still not recognize Bulgarian wines in terms of *terroir* potential—the ground, as Mr. Spurrier put it, did not seem like a relevant evaluative standard for international consumers when it came to “judging (tasting)” Bulgarian wines. At the same time, they also admitted that the Bulgarian wine industry was slowly learning the different *terroirs* across the Bulgarian wine regions. Their industry had not been organized around the discourse of *terroir* and hence had a different politics of taste at the local level. While ordinary Bulgarians would broadly associate the Northern Danube region with white grape varieties and the Southern Thracian Valley region with red grape varieties, during socialism, the entire wine industry was premised upon the economies of quantities (see also Walker

and Manning for their discussion on the wine industry of the Republic of Georgia) where large amounts of wine would be exported mainly to the Soviet Union, as mentioned earlier. Even the wines exported to Western Europe were appreciated for their price to quality ratio rather than for their taste of a Bulgarian *terroir*, a trend that continues for Bulgarian wines marketed in the West. As the Bulgarian wine industry produces more premium wines, it tries to engage more aggressively in the global discourse of *terroir* to add value and articulate a distinctive identity through place-based taste, but their attempts are limited by the existing hegemonic wine knowledge practiced by the global “high-profile” wine experts. It is important to point out here that these global actors are perceived by local actors as commanding considerable power over evaluative standards for fine wines. In the Bulgarian context, these high-profile wine experts are constantly referred to in order to legitimize the value of Bulgarian wine in the global wine hierarchy. The recognition of Bulgarian wine as premium quality fine wine depends largely on these powerful global actors who reproduce hegemonic wine knowledge. They are the agents of authoritative knowledge. Sternsdorff Cisterna’s study of the Chilean wine industry sheds similar light into the ways in which *terroir* discourse was embraced by Chilean wine producers to elevate the standing of Chilean wine in the global wine hierarchy. Analogous to the Bulgarian case, Chilean wines came to be known primarily in terms of their competitive price rather than premium quality. To enter the ranks of premium wine, Chilean wine producers embraced and engaged actively with the discourse of *terroir*. This move paid off as some Chilean wines have come to be recognized as premium fine wine exhibiting unique *terroir* characteristics.<sup>14</sup> In recent years, more boutique wine producers in Bulgaria are attempting to follow this path by embracing the discourse of *terroir* because they recognize that resisting it will further marginalize them in the global wine hierarchy.

Thus, the relevance of the hegemonic *terroir* discourse is enormous if marginal wine producers such as those in Bulgaria wish to elevate their global standing in the wine hierarchy. To be recognized as producers of premium wines with distinctive and discernible sensorial qualities, they must engage with this hegemonic knowledge and prove themselves over time. Wine competitions provide an efficient mechanism for potential high-profile exposure but also come with the risk of being pegged into the lower category of wine (table/generic wine) unless the winemakers and organizers of these kinds of wine competitions attend carefully to the sanctioned wine knowledge that organizes the global wine hierarchy. This requires a collective effort on the part of the marginal wine producers if they were to be judged on their own terms regarding the taste of place by tasters who are not familiar with a particular unknown “ground.”

Even as more Bulgarian wine producers embrace hegemonic wine knowledge such as *terroir*, the current state of the Bulgarian wine industry

remains fragmented, and collective agency is not easily mobilized. If it comes to be mobilized, some marginal Bulgarian wine producers could potentially make an imprint on the global wine hierarchy by showing consistently discernible sensory qualities of their premium wines from a given place. This is the way these marginal players can create and reproduce globally sanctioned value to their beloved cultural heritage.

#### RE-COGNIZING UNKNOWN *TERROIR*? THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SENSORY EXPERIENCE

The transnational movement of commodities, knowledge, and people has made wine become more global and popular than ever. One of the major characteristics that supposedly determine a wine's intrinsic quality is often associated with *terroir*, which is a French concept commonly described as "the taste of place" (Trubek, *The Taste of Place*; Paxson, "Locating Value," *Life of Cheese*; Weiss). This concept and the appellation model based on this cultural concept have greatly impacted the world of food commodities even as they continue to be contested. The dominant discourse of *terroir* has been widely debated in the larger wine world (and more so in the world of upscale food items), but in the world of premium fine wine, it continues to hold a hegemonic position in terms of the sensory experience that comes with this idea of the taste of place. The larger political economy in the global processes of the contemporary world has made *terroir*, a culturally embedded French notion, an important attribute in the global hierarchy of value.

The comments by one of the authors of the famous Japanese wine manga series, "Drops of the Gods," on American wine, and New World wine in general, are instructive on this point: "I don't feel the *terroir*" (Onishi). While American wines, especially those from California, have made enormous improvement since the "the Judgement of Paris" in 1976, and have certainly enjoyed the ranks of the premium fine wine category, this kind of statement reflects how hegemonic wine knowledge continues to be reproduced around particular sanctioned wine knowledge such as the discourse of *terroir*. While sensory experiences are culturally cultivated, certain material qualities of sensory experiences (such as the physical and mythical characteristics of *terroir*) generate more value than others. As Herzfeld argues, "the global hierarchy of value" continues to be reproduced in spite of the urge to resist it because to resist is to confirm its inferior position. From the standpoint of marginal Bulgarian wine producers, *terroir* is a compelling narrative to legitimize the premium quality of their wines and enter the ranks of fine wine in the global wine hierarchy.

