
Provenance and the Cultural Production of Value: The Example of Wine Promoters

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Abstract

Quality claims based on provenance and authenticity are increasingly common in today's consumer marketplace, yet the strategic, material practices that inscribe products with these values remain largely unexplored. Focusing on the specific example of wine, the article conceptualizes wine promoters as cultural intermediaries engaged in the qualification of products. Drawing attention to cultural intermediaries' intertwined professional strategies and personal preferences, the discussion examines how notions of provenance (especially sincerity, heritage and transparency) serve as filters through which wine promoters choose goods to bring to market; and how these attributes are selectively and strategically highlighted through various techniques (including the use of the winemaker as a promotional tool) to frame the wine as a premium product.

Keywords authenticity; cultural intermediaries; cultural economy; provenance; sincerity; transparency; wine

Introduction

Quality claims based on 'where things come from' are found across a range of categories of consumer products. As a marketing strategy, an emphasis on provenance and heritage has been found to be an effective positioning device for differentiating brands (Iversen and Hem 2008; Keller 2003; Lim and O'Cass 2001; Moor and Littler 2008; Piron 2000). Some provenance claims are highly regulated—as in the case of Country of Origin (COO), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and *Appellation d'origine controlee* (AOC) products—while others may be stylized (if not altogether fictional) marketing messages with varying degrees of congruence with actual conditions of production. A recognition of the socially constructed nature of provenance is echoed in recent discussions of the cultural meaning and production of authenticity (Grazian 2003; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Peñaloza 2000; Postrel 2003; Zudin 2009). Research in this vein has highlighted, on the one hand, the role of service workers and cultural producers in strategically embedding particular

goods, services and practices within a framework of ‘authenticity’ in order to add economic value (Arnould and Price 1993; Beverland and Luxton 2005; Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Fine 2003; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Lewis and Bridger 2001; Peterson 2005, 1997); and, on the other, consumers’ varied understandings of, desires for, and willingness to pay a premium for, ‘authentic’ products and services (Arvidsson 2005; Beverland 2006; Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008; Holt 1998; Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006; MacCannell 1989; Sassatelli and Scott 2001; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Despite such research making clear that authenticity and provenance claims are far from transparent and should be treated as the outcomes of complex processes of cultural production and consumption, there remains a lack of grounded, empirical research on how such claims are strategically, materially produced by marketers and other cultural producers.

This article brings these concerns to bear on a consideration of wine. Wine is a provenance product *par excellence*: a good for which origins and history are strategically framed to serve as key distinguishing features. Origin- and heritage-based quality claims are typical in the wine market (e.g. Beverland and Luxton 2005; Thode and Maskulka 1998), in which a long-established notion of *terroir* asserts an intrinsic, crucial link between a wine and the specific place and conditions of its production. However, this traditionalist view is challenged both by socio-historical research on the cultural construction of *terroir* (e.g. Guy 2001), and by the more fluid notions of provenance articulated in marketing messages, which draw together notions of cultural and regional heritage, personality and authenticity (Charters 2006; Vaudour 2002). The provenance of a wine (or any other good) is not indelibly stamped on it at its source; nor is it simply an end-stage symbolic veneer applied by marketers. Rather, meanings of ‘where things come from’ are worked and reworked by a variety of actors along the commodity chain. The focus of the research discussed here is on the cultural producers involved in shaping wine as a provenance good.

Working from a cultural economy perspective (Amin and Thrift 2004; du Gay and Pryke 2002), the article explores how notions of provenance and authenticity inform the ways in which wine promoters identify products to bring to market and, in turn, frame them so as to add value. In this regard, wine promoters may be understood as ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Bourdieu 1984) who operate at the intersections of production and consumption, and economy and culture to accomplish the ‘qualification of products’ (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002, 196). Cultural economic analyses of occupations in a wide array of fields draw attention to the various skills, dispositions and forms of capital called upon by cultural intermediaries in the course of identifying and inscribing notions of quality. As market actors for whom subjective preferences and experiences are crucial occupational resources, cultural intermediaries are simultaneously positioned as symbolic producers and taste-leading, high involvement consumers: reflexive producer/consumers whose personal preferences and experiences legitimate and inform professional practices (Smith Maguire 2010).

Of concern in this exploratory examination of the cultural production of wine as a provenance good are the multiple ways in which wine promoters draw on notions of provenance within their roles as reflexive producer/consumers. The discussion of findings focuses on two uses of provenance in particular. First, perceptions of and preferences for particular attributes of provenance (especially sincerity, heritage, immediacy) serve as filters through which wine promoters identify—from the thousands of available options—those products that they will bring to market. Second, these attributes are selectively and

strategically highlighted through various techniques (including the use of the winemaker as a promotional tool) to frame the wine as a premium product. Before considering the findings, the paper proceeds with brief overviews of the theoretical framework and the research design.

