Zinfandel: An American English Word of Czech, German, Hungarian, and/or Slovak Origin

(On How the Origin of a Significans Need Not Be Parallel to the Origin of a Significandum)

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Research on the origin of zinfandel has been going on for over fifty years, whereas investigation of the origin of the English word *zinfandel* has begun only recently. At first I thought that scrutiny of the word would require expertise in viticulture and enology. Lacking such knowledge, I abandoned the quest, but later realized that since the origin of a significans need not be parallel to the origin of a significandum, familiarity with grapes and wine, though helpful, was not essential. The search began anew and possible etymons turned up in Czech, German, Hungarian, and Slovak.

If American English *zinfandal* ~ *zinfandel* ~ *zinfardel* ~ *zinfidel* ~ *zinfindel* has only one immediate etymon, Czech *cinifádl* seems to be the best candidate. If it has a second immediate source, that source is probably German. Hungarian and Slovak are not likely sources of the English word.

This article has had several vicissitudes. At first, I thought that the origin of the word *zinfandel* could be ascertained by determining the origin of zinfandel (i.e., the origin of certain grapes and wines). That belief was based on the knowledge that significans and significandum often travel together. Later I realized that the origin(s?) of zinfandel were unclear and that tackling the problem would take a knowledge of grapes and wines infinitely more extensive than I could ever hope to acquire. I thus abandoned the study of the word, but, still later, in writing Gold 1984 and 1989, I realized that because significans and

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significandum do not always make the same journey, the origin of the word *zinfandel* need not correlate with the origin(s) of zinfandel. The etymological quest therefore began anew, this time with the help of Margot Dietrich, of the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (Mannheim, Germany), who sent me copies of relevant material in dictionaries and in other publications as well as copies of letters from wine experts to whom she had written.

1. English-language sources

> Tracing the origins of zinfandel has been the detective story of the wine world for half a century. It is not native to the United States, but no one seems to know how it got here. Tests have shown that it is identical, or almost, to a grape found in southern Italy called the *primitivo*. (Prial 1991a)

Discussion of the origin of the word *zinfandel* cannot even begin to match the fifty years of searching for the origin of the grape it designates. As far as I can tell, before 1991 only Mitford Mathews had given some thought to the matter: "origin unknown, presumably from some European place-name" (Mathews 1951:s.v.). Following him, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1961) offered: "perhaps from a European place name."

Gold (1991, 109) gave this quotation from Nalley 1989:

> [Although] legend has long associated zinfandel's arrival in America with "Count" Agoston Haraszthy, a relentlessly colorful California winery owner of the mid-1800s,...records place zinfandel's New World debut earlier and...in...Long Island. ¶ Vineyard historian Charles L. Sullivan turned up an 1830 catalog from the Long Island nursery of William Prince that included a "Black Zinfardel, of Hungary," and later Prince catalogs describe the grape in terms that seem identical to today's zin. What is more, many experts have now satisfied their curiosity on the "Hungary" part, identifying zinfandel as the Hungarian and Yugoslavian grape *plavac*, a fruit known in southern Italy as *primitivo*.[1]

The first question which that quotation raises is whether *zinfardel* is a misprint for *zinfandel*. Not having access to the Prince catalog, I cannot count the number of definite, probable, and possible misprints it may contain; hence it is impossible to evaluate the overall reliability of its spellings. We may surmise, however, that if Sullivan had had reason

to believe it was a misprint (the only basis for such a belief being the appearance of *zinfandel* or some other spelling besides *zinfardel* elsewhere in the catalog), he would have said so. Since he did not question the spelling, we may assume that it is the only one he found, in which case we do not know its status. If it is a misprint, nothing further need be said. If it is not, we must try to explain the change from *zinfardel* to *zinfandel*. Do we have a phonological change from /r/ to /n/?[2] Since the letters *r* and *n* are visually similar to each other, we must also ask whether a typesetter misread *r* as *n* and that misprint became established.

Brace (1969, 264) provides us with two more spellings: *zinfidel* and *zinfindel*.[3] Brace wrote that "It is said to be a Hungarian seedling of the black Pineaux or of a champagne grape from France." Again the reference to Hungary but now also to France.

The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) listed *zinfandel*, did not label it an Americanism, defined it as 'A red or white dry wine of California', suggested no etymology, and had two citations, one from 1896 (British) and the other from 1897 (American). Although the citations are only a year apart, the compilers of this dictionary felt that the 1896 citation justified not giving the word a spatial label (in the scheme of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, lexemes and senses which are considered to have arisen in British English are unlabeled), despite Mathews' consideration of the word as an Americanism. In this case, the quotations are too close to each other chronologically to allow us to take the 1896 one as evidence for a British origin of the word. Indeed, the 1830 antedating now makes the American origin of *zinfardel/zinfandel* clear.

