

ends up fulfilling his addiction making wine with his family in Burgundy, where they now all live.

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CHARLES L. SULLIVAN: *Sonoma Wine and the Story of Buena Vista*. Wine Appreciation Guild, San Francisco, 2013, 359 pp., ISBN: 978-1935879848, \$24.00 (cloth).

Charles L. Sullivan's latest book solidifies his already firm position at the head of the California wine table (Sullivan, 1998, 2003). In *Sonoma Wine and the Story of Buena Vista*, Sullivan is at his colloquial best. His passion for Bay Area wine history jumps off each of the 300+ pages as the reader is showered with compelling tales and fine historical detail. What the book lacks in penetrating interpretive analysis (and there is much to quibble about in this regard), it more than makes up for in its attempt to leave no stone unturned in the complex development of Sonoma. Sullivan has indeed put together a book about Sonoma wine history—largely through the lens of its most famous estate—for many generations to come.

To be sure, this is no economic tract. In fact, while scholars of wine and California will find some sections of use, the book is better positioned to reach a leisured audience with a personal or perhaps professional connection to the subject. There is, however, an almost subconscious thread of historical economics that underpins the entire narrative. The history of Sonoma wine, from its founding to the present, was marked simultaneously by the decisions of its pioneers and entrepreneurs as well as by socioeconomic factors acting upon Sonoma's tastemakers; immigration, rail travel, economic busts and booms, phylloxera, and the more recent transformation of California wine into a global brand. Sonoma, and Buena Vista, made history and were made by history.

The book's twenty chapters are filled with lustrous images, newspaper reproductions, maps, and antique photographs. In addition to aiding the story, these lend the book a collectable and luxurious feel. Fifteen of the twenty chronologically ordered chapters set the narrative before World War I, including eleven chapters focusing on the short period 1850–1900, a circumstance that often has the reader “running in place” (coincidentally, the title of Chapter 10). The remaining five chapters subsequently deal with post–World War II history at too brisk a pace.

Chapters 1 and 2 review the relatively well-known history of California wine before 1850, though in Sullivan's hands the events seem to come alive. The highlights here include the secularization of Mexican/Californian missions,

the rise to prominence of “General” Vallejo, and the initial wine success of California’s Southland. Something that clearly motivates Sullivan is his tireless desire to “pop a historical bubble.” In Chapter 2, Sullivan grinds away at the apparent importation of “foreign” grape varieties to California before 1860. He is adamant that many of these “foreign” varieties were simply table grapes from the East Coast, not the likes of “Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay or Pinot Noir” from Europe. Although a significant point, it is indicative of Sullivan’s somewhat nagging tendency to overprivilege setting the record straight in the area of firsts, bests, exact dates, and so on, often at the expense of deeper analysis.

Agoston Haraszthy, wine pioneer and founder of Buena Vista vineyards, along with his children, form the core of the first half of the book. Sullivan is justifiably moved by the native Hungarian’s adventurous life yet disappointed by his inconsistent biographical treatment (there are several misunderstandings that Sullivan is bent on setting straight). Of course, Sullivan is no stranger to Haraszthy, having covered him in previous works. But here, with the assistance of the work of Bryan McGinty, Haraszthy is brought to life perhaps as never before. While certainly giving Haraszthy the respect he deserves, Sullivan is no blind devotee to the “great man” theory of history, and it is refreshing to read the Hungarian’s biography contextualized into the era’s socioeconomic milieu.

One of the challenges for readers is following the book’s dual threads—Sonoma history and Buena Vista history. Sometimes, especially because ownership of the Buena Vista cellar, winery, and vineyards changed hands quite frequently, this proves difficult to do. In fact, the purchase of Buena Vista in 1879 by Robert Johnson effectively put wine production in a kind of dormancy (grapes were still grown but were sold to other manufacturers) until the 1940s. Thus, Chapters 11–16 carry the story of Sonoma, with Buena Vista garnering only an occasional mention. Nevertheless, this era of Sonoma history is fascinating, and Sullivan eruditely narrates the county’s booms, busts, encounters with phylloxera, immigration, and viticultural disputes. There is much that will have a familiar ring here, but Sullivan knows the major players—De Turk, Hilgard, Husmann—and the significant places—Italian Swiss Colony, Fountaingrove, the University of California—better than anybody. I was particularly delighted by Sullivan’s description of pre-earthquake San Francisco as an authentic wine town, replete with manufacturers, cellars, barrel stores, depots, and so forth.