A cultural economy of provenance

Cultural economy may be understood as an ‘analysis of the steps through which economic quantities and qualities are formed. ...[I]t is an attempt to identify the varied impulses and articulations through which value is formed, added, and circulated’ (Amin and Thrift 2004, xiv-xv). One stream within this research on the formation of value foregrounds the cultural producer. Here, cultural economy research builds on Bourdieu’s initial formulation of cultural intermediaries as those implicated in the mediation of production and consumption and the ‘orchestration’ of product qualities and consumer tastes (1984, 230). Two key elements of the cultural economic framework merit highlighting with regard to their implications for a study of the construction of provenance within the wine market (or more broadly).

First, by taking as a starting point the dialectical relationship between culture and economy, cultural economic analyses are necessarily anti-epochal; they eschew the position that there has been a radical break with the past and the emergence of a ‘new’ hybridization of culture and economy. As both du Gay (2004, 101) and McFall (2004, 79) point out, such radical breaks are empirically unsubstantiated and, indeed, refuted by anthropological and sociological research on the interconnections of economy and culture in practice. The task is to understand how the relationship between culture and economy is made and remade through everyday practices and institutions. This is not to deny that there have been changes in such practices and institutions, but to place those changes within a broader historical context, thereby tempering grand claims of epochal breaks.

In this light, the development of provenance as a resonant and lucrative market offering must be understood as the outcome of contingent and ongoing negotiations—the outcome of cultural and economic calculations, strategies and forms of knowledge. This is true, too, of *terroir*, a notion of provenance that has been employed in ‘Old World’ wine regions such as—and especially—France. Despite traditionalists’ claims for *terroir* as an objective, intrinsic bond between a product and its place of origin (Charters 2006), socio-historical research reveals how notions of *terroir* have been strategically constructed and articulated as part of ‘ruralist and protectionist’ discourses (Guy 2001, 164; see also Trubeck 2005), which responded to economic imperatives (such as non-local competitors) and employed cultural capital (such as local traditions and personalities, invented and otherwise; see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Provenance is an especially useful lens through which to examine how cultural economic practices shape markets, as it casts a wider net than *terroir* with regard to what ‘counts’ from the culture of production in shaping a product’s character and market value. Traditional elements of *terroir* (soil, climate, topography) are joined by such aspects as the biography of the winemaker, or history of the vineyard, winery or region. Provenance has a considerably looser relationship than *terroir* with the actual conditions of production and, like authenticity, should be regarded as a negotiated, not a primitive concept (Cohen 1988).

Second, cultural economic analyses tend not to focus on *either* production *or* consumption, but rather examine the ‘relational work’ (Cochoy 2003 cited in du Gay 2004, 100) that takes place between the two. Cultural intermediaries are of special interest in this regard and research has focused on the ‘devices and dispositions’ (du Gay 2004, 100) that

constitute the promotion of consumption, including the various tools, criteria and practices, and rationalities, motivations and preferences that cultural intermediaries draw upon in order to contextualize products and mobilise consumer conduct (du Gay 2004; Miller and Rose 1997). A growing body of case studies in fields such as advertising and branding (Cronin 2004; McFall 2004; Moor 2008) and fashion design and retailing (Entwistle 2006; Pettinger 2004; Skov 2002) explore ethnographically and historically how various occupations are implicated in the mediation of production and consumption.

Méadel and Rabeharisoa's research (1999 cited in Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002, 204-5) on the 'career' of orange juice, for example, highlights how a succession of actors—tasters, buyers, sales managers, marketers and so forth—transform the product, each working with and adjusting the qualifications articulated by their predecessors in the commodity chain. In this light, the cultural production of provenance may be understood as the outcome of a variety of 'regimes of mediation' (Cronin 2004), involving a host of wine intermediaries who draw from their liminal position, within and between the realms of production and consumption. The provenance of a wine—as received and articulated by—any particular wine promoter will depend on his or her location within the commodity chain: for example, interceding between winemakers and retailers (e.g. wine importers, publicists); retailers and end consumers (e.g. sommeliers); or winemakers and end consumers (e.g. wine writers). In other words, there are multiple layers and chains of mediation at work; representations of provenance presented to the end consumer are the result of multiple, progressive qualifications of provenance.

This research is concerned, therefore, with how provenance features in the devices and dispositions of wine promoters as cultural intermediaries. The identification, contextualization and mobilization of provenance by wine promoters takes place at the intersection of, on the one hand, subjective preferences and consuming experiences and, on the other, professional knowledge of the market and an occupational imperative to add value.