The earliest citation in Mathews 1951 is from 1908. Apparently, then, Mathews thought that the *Oxford English Dictionary* had not recorded the word and he therefore did not even bother to check that source. Otherwise, he would have picked up the 1897 citation and perhaps noted that the word had been used in a non-American source one year earlier (or perhaps he would have dropped the word altogether, agreeing with the *Oxford English Dictionary* that the 1896 citation was evidence for a British origin).

A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary (1986) added *Zinfandel* (capitalized), defined it as 'The grape from which this wine

is made. In full, *Zinfandel grape*', had citations for this meaning from 1880, 1977, and 1980, and gave no etymology. The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) combines the entry in the first edition and that of the 1986 supplement, but gives no new information.

No English dictionary gives *zin* or any other spelling but *zinfandel*.

Based on its appearance in the Prince catalog, we may antedate our problematic word a full fifty years, to 1830.

Because many grape and wine names derive from place names, Mathews' suggested etymology, though vague and tentative, was methodologically correct. Because Prince had mentioned Hungary in his catalog, Gold (1991, 109) says: "It is probably not coincidental that both *zinfandel* and all Hungarian words are initially stressed. That suggests that Hungarian (perhaps a Hungarian place name or family name) is the source of the problematic English word." I could not, however, find any such etymon in Hungarian. Now, the remark about stress may be supplemented as follows: in Hungarian all words are initially stressed; *zinfandel* is initially stressed; if the etymon of this word is not initially stressed, Haraszthy, under the influence of Hungarian, restressed either the etymon or the reflex, English-speakers imitated him, and, therefore, *zinfandel* is initially stressed to this day. As we will see, however, those assumptions are not necessary because the probable German etymon of the word is initially stressed.

Besides Hungarian, the Prince citation suggested to me that we examine older British English, Native American languages of Long Island, and perhaps New Netherland Dutch (the last-named language was at the time still spoken on Long Island as well as on Manhattan Island). None of those leads yielded anything.

Because early (though not the earliest) evidence for our problematic word places the grape in California, a look at western American English was also in order. The closest I could come was British Columbia. S.v. *zinfandel*, Partridge and Beale (1989) offers:

> Grave trouble, esp. as jail: Can., esp. Brit. Columbia: since (?) ca. 1950. 'There was the prisoner of the morning, deep in the zinfandel again; (P. St P. St. Pierre, *Chillicotin Holiday*, 1970) Orig.? When a word is orig. underworld, the etym. can be almost impossible to establish. There is a California grape so named, itself presumably ex the original grower's name.

One of these possibilities must be correct: [1] we have two homographs (etymologically unrelated to each other); [2] a to-be-presumed but unrecorded earlier form of the Canadian word was reshaped to *zinfandel* under the influence of the grape or wine name (= folk etymology); or, [3] by some quirk, the grape and wine name acquired an additional sense in Canada. In any case, the Canadian usage does not seem to throw any light on our problematic word, especially since the earliest citation is only from 1970.[4]

Bits of information in recent publications by students of wine provide us with more leads:

> The zinfandel grape turned up in California some time in the last century, but it probably came from Italy, where there is a similar grape called the *primitivo*.... For many years, wine drinking was mostly confined to Italian immigrants. Zinfandel, along with alicante, was a grape that old men bought in the railroad yards of New York and Boston and Baltimore. They turned them into wine in tenement basements and drank them in sooty backyards, recreating for a moment the life they'd left behind in the Piedmont and the dusty villages of the Mezzogiorno. (Prial 1990)

Nalley, too, had mentioned Italy but not so specifically as Prial. Mariani was even more specific. After noting that efforts to trace the grape to Hungary had failed, he wrote:

> Now, however, most evidence points to the Zinfandel having originated in Italy, and more specifically to the region of Puglia, where a grape called by the farmers there *primitivo di Gioia* (also called *zingarello*) has been shown to be almost identical to the California variety. In his book *Vino* (1980), Burton Anderson says that the *primitivo* was "almost certainly of Greek origin," and that after the phylloxera plague wiped out the grape in the Salento peninsula, growers had to bring back the vine from Gioia. Today in Italy some winemakers produce a Primitivo they call by the American name of Zinfandel. (1983, 447)

The foregoing citation gives us two possible etymons for our problematic English word, Italian *zinfandel* and *zingarello*. The first one, however, as Mariani suggests, is probably of American English origin; hence it is presumably a reflex, not the etymon, of our problematic word.