The final four chapters return Buena Vista to the forefront of the narrative but also do an effective job of bringing Sonoma into the present. A surprise for many readers will be the relative lateness of the county’s post-repeal rise to the forefront of the American fine wine trade. Although the war years witnessed an impressive jump in the price of grapes and finished wine, it was not until the 1970s that Sonoma embarked on a stable path that included the expansion of quality land under vine and a relative rise in grape and wine prices (and then not-so-relative beginning in the 1990s). Buena Vista during this period was rehabilitated by a number of investors and wine men, including the legendary André Tchelistcheff. Sullivan also smartly

identifies the impact of the consumer side of the trade in this section with brief discussions of influential critics, including Leon D. Adams. Of course, Buena Vista's fate is intimately tied to the globalization of commerce. Following stints in the hands of Southern California's Young's Market Company and A. Racke Co., a German wine and spirits distributor, Buena Vista was ruthlessly tossed back and forth between a number of international conglomerates (Allied Domecq, Pernot, Fortune Brands, Constellation, Ascentia) before coming to rest, in 2011, with its current owner, Boisset Family Estates, a French-American wine company.

There is plenty for the casual reader to glean beyond the major narratives of Sonoma and Buena Vista history. Something that Sullivan is passionately interested in is the history of grape varieties and varietal wine selection. Though it never materializes as a major argument in the book, the reader frequently encounters wonderful statistical and anecdotal material on Sonoma grapes since the inception of the county. What emerges is a remarkable back-and-forth struggle between green and red grapes, dry and sweet wines, and "native" and "foreign" varietals, all of which is sure to please the wine lover. Another theme of which Sullivan makes much use but never in an argumentative way is the long tradition of medals handed out at wine competitions. Although something that many wine writers would treat circumspectly, here they somehow contribute to another underlying theme; that of California boosterism, wine marketing, and entrepreneurialism.

*Sonoma Wine and the Story of Buena Vista*, for all the aforementioned assets, is plagued by what was an apparently dreadful final edit. It seems as if every other page contains some sort of typographical error, misplaced punctuation, or chopped sentence. This is a major distraction even for a reader with an extremely high tolerance for these kinds of mistakes. In addition, Sullivan's style is detail oriented but yet often not analytical enough. A discussion of Chinese labor ("coolies") in Sonoma correctly credits their massive contribution but also fails to examine it critically in the context of race relations, labor rights, or American-Chinese politics. Similarly, in referring to the transition of the American palate to dry table wine in the 1970s, Sullivan's assertion that "I believe this revolution in American wine consumption would have taken place even if the typical bottle of California wine had remained mediocre" (p. 306) is entirely unfounded. This rather bold claim is supported by nothing more than an interesting personal anecdote and evidence about improved variety selection and winery modernization projects that seem to work against Sullivan's claim! Despite these and other flaws, Sullivan has given us another timeless book, and along with Thomas Pinney, Sullivan remains a go-to resource for all things California wine (Pinney, 1989, 2005).

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JAMIE GOODE and SAM HARROP: *Authentic Wine: Toward Natural and Sustainable Winemaking*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2011, 279 pp., ISBN: 978-0520265639, \$34.45 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-0520275751 \$24.95 (paperback).

*Authentic Wine* is an exploration of the questions posed by today's Natural Wine movement. (It narrowly missed having those two words as its title.) The opposite pole to authentic wine is not artificial but mass-produced wine, similar to Coca-Cola, which tastes the same whether you open a bottle in China or Abu Dhabi. I don't find that idea so appalling (I love Coke), so I detect a slight elitist taint in the authors' viewpoint. Their arguments are aimed at the sort of person who might buy a book like this, someone who treasures wine as an important element of his or her life and values its amazing diversity. It is a sophisticated and fascinating tome even though I take issue with one of its central themes.

OK, you say. You can have mass market wine as well as niche wine. Hasn't that happened to beer? Not so fast. The authors argue convincingly that while Château Lafite doesn't have to worry, the economics of the market are such that the middle level of winemakers, those who are innovating and producing the most interesting wines, will be squeezed out. There are many indications of a "homogenizing" trend even in fine wine that will ultimately limit choices.

The authors generally favor the idea of Natural Wine but argue that there are degrees of "naturalness," and taking it to extremes may be counterproductive. The subject turns up throughout the book even though there is only one chapter specifically titled "The Natural Wine Movement," which is largely a discussion of the use of sulfur dioxide as an additive. For example, in a fascinating chapter with the title "Grafted Vines," the authors review the wine plagues of the nineteenth century, including the phylloxera epidemic. Phylloxera is a louse transported to Europe on American vines, which attacks the roots of European *vitis vinifera*. The eventual solution has been to graft European vines onto resistant American root stock, and this is the situation today for the vast majority of wine grapes planted in Europe and America. The interesting question becomes, isn't it hypocritical to make