Studying wine promoters

The article is based on qualitative interviews with a sample of 45 individuals involved in shaping and promoting the premium wine market. The vast majority of respondents are specifically involved in the Australian premium wine market: 25 of the respondents are based in Melbourne, 5 in Perth, 3 in Sydney. In terms of their primary roles, 14 are involved in the wine market as sommeliers and/or retailers; 11 as publicists or marketers/marketing consultants; 8 as wine writers; 8 as winemakers or winemaking consultants; and the remainder as distributors/importers. All of the respondents are involved—to greater and lesser degrees, with more and less intentionality—in the promotion of wine, be it increasing the visibility, legitimacy, market value or perceived quality of specific wines, wineries, or wine in general. The respondents also all interact with small-scale wineries on a professional level, working either directly or indirectly (but rarely exclusively) with boutique wineries or wines. This is significant regarding the theme of provenance, as small-scale wine brands often have objective production elements (e.g. a single vineyard or a family-owned and –run operation) that mark them as different from the large-scale brands against which they compete, and may be more likely to yield resonant—and lucrative—quality claims.

The research included two types of interviews, conducted in 2007 and 2008. Eight interviews (R1-8) were conducted at a Melbourne trade event for New Zealand wineries;

these ‘flash’ interviews (cf. Chapman 1999) lasted 5 to 15 minutes and involved an informal discussion about the particular wine brand. The remainder of the respondents, recruited from personal contacts and snowball sampling, participated in hour-long semi-standardized interviews, following an open question guide that explicitly probed the individual’s work practices and consuming preferences. In this way, it was hoped that the explicit attention to operational practices would address the critique that discussions of cultural intermediaries often concentrate on lifestyle dispositions without due attention to the materiality of mediation (Entwistle 2006, 707).

The analysis adopts an interpretive stance towards the data, and proceeds from the position that the market exists only *as* a cultural practice (e.g. McFall 2004, 84). Thus, the interviews are treated not as transparent reflections on practices and preferences, but as active moments of self-production and cultural-production: a narrativizing of both the self (Giddens 1991) and the category of provenance. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and field notes was approached both deductively and inductively. *A priori* templates of codes (Crabtree and Miller 1999; King 2004) for analysing the data were derived from the literature on cultural intermediaries, regarding the devices and dispositions called upon in their intertwined roles as symbolic producers who add value, and connoisseur consumers who assess value. The coding was an iterative process, guided by the templates but also responding to data-driven inductive findings from within and between cases (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006).

Provenance emerged in the analysis as a broad, meta-theme, incorporating assessments of and experiences with various elements of winemaking, both in general and with regard to specific wines. From the deductive coding, following the promoters’ dual roles as symbolic producers and high-involvement consumers, provenance emerged both in terms of respondents’ professional strategies for distinguishing a wine within the marketplace (by, for example, highlighting a winemaker’s or wine region’s history), and respondents’ criteria for selecting wines for personal consumption (as in, for example, a preference for small-scale, single-vineyard wines). Inductive coding fleshed these themes out in greater detail, with respect to the particular attributes or markers of provenance that were highlighted in the respondents’ accounts of their work practices and consuming preferences.

Multiple forms and aspects of provenance are at play in the work of wine promoters. In particular, from the analysis of interview transcripts and field notes, there emerged two key uses of provenance: a filtering device, and a framing device. These uses illuminate the interconnectedness of devices and dispositions in the work of cultural intermediaries. It is along these two lines that the discussion of findings proceeds, below.

Filtering choices

Cultural intermediaries play a role in the formation of value through the ways in which they bring goods to market. For example, Entwistle (2006) examines how fashion buyers utilize assessments of relatively objective elements, such as a garment’s shape, colour, texture and price, alongside their subjective understanding of aesthetics, fashion and the tastes of their target customers, in order to determine what to select for their store. Similarly in the case of the wine promoters: respondents assess objective elements (including the quality of the wine in the glass, particulars of the mode of production, specific price point and implications for identifying direct competitors) in combination with subjective preferences and experiences to

identify potential wines to promote, via their wine columns, distribution or retail portfolios, restaurant wine lists, and so forth.

The use of filtering devices is crucial, as the wine industry is crowded. For example, consider the following newspaper wine writer's comments:

I get 3 or 4 cases a week sent to me, unsolicited. That's typical for wine writers. And why do they do it? Because they know that there are two and a half thousand producers out there and they know they have to get noticed. (R32; female)

Similarly, a wine importer/distributor (R23; male) explained why he tends to focus on boutique wineries in his portfolio:

I think there's a raft of commercial wines that deliver something quite simple, and that is reasonable value for money at a certain price point. Beyond that, you're looking at labels that are far smaller production... Their methods of production and their ethos are what sets them apart.