Italian *zingarello* (literally 'little Rom') could be a folk etymology of English *zinfandel*. If so, that would be another example (documented

for Azorean Portuguese and for Italian) of how European working-class immigrants to the United States returning to their native countries have brought back American English words, which the local population later adopted. If *zingarello* is a folk etymology (i.e., a reflex) of *zinfandel*, we have made no progress.

On the other hand, *zingarello* could be the etymon of *zinfandel*. In light of Anderson's remark, Greek as a possible source should be examined, too. If Greek is relevant, it would presumably be the source of *zingarello* (which would be a folk etymology of the Greek etymon) and *zinfandel* would be either a reflex of the Greek word or a reflex of *zingarello* (in the latter case, *zingarello* and *zinfandel* would be cognates).

Assuming that it is not a misprint, we do not know how *zinfardel* was stressed or whether *zinfandel* may have originally been stressed on a syllable other than the antepenult. Since earlier (but not the earliest) citations for English *zinfandel* concern California, might basilectal California Spanish be relevant (cf. the phenomenon known in Spanish as *esdrujulismo* 'substandard restressing on the antepenult', e.g., basilectal Mexican Spanish *méndigo* 'beggar' [stressed on the antepenult] vs. standard Spanish *mendigo* 'beggar' [stressed on the penult]). Or, might certain varieties of dialectal Italian have restressing?

It may be only coincidental, but the *r* of *zingarello* might be evidence that the *r* of *zinfardel* is not a misprint. For argument's sake, let us assume that it is not, in which case we would have to explain how *zinfardel* became *zinfandel*. The change would have to have been either graphological or phonological. If the former, *r* was mistaken for *n* (a possibility, given the similarity of the two letters in print). If the latter, both /r/ and /n/ being sonorant consonants, substitution of one for the other would not be impossible (given the /n/ of the first syllable, that would be an instance of distant progressive assimilation). Indeed, for 'Rom', Italian has both *zingano* and *zingaro*.

We should also try to explain the relationship between *zingarello* and *zinfardel* or *zinfandel*. In the assumption that the former is the etymon of the latter, we would find only a few regular phonological correspondences. Particularly problematic would be /g/ > /f/.

As for *zingarello*, it could be a folk etymology (of a Greek word?) or, since it has a literal meaning, it could have arisen spontaneously in

some variety of Italian, i.e., in the latter case it would be a fanciful metaphor.[5]

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Hans Kurath wrote that "things and words go together" (1972, 60). Although that is the unmarked case in etymology (hence it does not require explanation), he was wrong to imply that significans and significandum *always* go together. The real or perceived origin of a significandum and the real or perceived origin of a significans need not be identical. In the United States, for example, pita is now generally held to be a "Middle Eastern" or "Arab" bread (to the extent that the word still has an ethnic identity), yet the English word *pita* is of immediate Italian, Greek, and Israeli Hebrew origin (Gold 1984, 1989). Among Jews in Israel today, this bread is perceived to be an "Arab" bread, yet the Israeli Hebrew word *pita* is of immediate Judezmo and Yiddish origin.

Therefore, the fact that students of wine have traced the grape in question to Apulia (specifically to the town of Gioia del Colle, which is between Bari and Otranto) does not necessarily mean that our problematic English word must be of Apulian origin. However, when investigation of the origin of a significandum and that of its significans point to the same place of birth, the chance that both investigations are correct is enhanced.[6]

Burton Anderson wrote me on 3 September 1991:

> Zinfandel is the same as the *primitivo* or *primativo* of Apulia. According to a booklet published in 1986 by Antonio Calò, of the Istituto Sperimentale per la Viticoltura (Conegliano Veneto, Italy), lists of vine varieties in Hungary in the early nineteenth century did not include zinfandel. Lists in Austria showed a *Zierfandler* and a *Zirifahnler* as both black and red. However, ampelographers have found that *Zierfandler* is not the same as zinfandel. Calò suggests that zinfandel vine shoots brought to the United States from the Austrian Empire may have been confused with *Zierfandler*, hence the name *zinfandel*. He notes also that California researchers found a black zinfandel on Hungarian wine lists.
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> As for primitivo, Calò and others record that Benedictine friars in Gioia del Colle in the eighteenth century noted its presence in vineyards. The Italian name alludes to its early ripening grapes. Calò strongly doubts that the *primitivo* originated in Apulia, suggesting instead that it arrived

> there from what is now Yugoslavia or central Europe, though evidence is scarce.[7]

Anon. n.d. makes thirteen possibly relevant points:

First, although the Italian primitivo or primativo (it goes under both names) may be similar to zinfandel, that Italian variety is known only from the late 1800s, by which time zinfandel was well established in the United States.

