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Lempert and Silverstein's collection of essays makes for a good read. As an observer of politics at work in both North America and the Middle East I am left feeling that understanding political processes in this era of "late-democracy" is intricately tied to gauging individual citizen's responses to Message construction and their dynamic interaction with the political messaging machine. Yet, the focus of the individual essays remains largely on the deconstruction of political performances and media uptake imbued with a substantial dose of "hermeneutics of suspicion" (p. 56). This is clearly central to our understanding of the role of language in contemporary political processes and the authors' efforts to educate the general reader in such analyses is certainly a worthy project in and of itself. But the book's call for a more anthropologically grounded study of political communication also invites further ethnographic study.

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The Semiotics of Drinks and Drinking. *Paul Manning*. New York: Continuum, 2012. 245 pp.

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Paul Manning opens the door. You hand him a jug of milk, a beverage that will not be available at this evening's drink buffet. As he leads you to the dining room, you quote Arnold Schwarzenegger's classic non-mock-Spanish line from the film *Pumping Iron* (1977): "Milk is for babies. When you grow up, you have to drink beer." You try to save intellectual face by mumbling something about Roland Barthes's description of milk as "the true anti-wine" (*Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, 1972 [1957]). You scold yourself and conclude that bringing tea would have been a more strident, sophisticated choice.

You pause in the kitchen for a crispy hors d'oeuvre of Peircean semiotics, accompanied by a beet-colored foam made from the anthropology of materiality. A wave of apprehension passes over you, as Peircean wafers sometimes cause you mild nausea, dizziness, and triple-vision. Yet this introduction surprises you with its straightforwardness, and you find that you have devoured it with pleasure by the time you enter the dining room. The introductory chapter contains ingredients—brand, culinary modernism, hybridity, settings of consumption, and spheres of production—that all reappear later in individual chapters devoted to specific drinks.

The evening is divided into seven courses, each named after a drink ("Coffee," "Gin," "Water," "Colas and uncolas," "Wine," "Vodka," and "Beer"). Despite the monolithic chapter names, none profess to treat their libation in the full richness of its social, political, historical, or gustatory senses. Instead, one is offered a taste of each, a sample foregrounding the ways that discourse about drinks, especially connected to marketing and the formation of brand, creates semiotic ideologies that draw in social types and geography to create distinctiveness.

Manning's audience and interlocutors have assembled—world-weary anthropologists, passionate food studies folk, a few semioticians who always seem to be winking at each other (or was that a twitch?), and some Georgian scholars and Eurasian specialists who arrive very late but contribute heavily to the conversation in the last five courses, and show no sign of leaving until the last toast has been drunk. Manning keeps everyone's glasses full, at times almost to overflowing.

You may have sampled some of these courses at Manning's anime-lacquered website (http://www.dangerserviceagency.org/), a sort of internet roadside café. Or perhaps you have seen them featured as specials in journal publications, but never before have they been assembled buffet-style in a single volume. An advantage of this arrangement is that the greatest sources of insight, cropping up in various places in the text, are the contrasts and distinctions among the beverages, in terms of their social and discursive functions and practices.

Two sections ("Coffee" and "Gin") precede the Georgia-focused suite of chapters that comprise the bulk of the text. The first ("Coffee") focuses on employee critiques of real and

imagined customers' poorly calibrated drink order attempts within Starbucks' drink ordering format. The second ("Gin") takes the cocktail party as its analytical focus, interestingly discussing how modernity and the drink "mixture process" are linked. In both chapters, the inquiry attunes us to drinks as semiotic mediums about which discursive structures stabilize, a theme deepened and complicated in later chapters.

The strongest chapters are those that draw on Manning's ethnographic fieldwork in Georgia. The chapters at the middle of the text ("Water" and "Colas and uncolas") explicitly focus on Soviet and post-Soviet regimes of taste, with examples drawn from Georgia, whereas the final chapters ("Wine," "Vodka," and "Beer") concentrate on the Georgian context, including how drinks form a constellation of complementary ritual functions and expectations in social interaction. For a taste of Manning at his best, begin with the excellent chapter "Water." This chapter is an encapsulation of the many polarities (such as socialism // postsocialism, tradition // technology, natural // artificial, authenticity // falsification) that animate the discussion across chapters. Manning discusses hybridity and parasitism as ways to understand the ontologies of production, brand, and consumption.

Throughout the text, Manning deftly incorporates literary, film, and TV references as background-and-example of phenomena he discusses, with his characteristic sense of humor. At times, one thirsts for an ordering or justification of the heterogeneous multitude of sources—a Pelevin novel, James Bond films, Niangi comics, half-remembered Russian jokes, internet forum posts by Starbucks baristas, excerpts from Iskander novels, advertising materials, and much more. Perhaps it is unfair to deflate such an enjoyable reel of popular culture intertext by situating its components, either in terms of genre, or socio-political import. Should internet forum posts, interviews with informants, and dialogue from *The Thin Man* be read as standing on equal footing? Manning prefers his sources shaken, not stirred. To his credit, he is both well-read and brave enough to draw together such a chorus of influences in his text, and what he skips in biography of each is made up for by the collective harmony in this polyphony of voices.

The reward for a focus on the semiotics of brand is a well-elaborated view of the multiple discursive networks that render a drink socially meaningful as icon, index, and symbol. There is little, however, about the interpreters who imbibe and discursively imbue these beverages with qualities. This includes discussion of the production --> circulation --> service chain, in which Manning undoubtedly has discovered a rich variety of semiotic hybrids and parasites contributing to the stabilization of categories composing any given product. Along with this, for a book about drinks, there is precious little about taste, in its several meanings. One wonders, for example, how the axes of selection and evaluation bisect olfactory concerns on the part of consumers and producers alike.

By remaining at a level of analysis that rarely incorporates tangible interpretants, there is the danger of making categories such as "class" appear to be primary and internally homogenous. Class is one of several active variables across the chapters, and Manning at times retains the flat class analysis of Michael Silverstein's *oinoglossia* ('wine talk') ("Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," *Language & Communication,* 2003: 193–229; "Old Wine, New Ethnographic Lexicography," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2006: 481–96), which appears in a few places in the text, least of which, surprisingly, is the chapter on "Wine." The elaboration of class in the case of "expert" or "connoisseur" discourses would be enriched by ethnographic description of specific individuals and their networks. Approaching class through individual reckonings can mark up the heteroglot, fragmented, partial, and international dimensions of drink talk that occur among different kinds industry workers, none of whom possess an idealized totality of knowledge. Wine-talk, for example, is not inherently connected to high-class social types or pretensions.

It is worth adding that non-wine beverages are also incorporated into class-linked discourses. I noticed this most recently in a Dunkin' Donuts, where a new advertising placard proclaimed, "Lattes for the rest of us." There is more profitable discussion to be had about the ways that expertise and class—two unstable categories to start with—are periodically joined or brought into tension through discourse. Additionally, there are many drinking practices and attributes of drink that are completely decoupled from class concerns. Manning's treatment of other large-scale social vectors, such as gender and ethnicity, are worth attending to, especially for scholars of Georgia.

You finish Manning's drink banquet inebriated with new ideas, and still thirsty to follow-up on lines of discussion from earlier in the evening. Such an approach to drink and drinking is refreshing, and will make a nice addition to any kitchen library, departmental water cooler, or scholarly snack bar. Staggering out into the night, you try to call up the distinctive flavors of

each libation and its conversational garnish, but find that your memory has already begun to mix them, to create strange new hybrid cocktails of its own.

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