If end consumers face staggering choice (Tesco, the largest UK distributor, for example, lists 1,100 different wines), then the situation is even more pronounced for wine promoters. In order to narrow the field of choice, wine promoters bring subjective preferences—in addition to objective criteria—to bear on the thousands of available options, using their personal, consuming experiences and dispositions to assess a wine's potential market viability. In this regard, provenance acts as a filtering device. Three elements of a wine's provenance were particularly common in the respondents' narratives: sincerity, heritage, transparency.

The first of these elements of provenance is the winemaker's perceived sincerity, which is often linked in the cultural imagination with economic disinterestedness (Beverland and Luxton 2005; Holt 1998; Johnston and Baumann 2007). A different newspaper wine writer (R41; female) complained of being overwhelmed by the overtures of wine publicists—she is sent between 8 and 12 cases a week of wine. In looking for wines to write about in her columns, she tends to focus on the smaller producers rather than the large companies. As she explains:

I'm not *not* going to follow up on something just because it's part of a large company...but if I had a choice...I would much prefer to support someone who's making a great product *and* who is also doing all the right things, working the land, who's generous. For the big companies, it always comes down to the bottom line. And that affects how they do things. They have these *enormous* marketing budgets. Some of them send you a press release every day, or they have a PR person bugging you every day. They're *selling* you something *all the time*. But with the smaller producer, they want you to judge them on their wine, and that's it.

Claims to authenticity and sincerity are thus intertwined with a rejection of commercial interests and economic instrumentalism. Perceived sincerity has two implications for adding value. On the one hand, it establishes a point of difference for the specific wine, which resonates with both the respondent's ethical preference to support smaller producers, and her strategic assessment of what makes an interesting subject for her wine column. On the other, perceived sincerity adds value for the wine promoter, as it offers a device for resolving a dispositional conundrum that Bourdieu identifies for cultural intermediaries generally (1984, 358-60, 365-66, *passim*). That is, charged with promoting or selling goods, which brings with it lower-class associations of the shopkeeper and economic instrumentalism, cultural intermediaries adopt a vocational mentality and identify instead with the more culturally

esteemed ‘therapeutic’ occupations, such as teaching and medicine (1984, 369). For them, selling is converted into preaching: cultural intermediaries don’t sell so much as sell their own beliefs, making them honest brokers and sincere mediators (Bourdieu 1984, 365; Smith Maguire 2008; Zukin 2004). Thus, what is at stake is not only the sincerity of the wine producer, but also—by virtue of choosing to write about such wines—the wine writer.

The second provenance element relates to the wine’s heritage or tradition, which resonates with the increasingly common strategy of extracting market value from brand histories (Peñaloza 2000). Wine promoters utilize their specialized cultural knowledge (in addition to the strategically presented PR information created by other wine promoters) to evaluate the historical claims made by a wine—be they about vineyard, winemaker, winemaking techniques, region, or grape variety. For example, a wine writer (R30; female) for an upscale financial magazine explained what she looks for in a wine as a potential subject:

A lot of it is about if you see the place and the people who made it. If you’ve got a family business making fabulous wines for 15 generations, that is still on the same plot of land and you can *talk* to the people and you can *taste* the wine, then you can get a sense of that continuity of style that’s developed over 300 years. That gives it a bit of cultural credit. The sense that people have a real *connection* to their product. I think in a lot of cases, you can taste that in the wine—or you *imagine* you can taste it. And I have a tendency to champion the small, passionate producers rather than the big, impressive companies.

Telling, here, is the reference to personal experience: it is the wine promoters’ past consuming experiences that serve as the foundation on which their professional choices—and credibility—rest. The personal connectedness (if you see the place; if you know the winemaker) facilitates an estimation of a particular product’s marketability (which can then be distilled and passed on, in a mediated fashion, to the end consumer).

The privileging of heritage is often accompanied by explicit juxtapositions of the small-scale and rural with the mass and industrial, linking back to the first element of sincerity. For example, a sommelier/restaurateur (R20; male) provided a rationale for his Old World-focused wine list by referring to his own preference for Old World (typically Italian) wines over Australian producers:

I think the New World are like green winemakers, and the Old World are brown winemakers. I’m using that as a metaphor, green meaning clean, technical, stainless steel, very structured; brown meaning chickens running around the vineyards, sort of rustic. What has happened with the green style winemaking, we’ve become so green, that our wines in Australia are suffering this homogenized effect. In my perspective and having an Italian background, it’s simple: food, wine, and earnest conversation. ... So, [the Old World] is incredibly romantic to me. ... It’s age-old, and it’s been there forever, so there’s this beautiful romanticism.