Second, under the name *plavac mali*, the primitivo or primativo also grows "elsewhere near the Adriatic." Reference is presumably to Croatia.

Third, according to Charles L. Sullivan, the story that Haraszthy brought zinfandel to California in 1852 was probably concocted by Haraszthy's son Arpad Haraszthy in 1886. Sullivan notes that Agoston Haraszthy, in all his writings about wines and vines, never mentions zinfandel.

Fourth, Sullivan believes that zinfandel was brought to California from New England, where it was grown as a table grape as early as 1830 and that even Haraszthy probably ordered zinfandel cuttings from New England nurseries.

Fifth, in a manuscript owned by Charles Kohler, a California wine pioneer, we read that in 1853, at Crystal Springs, California, Agoston Haraszthy "laid out an orchard, a very considerable patch of strawberries, and a large number of vines that were all imported by him from the East and from Europe through the late General L. Meszaras, former Minister of War of Hungary." Paul Fredericksen, a student of wine, believed that Meszaras was running a nursery not far from New York City at the time. If all of the foregoing is correct, Haraszthy did not bring back the zinfandel from Europe but ordered it from someplace in the northeastern United States.

Sixth, the foregoing notwithstanding, in an 1884 report, Charles Wetmore, Chief Executive Viticultural Officer of the California Viticultural Board, gave Agoston Haraszthy much credit for zinfandel *before* Arpad first wrote on the subject (in 1886). Wetmore noted in his report that

> This variety was imported and extensively propagated by Col. Agoston Haraszthy and by others who followed his advice. He knew the grape in Hungary.... The same variety came, in small lots, at an early day, from

> eastern nurserymen, who called it *Zinfandal*; one American authority says it was called also *Zinfardel*, and that it came from Hungary.... That it was directly imported by Col. Haraszthy is known to his family, and that its extensive use was due to his efforts is well known to the State. It is probably known in Hungary also by some other and more popular name; the leaf and shape of the bunch resemble much the celebrated *Kadarka* of that country; the wine also is generally Hungarian in character. Possibly it belongs to the varieties of *Sylvaners* or *Zierfahndl*, described by Count Odart.

Seventh, Sullivan suggests that Zinfandel might have earlier been called *Black Saint Peter's* and grown extensively in Santa Clara County, California, in the 1850s. Antoine Delmas, he says, claimed to have imported Black Saint Peter's from Paris and is known to have given cuttings of it to General Vallejo in Sonoma, California (which is at about the same time that Haraszthy was growing his grapes at Crystal Springs, in nearby San Mateo County). Sullivan goes on to suggest how Black Saint Peter's and Zinfandel could have been confused: at a meeting of grape growers on the difficulty of identifying different varieties, William McPherson Hill said that he had planted blocks of Black Saint Peter's and Zinfandel next to each other in 1864 and twenty years later could not tell where one block began and the other left off.

Eighth, Sullivan's reaction to Wetmore's statements is that his otherwise learned works are filled with misinformation about Zinfandel, perhaps as a result of his close friendship with Arpad Haraszthy.[8]

Ninth, Sullivan's belief that Zinfandel came from the northeastern United States is not shared by John W. McConnell, of the Shields Library at the University of California at Davis. In the November 1982 issue of *Wines and Vines* he wrote that the Zinfandel (however spelled) grown in the eastern United States before the Civil War was a hothouse table grape, hence a different variety from the Zinfandel grown in California, which is a wine grape. McConnell says that the pre-Civil War Zinfandel is identical with the *Frankenthal* (a large black table grape also called *Trollinger* and best known in the United States and the United Kingdom as *Black Hamburgh*). He also notes that vol. III, p. 361, of Viala and Vermorel's ampelography (c. 1902) lists *Zinfandel* and *Zinfindel* only as synonyms of *Frankenthal*.

Tenth, McConnell writes further that Viala and Vermorel say that *Zirfahler*, *Zirfahnl*, *Zirfantler*, *Zirafandel*, and *Zinifal* are synonyms used

in Austria and Hungary in the sense of 'Sylvaner', with *Ziehfadl* being used in Czech in this sense and *Zinfardel* being used elsewhere [the Czech spelling cannot be correct and McConnell does not specify where "elsewhere" is, D. L. G.].

Eleventh, McConnell notes that the Sylvaner known today is a white grape but Viala and Vermorel also list a *Sylvaner Schwartzer* or *Sylvaner Noir*. He thus asks how Sylvaner and Frankenthal came to be confused. He says that

> Sylvaner, the premier vine of Franconia, has also been widely known as *Franken*, *Frankentraube* and *Frankenriesling*. In fact, in California, *Franken Riesling* was the official designation for the Sylvaner in the Grape Acreage Reports at least as recently as 1964.

