

not the only one, especially since the original publication date. Perhaps there is a non-European counterpart to Johnson who will pick up the story someday and celebrate the contributions of those in less obvious but equally important places.

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SUSAN KEEVIL (ed.): *In Vino Veritas: A Collection of Fine Wine Writing Past and Present*. Académie du Vin Library Ltd., Ascot, Berkshire UK, 2019, 224 pp., ISBN: 978-1-913141-03-5 (hardcover), \$45.

OK, I'll warn you up front, I'm enamored with British wine writing. The dry wit, the masterful yet effortless use of language, and the confident command of the subject remain inspirational models for this wine writer.

*In Vino Veritas* assembles 36 pieces, dating from 1833 through 2019 by 34 writers, many of whom are English, including Michael Broadbent, Hugh Johnson, and Steven Spurrier. The latter two, along with Simon McMurtrie, founded the Académie du Vin Library, the publisher of this volume. A brief introduction by Hugh Johnson highlighting the origins of wine writing is followed by 10 chapters, each covering a single theme and each containing 3 to 5 stories covering 2 to 11 pages.

Charles Walter Berry's *In Search of Bordeaux* is a highlight of Chapter 1, "Good Vintage, Bad Vintage." This excerpt from *In Search of Wine, A Tour of the Vineyards of France* published in 1935 by "one of the first British wine merchants to venture abroad and taste wines on their own terroir" (p. 18) chronicles his visits to the chateaux the year before. It contains descriptions of wines, both good and not so good, and accompanying dishes. Included as an insert, Michael Broadbent's tasting notes of several of the wines supplement Berry's pithier ones. In addition, Fiona Morrison MW contributes *Le Pin: the First Day of the Harvest* written in 2019 and H. Warner Allen describes *My Best Claret* (1951).

A 1981 extract from Christie's Wine Companion by Broadbent, *My Wife and Hard Wines*, concludes the chapter. It is a charming recollection of visiting old wine cellars whose bottles ended up on the block at the famous auction house. Contrasting "map-bedecked modern American air-conditioned cellars" with "the 'feel', smell, chill and content of an old cellar," he wonders: "How can a room comfortable enough to sit in for several hours...possibly be the right temperature for storing fine vintage wines?" (p. 25)

“Bordeaux, Burgundy...or Napa Cabernet?” is the focus of Chapter 2. It starts with a debate of sorts: *Burgundy is Better* (1940) by Maurice Healy versus Ian Maxwell Campbell’s *Burgundy, The Cannibal Wine* (1945). Spurrier’s, *The ‘Judgment of Paris’ Revisited*, written in 2018, details the results of subsequent rematches of the 1976 tasting he organized, as well as the original event. He quotes Ashenfelter and Quandt (1999) who “concluded that: ‘It was no mistake for Steven Spurrier to declare the California Cabernet the winner” (p. 41). This is true based on the inclusion of the rankings of Spurrier and Patricia Gallagher in their analysis. But there is strong evidence that their ratings were not included (Taber 2006; Hulkower 2009). As I demonstrated, without Gallagher’s and Spurrier’s points, top honors went to the 1970 Château Haut-Brion. Nevertheless, this article is a valuable record of a tasting that “gave to the world of wine...a template whereby little-known wines of quality could be tasted blind against known wines of quality...” (p. 45). I can drink to that.

“Power to the Underdogs,” Chapter 3, includes *Notes on a Barbaric Auslese* (1920) by George Saintsbury, *The Debut of Dom Pérignon* by Henry Vizetelly (1879), and a 2019 philosophical musing on an obscure variant of Syrah called Sérine, “Ah, the Sérinity...” by one of the original American Rhone Rangers, Randall Grahm. Also from 2019 is a credible analysis of the future of British sparkling wine, *The English Wine Bubble* by Justin Howard-Sneyd MW. He cautions:

“When there is not enough wine to go round, no producer ever needs to price-promote, and no retailer wants to create a price war...This rather artificial environment trains the customer to pay the full price and buy the wine...immediately...But this state of the market can quickly unravel as soon as supply exceeds demand, even by a small amount...it looks as if this is where English Sparkling wine may be headed next.” (p. 73)

Kathleen Burk’s 2013 contribution, *Cyril Ray and The Rise of The ‘Compleat Imbiber,’* is a delightful short history of the publication that inspired this volume.

Chapter 4, “Wine Travels,” comprises four accounts, either first- or second-hand, of visits to regions around the world. Hugh Johnson goes to *The Wilder Shores of Wine* (2019), Peter Vinding-Diers is *A Viking in the Vineyard* (2019), Simon Loftus spends time with *Guiseppa Poggio: Home Winemaking in Piedmont* (1986), and Jason Tesauro extols the progress made in winemaking in Virginia in *Out of California’s Shadow* (2019).