A preference for the rural and the rustic is not confined to the field of wine nor the tastes of wine promoters. Indeed, MacCannell (1989) suggests that it is part of modern, Western consciousness more generally, which quests for an authentic ‘other’ in an imagined past.

The third provenance element relates to the transparency of a wine’s culture of production. As has been shown elsewhere (e.g. Beverland 2006, Sassatelli and Scott 2001), making a production process seem knowable and tangible is a strategy for engendering

experiences of authenticity and trust. Returning to the first wine writer (R32; female) cited above, consider her experience in researching potential subjects for her weekly wine column:

It's not always the small guy, but the small guy tends to impact *more* on you because you ring them up, you get on to the guy—he probably answered the phone! (*laughs*)—and he tells you, directly, how the wine is made. It's *immediate*. You get that insight into their sense of ownership. With the big companies, you ring up the winemaker and often, they'll say, 'Have you OK'd this with the media people?' So you have to go through the media people, and you might speak to the brand manager, before you finally get to speak to the winemaker. And over all that time, all that excitement that you had has worn off!

This account highlights the potential conflicts between different types of mediators and modes of mediation in a commodity chain. This is especially pertinent for provenance products, as longer chains involve greater layers of mediation, which start to obscure the view of the origin. However, the immediacy of a wine—or any other product—should not be taken at face value. As Moor and Littler (2008, 705-6, *passim*) observe of American Apparel's branding strategy, transparency as an aesthetic effect, produced by a range of strategic visual and material cues, is not necessarily matched by transparency regarding the actual conditions of production (e.g. information on company profits or employee salaries). A perception of immediacy or transparency may thus be the effect of 'thick' mediation (as for American Apparel) or 'thin' (as for R32).

When wine promoters use provenance as a filter to identify a wine to bring to market, they are calling upon their own ethical mentalities, aesthetic sensibilities, forms of cultural capital, and experience of and sensitivity to the tastes of others. These various forms of subjective knowledge and dispositions are crucial in the successful mobilization of devices in the further formation of value, when filtered choices are then framed for consumption by others.

Framing choices

Cultural intermediaries play a role in the formation of value by contributing to the contextualizing of products. The use of framing devices is endemic to an 'economy of qualities,' what Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa (2002) term the contemporary service economy. From this perspective, the qualities of goods are understood not as intrinsic, but as the outcomes of an ongoing process of qualification and requalification, undertaken by a range of actors including various market professionals and consumers. Classifying and positioning goods is central to the dynamic organization of, and competition within, today's consumer markets; hence, the interest in the 'real professionals in product qualification and the profiling of goods' (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002, 212).

For example, returning to Entwistle's research, fashion buyers make use of the 'pedagogic role of store placement' (2006, 715), adding value by placing new items in proximity to established prestige goods and thereby encouraging particular perceptions on the part of consumers. Similarly in the case of the wine promoters: once market-worthy wines have been identified, they must then be framed for consumers as 'worthy choices' (Johnston and Baumann 2007, 170) through a variety of promotional strategies, such as designing logos, packaging and other promotional material, and securing endorsements and high-status affiliations for a wine. Here, the context of a wine's production may be used strategically to

manage consumers' experiences and perceptions of the product. In this regard, provenance acts as a framing device. Within the respondents' various mobilizations of provenance as a framing device, the discussion below highlights the particular use of the winemaker as a promotional tool.

Despite the fundamental role winemakers play in the wine market, their role in brand identity has been largely the focus of journalistic rather than scholarly attention. An exception, Beverland and Luxton (2005, 111) note how winemakers travel and taste widely, in order to engage with buyers, consumers, winemakers and critics, thereby representing their brand while getting a broad feel for consumer tastes and their competition. This fits within research (Beverland 2005, 2006; Beverland and Luxton 2005) on how luxury wine brands may substantiate authenticity claims (based on affiliations with specific geographical places, historical traditions and long-standing stylistic consistency) by decoupling their brand image from the highly technical, industrial and, indeed, commercial realities of wine production, by downplaying or disavowing their commercial strategies and promotional expertise. By being 'in the market' (Beverland and Luxton 2005, 111), the winemaker is simultaneously performing his or her intrinsic passion for winemaking (thereby substantiating the brand's authenticity) while engaging in an unacknowledged form of market research and promotion, decoupling wine-as-craft from wine-as-commerce.