Twelfth, McConnell suggests that Haraszthy probably misidentified many grape varieties he brought from Hungary in 1862 and that if the Zinfandal grown in the eastern United States was not the same as the Zinfandel grown in California, perhaps Agoston Haraszthy did, after all, introduce Zinfandel to California.

Thirteenth, with respect to the relevancy of Primitivo, McConnell does not believe that this grape of Apulia is identical to the Zinfandel of California. He writes: "The Primitivo is so named because the *prima raccolta* (first harvest) of that variety is the earliest red wine vintage in Europe, taking place in early August. Zinfandel is not that early." McConnell also wonders whether Zinfandel might not have originated from a seedling, in which case it would not be identical with any European variety (in 1884, Arpad Haraszthy wrote that Zinfandel was a seedling of Pinot Noir grown in his mother's vineyard in Hungary).

Anon. n.d. makes four points in summary:

First, if Black Saint Peter's and Zinfandel are the same, and if the Zinfandal grown in hothouses in the eastern United States and Zinfandel are the same, then Sullivan is right that California Zinfandel came from the eastern United States.

Second, if, however, either or both of those other grapes (Black Saint Peter's and Zinfandal) are not the same as Zinfandel, the picture becomes extremely muddled. For example, if the Zinfandal of the eastern United States was the true Zinfandel, how did Zinfandel get there?

Third, the issue was debated as early as the 1880s (by industry leaders and wine historians) but with no clear resolution. However, anon. n.d. says

> sides then seemed to be chosen on the basis of personal friendship rather than on an educated review of the facts. Indeed, the arguments and "documentation" concocted in the 1880s may have totally blurred the few facts that did exist. ¶ It may now be impossible to distinguish fact from fantasy and the introduction of Zinfandel to California and Sonoma County may never be truly known.

Fourth,

> but the search is still on to find grapes growing elsewhere that are the same as the Zinfandel we know and love. But even here, time may be running out. While no foreign producer is commercially growing Zinfandel, cuttings are being cultivated in Europe for study. It might only be a while before Zinfandel of California origin is widely planted throughout the world. And if it then shows up in Arpad Haraszthy's mother's vineyard in Hungary....

In Prial (1991b) we read:

> Zinfandel is America's only indigenous fine-wine grape, but no one is quite sure how it got here or where it came from — not precisely, anyway. For a long time it was thought to have been imported, perhaps from Hungary, by the improbable "Count" Agoston Haraszthy, a 19th-century visionary, adventurer and con man who also happened to be one of the founders of the modern California wine industry.
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> In the 1850s, Haraszthy returned to Europe to select grapevine root stocks. His family later maintained that one of the plants he carried back to California was zinfandel. Then it turned out that zinfandel had been grown at a Long Island nursery as early as the 1820s. It probably came to California at the time of the Gold Rush.
>
> More recently, the vine was found in southern Italy. But it appears that it may have been growing in this country [the United States, D. G. L.] even before it got to Italy.
>
> ...Once zinfandel was a workaday blending grape, favored by old Italians for the vinous soup that became their jug wines. There were exceptions: the book's title comes from George Husmann, a California horticulturist who noted back in 1888 that the best zinfandels were better than any other California wines. But, he added, the best zinfandels were "like angels' visits — few and far between."

In reaction to Gold 1991, Prial (1991c) noted the following:

> The big mystery is zinfandel. One theory holds that it was imported by Agoston Haraszthy, a mid-19th-century promoter who grew grapes and made wine in Northern California and who is sometimes called the father of modern American viticulture. His Hungarian background and the vaguely Hungarian sound of the grape's name lent that idea some credence.
>
> Other theories hold that zinfandel had been grown as a table grape in nurseries and hothouses in New York and Boston since at least the early 19th century or had been a French import known as *Black St. Peter's* or had been carried around the Horn by a ship captain who was an amateur horticulturist. There is yet another theory that the grape is actually an Austrian import called the *schwarzer Zierfandler* and the names got mixed up. Or the grapes got mixed up. Or something.
>
> Many years later, the identical grape was found in Italy, where it is known as the *primitivo*. For a time, viticulturists were convinced that they had found the source of the mysterious grape. But it turns out that the grape was thriving in California before the Italians had ever heard of it. It may actually have come to Italy from California.
>
> One way or another, zinfandel appeared in Northern California in the 1850's and within a few decades had become one of the important wine grapes. And since no one could trace it to France or anyplace else, it became a uniquely American phenomenon.
>
> For much of its existence, zinfandel was a blending grape. It gave body and color to jug wines and to many of the anonymous "clarets" that were the mainstay of the California industry before varietal names — *caberet*, *sauvignon*, *chardonnay* — became fashionable.