Three-piece Chapter 5, “The Mischief of Tea,” follows, offering quirky views of the English staple, especially vis-à-vis alcohol from George Orwell (1946), Cecil Torr (1918), and PG Wodehouse (1964).

Chapter 6 is a four-way discussion across 186 years over the question “Should Port be Fortified?” The title, *A Call to Ban Port’s Fortification* (1833) by Cyrus Redding, unambiguously stakes out one position. Dirk Niepoort’s *The Best of Both Worlds?* (2019) defends the middle ground, which in fact is put into practice at the company bearing the family name. An excerpt from *A Contemplation of Wine* by

H. Warner Allen (1951) examines “The Scandal of Elderberries,” involving adding the juice of this fruit to darken port. The final word, which I leave to the reader to discover, is given to Ben Howkins in *The Port Trials* (2019).

“To the Table at Last,” Chapter 7, is a quartet of essays by three Brits and one of the most distinguished American wine writers of the last century. Jane MacQuitty ponders *To Decant or Not to Decant?* (2019). Hugh Johnson’s *Beyond the Banyan Tree* (1980) is a remembrance of a dinner organized by the Zinfandel Club, during which a selection of notable California vintages was served. Californian Gerald Asher recounts the challenges of serving the best from our collections at a multicourse dinner in *Wine on Wine* (1996). As in Berry’s story, Broadbent’s tasting notes of some of the clarets and California cabernets are included. Spurrier’s *Memorable Menus* (2019) will leave the reader both envious and incredulous as to how anyone could consume that much and still live to write about it.

Chapter 8, “Something a Little Different,” is the shortest, with just two very brief essays. *Sting Like a Bee* (2019) by Dan Keeling considers high alcohol wines. Jonathan Miles offers *Mint Julep, A Cocktail to Crave* (2008), as his complete departure from the subject of the book.

Chapter 9 looks at “Wine and Art” from four perspectives. Australian Andrew Caillard MW, who is also a painter, explores *Art, Wine and Me* (2019). The editor’s introduction, of course, includes the inevitable wordplay: “The palate and the palette have been tools of his trade for over 40 years” (p. 166). American wine writer Elin McCoy contemplates *Is Wine Art?* (2018) and reveals a third side to this coin. The backstory of the decision to put art on the labels of Château Mouton Rothschild is disclosed in *Best Dressed and Bottled at Home* (1984) extracted from *Milady Vine, the Autobiography of Phillippe de Rothschild* by Joan Littlewood. Canadian Tony Aspler writes about one Mouton label in *For a Piece of the Glamour* (1997) with an ending that could come straight from O. Henry.

A trio of essays comprises the final chapter, “Wine and the Poets.” Baudelaire is the focus of *Wine and the Outcast Poet* (2009) by Giles MacDonogh. *Colette and Wine* (1983) by Alice Woolledge Salmon offers vinously-inflected highlights of the life of a talented but controversial character. We are cautioned that “just as one’s pleasure in rare wine can be blunted by undue dissection, so various critics have taken Colette to absurdities in their haste after ‘psychoanalysis’ of both woman and achievement” (p. 211). In any case, one can certainly lust after some of the bottles she encountered. Harry Eyres discusses Roman poet Horace in *In Vino Veritas* (2014).

*In Vino Veritas* is a gorgeous package, stunningly illustrated with exquisite color and historic black and white photographs and handsomely bound with a blue ribbon marker. I did find a few minor editing issues, however. On p. 46, “vineyard” has a typo, on p. 66 “to this” is repeated, and a caption refers to its illustration in the

wrong direction (p. 85). Nits to be sure but unexpected given how carefully the book was otherwise compiled.

This assemblage of small sips, tantalizing tastes, and gratifying gulps of some of the best wine writing of the last two centuries is a joy to read. It is as much a verbal crazy quilt as an anthology that is clearly self-aware, with footnotes referencing other essays and an occasional piece responding to another in the collection. I reveled in the precision of the jewel box of \$50 words (€42.80 or £36.25 on October 28, 2021) like “cacographists” and “omnibibulosity” (p. 17), “etiolated” (p. 67), “adventitious” (p. 124), “flagitious” (p. 127), and “topos” (p. 221) as well as the French “maquillage” (p. 62), all of which I had to look up. I really did not want the book to end. Good news, signaled by the date 2020 on the spine and front cover, was found on p. 224 buried in the Acknowledgment: “With luck and a following readership, perhaps our book [will] see a run of annual editions...” Sign me up.

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