Recalling the discussion above, the wine promoters represented in this research are attentive to a winemaker's philosophy (e.g. small-scale or 'brown' (R20) producers), accessibility (e.g. answering one's own media calls) and biography (e.g. winemaking family traditions) in their use of provenance as a filtering device. The winemaker was also a recurring figure in the respondents' accounts of how they frame wines; that is, the winemaker was identified by other wine promoters as a key promotional tool for the qualification of wines, as illustrated in the following three examples.

The first example highlights the use of winemakers as a symbolic figure in other wine promoters' provenance stories. A sommelier/restaurateur (R34; male) discusses how interactions with winemakers provide fodder for narratives in his customer service role, helping to contextualize the wine and 'bring it to life' for the end consumer:

People love a story. Quite often, someone will ask me about a wine and I'll start telling them about the winemaker or the winery or whatever, and they'll buy the wine before I even get to talk about *the wine*. A lot of the time, people want their choice validated.

They want to know they're not making a mistake. They don't necessarily *want* you to say, you know: 'It's got strawberry fruit, great acid and nice length.' They want to know: yes, it's a good choice; no, it's a bad choice. I always like to pick up on the little bits: I'll talk about if he's the winemaker of the year, or who does his labels—that sort of thing. What we do is theatre. What they want to hear are those little, quirky stories.

In short, personal knowledge of the winemaker makes it easier to tell a good story—and thus to sell (and up-sell) the wine. As for cultural intermediaries more broadly, wine promoters are charged with the 'production of the value of the [product] or, what amounts to the same thing, of the belief in the value of the [product]' (Bourdieu 1996, 229). For R34, facilitating a consumer's belief in the value of a wine requires drawing upon the winemaker as an iconic cue to authenticity, whose presence in the story provides a symbolic, mediated link rather than direct connection to the wine's provenance (cf. Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008, 8).

Through such provenance stories, a wine is singularized and personalized, framed as authentic, and positioned as a premium product.

In the second example, the winemaker is a direct guarantor of sincerity and economic disinterestedness. A wine importer/distributor (R23; male) discusses the value of having the winemakers he represents come in and talk to clients, such as restaurateurs:

Generally most of the producers are fairly competent marketers... You have to sometimes remind them to take their dirty jeans off and wear something appropriate when they're coming to see top clients, but in a lot of ways people don't mind necessarily seeing that. As long as they're not uncouth, I think people don't mind seeing the raw, guts-and-all producer. Their hands are still filthy from the red ferments, you know, they're bleary eyed, they've been working fourteen-hour shifts for ten weeks straight: people can understand and empathize, and you know, it sort of brings it back home....it keeps it real.

Here, the winemaker serves as an indexical cue to the wine's provenance, providing an actual link to the creation of the wine for the audience (cf. Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink 2008, 8). As such, the winemaker must not allow too great a gap—in terms of appearance and behaviour—between his or her 'production' self (stained hands, bleary eyes) and 'promotional' self (sharing compelling anecdotes).

The third example, like the second, highlights how winemakers are used as a strategic device to circumvent the use of explicit promotional pitches. For example, a publicist (R17), who makes use of winemakers in the wine events she organizes, says:

What I do is brief the winemakers and say, 'Look, don't tell us something that we could learn from reading the bottle or going to the cellar door. Share with us some anecdotes like, you know maybe it was a disastrous vintage and you were really worried whether or not the grapes would come through or not, or maybe something happened that you know, during vintage that was hilarious or maybe something bad happened or something really good happened.' ... What I don't think people want to hear is a sales pitch. ... I think they just want to hear anecdotes and personal stories about the winemaking process and about the winemaker and how the vineyard's going...

The personal narratives of winemakers are intended to frame wines as sincere by masking the economic instrumentalism that has put the winemaker on show in the first place. In addition, reference to the vagaries of vintages reinforces the framing of wine as a natural, agricultural product, more 'real' than other, mass produced goods. Thus, the winemaker and the wine are juxtaposed with crass commercial technocrats and their bland, mass, homogenized products—an implicit critique of the traditional mass market.