It was at this point that I threw my hands up, concluding that I could never acquire enough knowledge about grapes and wines to evaluate the various suggestions about the English word and what it designates, follow up the various leads, and draw reasonable conclusions of my own.

Later, however, having recalled that significans and signficandum need not travel together and the fact that a significans may come to have different referents (whether through "normal" semantic change or because people have confused referents), I decided that the question of the origin of the grapes or the wines need not be answered before an etymology could be provided for the English word; hence my total ignorance of viticulture and enology, although certainly no feather in my cap, was not necessarily an obstacle either.

I thus returned to the etymological question, with, in essence, these points in mind:

[1] The English forms have been at least *zinfandal*, *zinfandel*, *zinfindel*, *zinfidel*, and *zinfardel*.

[2] Anderson had given me *Zierfandler* and *Zirifahnler* for Austrian German. It would later turn out that no one could attest **Zirifahnler*, though Margot Dietrich did find *Zierfahnler*, which is presumably what Anderson had in mind.

[3] Anon. n.d. said that the chief vine of Franconia, Germany, has been called by these German names: *Franken*, *Frankentraube*, *Frankenrieslin*, *Sylvaner*, *Zirfahler*, *Zirfahnl*, *Zirfantler*, *Zirafandel*, *Zimfal*.

I thus supposed that English *zinfandal*, *zinfandel*, *zinfardel*, *zinfidel*, and *zinfindel* might bear some relationship to German *Zierfahndl*, *Zierfandler*, *Zimfal*, *Zinifal*, *Zirafandel*, *Zirfahler*, *Zirfahnl*, *Zirfantler*, or *Zirifahnler*.

In September 1991 I wrote to the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache, explaining that I was looking for the etymon of English *zinfandel*, etc. Since anon. n.d. also mentions *Sylvaner*, I also asked whether it might not be the etymon of the presumed German etymon(s) of *zinfandel*.

2. The English- and German-language material brought together

After corresponding with Margot Dietrich, I realized that Viala and Vermorel's mention of Czech *Ziehfadl* should be examined, too. Although *-fadl* looks Czech, *Zieh-* does not (it looks German). The first task was therefore to determine the correct Czech spelling(s). Ladislav Zgusta brought this information to my attention: Machek (1968, 86) defines Czech *cinifádl* as 'a sort of grape', says that the word is used in Moravia, and notes that Jungmann (1835-1839) gave Czech *cinifál* and Slovak *cirifandel*. Šmilauer notes (apud Machek) that Czech *cinifádl* is derived from German *zirifandel* 'sylvaner wine'.

The spelling "zirifandel" is Šmilauer's. It did not turn up in any of the material which Margot Dietrich was able to find, the closest which one can come to that spelling in her material being *Zirifandl*. Since German word-final *el* may become *l* in Czech (e.g., German *Spiegel* 'mirror' > Czech *špigl*), it is quite possible that Šmilauer reasoned that, if Czech has *cinifádl*, its German etymon must end in *-el*, hence his

spelling. Or, he might have subconsciously been guided by the fact that New High German has many more instances of word-final *-del* than *-dl*. The matter, however, is not important, for we are interested now in the Czech and Slovak words.

The Czech word thus occurs at least in the forms *cinifádl* and *cinifál* and the Slovak word in the form *cirifandel*. Since all of the English forms known to me begin with *zin-*, it seems safe to eliminate Slovak from further consideration. Czech, however, is still in the running, not only because both Czech forms have /n/ but also because Zgusta told me that one of the best-known California wines, Korbel, bears the name of the Czech family which for several generations (until around 1975) owned the California vineyard where the grape for this wine is grown. That leads us to think whether Czech-speakers might not have played a greater role in American viticulture than any of the material examined so far suggests.

Later, after my correspondence with Margot Dietrich, John F. Mariani gave me a copy of Asher (1994), where we read:

> There seems little doubt that Zinfandel's name has come to us from the Zierfahnler grape by way of its Czech-language variant, *cinifadl*. The name was used for both white and black grapes grown in the nineteenth century in the vineyards of a region that spilled across what until recently was the Austrian-Hungarian-Czechoslovakian border. The black version 9— Blauer Zierfahnler — is thought to have been either the Kadarka grape or the Kéfrankos, both of Hungary. But that doesn't necessarily tell us anything much about California's Zinfandel because there is no certainty that its connection with the Blauer Zierfahnler goes further than the name.
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> Zinfandel came to California from nurseries in New England where vines of that name (or slight variants of it) were already being grown and offered for sale in the 1830s. But either there, or after its arrival in California, Zinfandel could have become confused with Black St. Peter's, a vine of similar appearance bearing similar grapes, developed from seed in eighteenth century England....
>
> But no matter whether today's California Zinfandel is still the variety that arrived as such in the state or is Black St. Peter's with a change of name, we know from genetic fingerprinting that it's related to the Primitivo di Gioia, a black grape grown in Apulia, the heel of Italy. For a while, after the Primitivo connection had been established, it was assumed that Zinfandel's mystery was solved and that one must have come from the other. But Primitivo was introduced into Italy only in the late