In this article, I have discussed the question of why a culturally distinct concept such as *terroir* has become so important and prominent for marginal

wine producers such as Bulgarian winemakers, who have traditionally not organized their wine knowledge around this particular taste-of-place discourse. By discussing the driving force, tensions, and limitations that the hegemonic discourse of *terroir* engenders within the Bulgarian wine industry, I have demonstrated how the sensory experience of taste intersects with a larger political economy expressed in terms of a global hierarchy of value that transforms subjective taste experiences into objective taste knowledge. Evaluative standards for sensory experiences not only reinforce a hierarchy based on power differentials but also form the fundamental criteria upon which the added value of a commodity, such as wine, is determined. Highly valued wines in the global market are fundamentally shaped by the political economy of “taste,” and the celebrated idea of the “taste of place” in particular is not merely a measurement of a *unique* sensory experience. Rather, the taste of place becomes meaningful if it can be recognized as such by global tasters who can taste the *discernible difference* in sensorial terms and reproduces the hierarchical system of taste in wine. In order to experience, articulate, and appreciate certain kinds of tastes in global foodways, both producers and consumers communicate with hegemonic taste knowledge such as *terroir* because global tasters rely increasingly on common sensory experiences to evaluate, share, and exchange sensorially discernible taste experiences.

While the Bulgarian case that I have discussed cannot be considered representative, it has implications for other similar marginal wine producers around the world who struggle to convince savvy global wine consumers about the particular and distinctive taste of their unrecognized wine. Wine is not simply an alcoholic drink but a cultural commodity and symbol of identity that generates meaning in everyday life for cultures across the globe. For many countries, it is also a protected national economy that is influenced by global processes. The articulation, exchange, and recognition of sensory experiences through which wine from particular locales are appreciated and evaluated cannot be understood separately from the larger political economy in which the evaluative standards are established and become hegemonic knowledge. Ironically, the very “local” flavors deriving from each unique *terroir* rely increasingly on a globally standardized sensory experience of taste sanctioned by a hegemonic wine knowledge and affecting how taste experiences are shaped in the contemporary world.

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## NOTES

1. Steven Spurrier, October 30, 2008.
2. This event was featured in the Hollywood film *Bottle Shock* (2008).
3. In the wine world, “Old World” wines refer to the wines from the European producers and the “New World” wines from countries such as the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and Argentina (Banks and Overton).
4. In comparison, major wine producing countries’ export proportion is much lower (e.g., France [20%], Italy [25%], USA [9%], Australia [21%]) (Noev). This means that the Bulgarian wine sector has been relying heavily on global trade rather than domestic sales.
5. This should not be too surprising given the fact that in the discourse of *terroir* in France, the sensory experience of taste has only recently entered the discussion with the emergence of wine experts and guides in the literary field. It was not until 1990s when French wine growers started to evaluate wine through tasting (Demossier, “Beyond *Terroir*” 698).
6. I participated in the competition as a staff assistant to the organizers, helping out with the logistics of the event.
7. While Bulgarians consider wine as their cultural heritage, their wine drinking culture did not develop as in other major wine-producing countries. Partly due to the communist economic policies that did not offer diverse goods (including wine) in the domestic market, Bulgarians have not traditionally enjoyed a culture of wine connoisseurship. Wine aficionados in Bulgaria, therefore, are a new group of wine lovers who are cultivating a new wine-drinking culture in Bulgaria.
8. Teil argues that the discussion of “quality” within the discourse and practice of AOC is constantly being contested because of its ambiguous meaning. As Herzfeld demonstrates in discussing the global hierarchy of value, however, it is this vagueness that establishes an authority. While I recognize the contested nature of the *terroir* discourse, I suggest that it is still a hegemonic discourse that influences the ways in which premium quality wines are evaluated.
9. Demossier (“Beyond *Terroir*,” “Following *Grand Crus*”) suggests that there has been an increasing shift in the *terroir* discussion among the Burgundy Grand Crus producers from the soil or geological characteristics to the individual craftsmanship and labor of the winegrower as the primary factors for wine quality. While the geological argument still dominates the social construction of wine quality, Demossier argues that it is losing some of its ability to convince consumers about its unique effect on wine among these Burgundy producers (“Following *Grand Crus*” 271–272).
10. *Wine & Spirits* devoted the entire issue of Fall 2012 to *terroir* and was titled: “Uncommon Ground: Can you taste a place?” It surveyed over 400 wine experts on how they “tasted” the unique *terroir* of a wine that made them have an epiphany regarding the taste of place. The majority was featured in the magazine with short blurbs where they talked about sensing minerality as an important moment for their understanding of *terroir*.
11. All names in this article are pseudonyms except for Steven Spurrier, whose public identity is well known in the popular media and makes him easily identifiable. A similar interview to the one quoted here (taken by the author), conducted by a Bulgarian journalist, was also reported and broadcasted in the Bulgarian media during the Bulgarian wine competition.
12. According to Silverstein, “wine speak” is a discourse of connoisseurship that cultivates both the sensory experience of tasting wine and the sophisticated ability to describe the wine tasting experience.
13. Although in this article I use primarily the example of the wine competition with Steven Spurrier to illustrate my points on the sanctioned hegemonic wine knowledge, he is not the only global actor influencing the Bulgarian wine industry. A number of MWs (Masters of Wine) have been consistently sought after for their expert opinions on the state of Bulgarian wines and numerous global wine merchants specializing in niche markets visit Bulgaria in search of distinctive wines and provide commentaries to Bulgarian wine producers.
14. It is also worth noting that the Chilean wine industry cultivated a national wine identity through a grape variety Carmenere. Yet Sternsdorff Cisterna explains that it was the engagement with the *terroir* discourse that brought global distinction to some premium Chilean wines. While Carmenere represents a signature Chilean wine, it does not automatically imply a “fine wine.”

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