The potency of provenance goods lies in their promise of a return to the more immediate, spontaneous forms of human relations that, in nostalgic hindsight, appear to have been annihilated by the mass market. Like fair trade coffee, 'slow' food and cruelty-free cosmetics, provenance-oriented wines offer a 'gestural unmasking of the purported artifice of commodified goods and services with the aim of recovering an intrinsic humanity or naturalistic sociability they are believed to conceal' (Binkley 2008, 602). Provenance goods such as single-vineyard wine and artisanal cheese may offer a sense of connectedness, placing reflexive producer/consumers in touch with a system of production in which the sources, makers and context of the final goods are (felt to be) known and/or knowable (Smith Maguire

2010). Wine's potency as a provenance good lies in its ability to facilitate a (mediated and strategically managed) connection to the culture of production and thus to the social context of goods, and in this connectedness lies the potential for generating economic value (cf. Arvidsson 2005). In this way, provenance serves as a tool for the re-enchantment of consumer goods, not through spectacle or simulation (Ritzer 2005) but through personalization. Enchantment lies in the safely unpredictable biography and irrational passions of the winemaker, while the benefits of the rationalization of consumer goods—such as predictability and calculability—are maintained: consumers are still assured that the wine will be good and worth the price.

The characteristics of a good (including its provenance) are not something to be revealed, but to be made real through an ongoing process of qualification and requalification (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002). Thus, the framing work of wine promoters may be understood not as the representation of provenance, but as the (ongoing, contested) objectification of provenance. Wine promoters make cultural and economic calculations in the types of stories they tell, offering a selective transparency (Lury 2004, 161) that is intended to convince and reassure consumers that the wine is, indeed, a 'good choice.' In this, wine promoters use winemakers in different ways—as a centrepiece for their narratives, a source of personalized knowledge, a guarantee for the quality and authenticity of the wine, and a key agent in its promotion. The winemaker may be mobilized by wine promoters as a source of sincerity and a means of evading the impression of promotion *per se*. However, at the same time as speaking to a distrust of economic instrumentalism, the respondents highlight the highly managed nature of seemingly authentic, unmediated interactions: winemakers are primed (by their promotional handlers and/or by virtue of their own marketing wherewithal) on the value of their 'realism' and what aspects of the winemaking process are most likely to yield marketable results. The winemaker—and especially their personal biography—may also be mobilized as a way to add heritage or tradition and, more importantly, to personalize the product. Narratives about winemakers, wineries, vintages and varieties all help to contextualize the product, mediating between the actual material production of a wine and its reception in the marketplace (cf. Jack and Phipps 2005, 55). In all of these regards, and others, wine promoters extract value from their cultural capital—knowledge of wine, experiences touring vineyards, friendships with winemakers—and particular taste for provenance.

Taste and provenance

Representations of provenance provide not a clear view of the origins of a product, but a partial window that reveals some aspects of the conditions of production (the charms of the vineyard, the quixotic dreams of the winemaker) while disguising or ignoring others (such as the day-to-day financial and technical realities of making wine). Wines are thereby embedded in a particularized and personalized (and fictional) culture of production, intended to increase consumers' trust in, and willingness to pay a premium for, the wine. However, constructions of provenance do not simply add value for the end consumer; provenance presents a number of value dimensions (Holbrook 1994) for wine promoters as well, including the extrinsic values of efficiency and quality (in assisting in the identification of 'good' wines); and intrinsic aesthetic and moral values (in the appreciation of, and satisfaction of championing, small-scale, artisan producers). To value provenance and align oneself with provenance goods

is to privilege the small-scale over the mass, the hard-to-find over the common—and thus to insist on the necessity of one’s own distinctive access to, and knowledge of, such products.

For wine promoters, provenance is both a device for identifying marketable wines that suit the intended market, and an expression of a disposition or personal preference for such elements as sincerity, heritage and transparency. Indeed, as for cultural intermediaries more generally, dispositions and devices (du Gay 2004) are inextricably intertwined because wine promoters sell their own tastes: it is their taste for provenance that underwrites the devices they employ to frame provenance as added-value for others.

However, this creates a tension between the wine promoters’ own tastes and those of their intended market. As the following two examples illustrate, wine promoters project their tastes onto the target consumer, not as a didactic (and impossible) imposition but as an empathetic diagnosis of others’ needs and desires:

The hot thing right now is bespoke. Like, a hand-made shirt: that’s what people want. It used to be, they wanted the *brands*—Gucci shoes and Prada handbags. And *now*, no, that’s not cool anymore. What you need is what’s been made for you especially. I suppose that’s what these [artisan] wines offer. They love the hand-crafted, hands-on aspect of it—that’s the driving force. (R31; female; wholesale distributor of artisan wine brands)

It’s like anything: if you wear a dress, which was designed by someone that you met you feel closer to it; if you buy a painting from an artist that you’ve met, or you have your house decorated by someone that you’ve met... I think that people just like to have connections with the people with whom they do transactions. ... People really want to feel that they have a connection, so they have wine in the fridge that they can pull out and say to friends, ‘Oh I met the winemaker and he was delightful,’ or, you know, ‘He was an irascible character,’ or whatever it may be. (R17; female; publicist who organizes wine events as part of her work for a luxury hotel)

Wine promoters are effective insofar as they can identify—if not identify with—the needs and desires of the target market. While wine promoters must, as a matter of livelihood, insist on the distinctiveness of their own tastes (and thus their unique ability to mediate between the realms of production and consumption), they must also be credible ‘proxy consumers’ (Ennis 2005 in Moor 2008, 422), demonstrating their knowledge of the tastes of their intended market.