> nineteenth century, when the vines indigenous to Apulia had been destroyed by the vine pest phylloxera. That was long after Zinfandel had been brought to California. All that can be said with certainty is that Zinfandel and Primitivo are related and that they have a common connection, possibly a common ancestor, in the Plavać Mali, a grape grown on the Adriatic coast of Croatia. Croatia, of course, was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. And that, perhaps, brings us back full circle to the Zierfahnler.

English texts often omit diacritics used in other languages. *Cinifadl* should thus be *cinifádl*.

Since all of the recorded English forms of our problematic word have /n/ after the first vowel and that consonant is found only in Czech *cinifádl*, Czech *cinifál*, German *Zinifal*, and German *Zimfal* (in this last word, the following labiodental has led to an assimilation: /n/ > /m/), we may eliminate all other possible etymons recorded and concentrate on just those four. Clearly, the /d/ found in all of the recorded English forms eliminates three of those possible etymons. Only Czech *cinifádl* remains in the running. However, since the shortest theoretically possible etymology is not always the correct etymology, we should not rush to conclude that our problematic English word is of Czech origin and only of Czech origin. Rather, of the four languages in the running, it seems that Czech and German are in the lead (with Czech being slightly ahead of German) and Slovak and Hungarian are both running an extremely poor third to those two languages. Asher is certain that Czech is the sole winner of the race, but let us not exclude the possibility that German is a winner too. It often happens that a linguistic form is of more than one immediate origin.

3. Conclusions

If American English *zinfandal ~ zinfandel ~ zinfardel ~ zinfidel ~ zinfindel* has only one immediate etymon, Czech *cinifádl* seems to be the best candidate. If it has more than one immediate etymon, German is the likeliest source of any additional etymons (for convenience's sake, all of the German forms recorded above are given here in one list: *Ziafal*, *Ziafandl*, *Ziafandla*, *Ziafanla*, *Zierafahndler*, *Zierfahnder*, *Zierfahndl*, *Zierfahndler*, *Zierfahnerl*, *Zierfahnler*, *Zierfandl*, *Zierfandler*, *Zierifandel*, *Zierifandler*, *Zierifanl*, *Zimfal*, *Zinifal*, *Zirafandel*, *Zirafandl*,

Zirafandla, Zirfaaner, Zirfahler, Zirfahnl, Zirfanl, Zirfantler, Zirifadler, Zirifahnler, Zirifaln, Zirifandl, Zirifandler, Zirifaner, Zirifanln, Zirlafanla.

The Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian words all go back, in one way or another, to Austrian German. Werner Bauer and Gerhard Resch have explained the origin of the German forms convincingly:

> Dr. Bauer vermutet Zusammensetzung aus *Zier* und Deminutiv von *Fahne*, die Bezug nimmt auf die Buntheit der Ranken. Dies bestätigt Gerhard Resch in seiner *Weinbauterminologie des Burgenlandes* (Resch 1980:121f.) mit folgender einleuchtender Sacherklärung: "Ihr Name [der Sorte Zierfahndler] kommt von den hellgrünen, feinwolligen, bronzierten Triebspitzen mit 3-4-teiligen *fahnen*artigen Ranken, deren Herbstfärbung gelb und rot ist, weshalb man sie mit Zierfahnen vergleicht."
>
> [Dr. Bauer assumes a compound of *Zier* 'decoration' and a diminutive of *Fahne* 'flag,' with reference to the colorfulness of the vine. Gerhard Resch confirms that in his *Weinbauterminologie des Burgenlandes* with the following plausible explanation: "Its name (of the type Zierfahndler) comes from the bright green, finely fuzzed, bronzed sprout tips with ¾-part flag-like vines, whose autumnal coloring is yellow and red, which is why they are compared to decorative flags"].

Italian *zingarello* does not seem to be relevant to the etymology of the English word. If it did play a role, that role was presumably secondary, i.e., one or more of the English forms, we assume, were modified under Italian influence.

