REGISTERING REGISTER
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REGISTER ISN’T ONLY FOR SPEECH

- Linguists talk about “register” with regard to speech.
  - Patterns
  - Word choices
  - Expectations of listeners

- I talk about “register” with regard to writing.
  - Patterns
  - Word choices
  - Expectations of readers
THE FIVE REGISTERS

Frozen
Formal
Consultative
Casual
Intimate
SPEECH REGISTERS

- **Frozen**: pledges, oaths, ceremonial speeches
- **Formal**: speeches, much of academia/research
- **Consultative**: professional-to-client (doctor, attorney, teacher), with an assumption of mutual respect
- **Casual**: peer-to-peer, whether in a business setting or an informal one with those who are not family
- **Intimate**: family and closest friends, often using “in jokes” and special phrases/words with meaning only for those “in the know”
FROZEN REGISTER

- Fashion: full evening dress (white tie)
- Food: traditional Japanese kaiseki
- Writing: religious (liturgical)
FORMAL REGISTER

Fashion: black tie (cravate noire)

Food: prix fixe, tasting menu

Writing: academic, legal, medical
CONSULTATIVE REGISTER

Fashion: business suit/uniform

Food: a step above restaurant franchise

Writing: marketing material/educational texts
CASUAL REGISTER

Fashion: T-shirt and jeans

Food: the corner diner or buffet

Writing: business emails (peer to peer)
INTIMATE REGISTER

Fashion: underwear, lingerie

Food: home cooking

Writing: personal letters, emails, texts
REGISTER IN FICTION

• Register is not the same as authorial voice, but it is a part of it.
• Dialogue can take on nearly any register, depending on who is speaking.
• The narrative voice will be the main register of the work; dialogue is secondary.
• Consider the register and voice of a classic like *Brideshead Revisited* compared to that of *The Old Man and the Sea*. 
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