Wine promoters, like cultural intermediaries generally, are exemplars of, but not exceptions to, their cultural context. The provenance attributes the respondents value—including sincerity, heritage and transparency—are in keeping with research on authenticity more generally, which has identified links to issues of economic disinterestedness and anti-commercialism, nature and tradition, and the hand-crafted and local rather than the mass-produced and industrialized (Beverland 2006; Beverland and Luxton 2005; Fine 2003; Holt 1998; Johnston and Baumann 2007; MacCannell 1989; Sassatelli and Scott 2001; Zukin 2009). Thus, it is not that wine promoters’ perceptions of and preferences for provenance are necessarily different from those of others. Rather, the distinctiveness of wine promoters lies in their ability to extract economic value from their tastes, converting such dispositions into value-adding devices.

Conclusion

Cultural intermediaries use their own tastes and experiences in making the cultural and economic calculations involved in bringing goods to the marketplace. Wine promoters mediate between economy and culture when, for example, they: use cultural knowledge as a tool to achieve economic ends (e.g. wine publicists use winemakers' 'authentic' stories as promotional tools); economic logic is used to achieve cultural agendas (e.g. wine writers use the circulation of their columns to draw attention to and protect small-scale producers); economic ends are embedded in cultural activities (e.g. touristic visits to wineries provide sommeliers with ammunition to use in (up)selling to the end consumer); and cultural knowledge is embedded in economic calculations (e.g. wine distributors use their interpersonal knowledge of winemakers to identify the most promising wines to add to their portfolio). In their personal preferences and professional practices, the respondents identify, inscribe and objectify the sincerity, heritage and immediacy of a wine's culture of production.

The provenance of a product, as represented to the end consumer, is a combination of material and narrative elements. In an ideal sense, provenance refers to the actual source and history of a good—an account of its 'start' at the furthest point upstream in a commodity chain, and its development through various stages of production and distribution until it reaches the final consumer. As a marketing construct, however, provenance may be highly fictionalized—a stylized, symbolic 'package' added near the end of the commodity chain. From a cultural economy point of view, which recognizes that goods undergo complex and ongoing material and symbolic transformation, provenance is objectified—made real—through a process of qualification and requalification (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002) that occurs across multiple 'regimes of mediation' (Cronin 2004). As such, attributes and inscriptions of provenance may overlap or be overwritten as the wine 'moves' between intermediaries (cf. Méadel and Rabeharisoa 1999 cited in Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002). For example, the winemakers' experiences of the provenance of a wine (through hands-on participation in its creation) may be transmitted through a narrative (itself partial and strategic) for the distributor, who will then select attributes to highlight in training restaurant staff on a wine's provenance story. Similarly, wine promoters' personal experiences and evaluations of a wine's origins and history are used to identify marketable goods, without any necessary requirement for those notions of provenance to then carry downstream to the end consumer. Further research is needed on the progressive qualifications of wines, tracing the ways in which notions of provenance are written, rewritten and overwritten by successive cultural intermediaries as a wine moves from production to consumption and mapping the relationships between commodity chains of various lengths and different regimes of mediation. How and to what effect do long and short chains entail thick and thin regimes of mediation?

In closing, looking beyond the specific case of wine, the focus on provenance as a source of economic value is increasingly pertinent in the current economic climate and consumer market. Heightened competition has intensified the need for brands to craft a distinctive identity; quality claims based on heritage, origin and authenticity are increasingly to be found in retail sectors including fashion, cuisine, and hospitality. The value of provenance is linked to the perceived shortcomings of contemporary cultures of production—including increasingly long and inscrutable commodity chains and mass, impersonal relations of exchange; failures in trust and security; and emotionally deadening rationalization and

predictability (e.g. Binkley 2008; Lury 2004; Ritzer 2005; Sassatelli and Scott 2001). Provenance goods are a selective response to such conditions—an emphasis on the personal and knowable origins of products, but (typically) with assurances of predictability and calculability. The wine promoter is but one example of cultural intermediaries who, more generally, employ cultural capital and economic logics to ‘re-enchant’ particular goods as authentic, and thereby render them worthy of a premium.

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