Antonio Calò was probably right in suggesting that, as a result of confusion, the referent of the English word came to be different from the referent of its etymon (see Burton Anderson's letter to David L. Gold of 3 September 1991).[9] If so, the origin(s?) of the grapes and wines in question need not correlate with the origin(s?) of our problematic English word. The etymology of *zinfandel* and the origin(s) of zinfandel are thus probably separate questions.

Therefore, although the precise history of our problematic English word is still unknown, the etymological discussion has been advanced significantly because the possible sources of *zinfandel* have been narrowed down to four languages, all of them spoken in proximity to one another: Czech, German, Hungarian, Slovak, with Czech being in the lead, German in second place, and the other two languages poor

thirds. If the immediate source of our problematic word is Czech, Hungarian, or Slovak, it would presumably be the only widespread English word of that origin to have arisen in American English.

Critical comments would be appreciated from historians of viticulture and enology and from students of English, Czech, German, Hungarian, Slovak, and Italian etymology.[10]

Notes

1. In giving this quotation from Nalley, I thought that he was the first to report Sullivan's discovery of the Prince catalog. It turns out, however, that the catalog has been known to latter-day students of wine at least since 1983: "There is a record of William Robert Prince growing a grape by this name in New York as early as 1830; Prince said the grape was from Hungary" (Mariani 1983, 447).

More than one owner of "the Long Island nursery of William Prince" must have been named *William Prince*. This nursery, which was the first commercial tree nursery in what is now the United States, was called the Linnaean Botanic Gardens. It was established by William Prince in Flushing, New York, in 1732 and remained in operation for almost two hundred years. That William Prince cannot be the William Robert Prince of the 1830 catalog for it is virtually impossible that anyone could have founded a nursery in 1732 and live to publish a catalog ninety-eight years later. Some sources say that the nursery was opened in "the mid 1700s." However, the exact year is 1732.

Another early nursery, also in Flushing, was the Parsons Nurseries, set up by Samuel Parsons. It might be worthwhile to check its catalogs, if they are extant.

2. Variation between /n/ and /r/ appears to be rare in the world's languages. Cf. Hittite nominative *wadar* 'water' and locative *wedeni* 'at the water'; and Gothic genitive *watins* 'of the water' and later Germanic forms like English *water* and German *Wasser* (Gothic nominative *wato* 'water' will not help us).

3. I owe this reference to David Shulman.

4. Partridge had the annoying habit of setting first use a few years back from the date of the first citation (here, about twenty years). Although Beale rightly disowned that unjustified procedure (1989, viii), he did not expunge all trace of it.

5. Cf. Murcian Spanish *gitanilla* 'climbing geranium' (literally 'little Rom woman') and, semantically more distant (but structurally identical), Eastern Yiddish *tsigaynerl* 'pocket knife with a wooden handle' (literally 'little Rom'). Since hardly any Roma in days gone by were sedentary, it is doubtful that any engaged in the growing of grapes or the production of wine; hence the metaphor would have to be fanciful rather than named for some Rom grapegrower or winemaker.

6. "The etymology of the grape variety name *zinfandel* has not been established and becomes even more confusing as many different spellings are unearthed in the

viticultural literature. The place of origin of this variety is still uncertain: southern Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and, according to a more recent guess, Greece have been suggested. Popular writers on wine have adopted this or that suggestion about the identity of the variety, although none of them has been proven, for example, the suggestion that the plavac of Yugoslavia and zinfandel are identical" (H.P. Olmo, professor emeritus in the Department of Viticulture and Enology, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, University of California, Davis [letter to David L. Gold, 25 July 1991]).

7. In a letter dated 22 September 1992, Anderson wrote me that since Yugoslavia no longer exists, reference in his earlier letter should be to the Dalmatian coast, mainly in Croatia.

8. Comment by David L. Gold: the fact that Arpad did not write about zinfandel until 1886 does not necessarily mean that it was only in that year that he began believing that his father had introduced it. 1884 is too close to 1886 for us not to believe that Wetmore may have, as Sullivan thinks, gotten his information about zinfandel from Arpad.

9. On how easily referents may change is seen in the fact that in September 1993 Margot Dietrich saw a bottle of "white" California zinfandel in Germany that was actually a rosé.

10. Articles on zinfandel which I have been unable to see are by Paul Fredericksen (published in 1958), Miles Lambert-Gocs (in *The Journal of Gastronomy*; the author, who writes under this pen name, works at the United States Department of Agriculture); and Charles L. Sullivan (in *California History: The Magazine of the California Historical Society*, summer 1978; *Vintage Magazine*, April and May 1979; and *The Vinifera Wine Growers Journal*, summer 1982).

John F. Mariani kindly supplied copies of several of the articles mentioned in the bibliography.

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