

gravity moved the grapes and juice from one part of the production process to the next, was created to economize on labor, Simpson says, not just to provide more gentle treatment of the grapes as a dozen wine tour guides must have told me over the years.

Getting a better understanding of the past is satisfying, but I think what I like best about *Creating Wine* is the way it helped me think about the present and the future. Exogenous shocks are still with us, technological change (the now widespread use of 24,000 liter bulk wine ocean shippers) is there, too, and the problem of penetrating new export markets is with us, too. Reflecting on the past in this way promotes a deeper appreciation of current issues and

Creating Wine is a good book for anyone who loves wine economics, wine history or ... wine! Highly recommended.

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ROGER SCRUTON: *I Drink Therefore I Am. A Philosopher's Guide to Wine*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009, 214 pp., ISBN 978-1-4411-7067-5 (paperback), \$19.95.

Though I bought the book in Leeds, England, during a conference where I met the author, I read most of it during another conference in unbearably hot Odessa, Ukraine, sitting and drinking (unfiltered, I insist) beer in a German beer cellar.

The title of Scruton's book, a reminder of Descartes' *I think therefore I am*, does not tell it all. Descartes was a serious man and though he was born in Touraine, a wine region, did probably not drink much. Scruton is often very funny, serious at times (perhaps too much), knows wine very well, drinks and fondles it, writes on beauty (2009a), sexual desire (2006), is one among the great contemporary philosophers of music (1997, 2009b), and even composed two operas. He does not look very tender, but his (written) relations with wine, women, music and poetry are very delicate. And this starts very fast, in his Prelude (a musical term, of course) where he quotes Emerson "who commends the great wino Hafiz [a Persian poet] in the following words:"

Hafiz praises wines, roses, maidens, boys, birds, mornings and music, to give vent to his immense hilarity and sympathy with every form of beauty and joy.

This is echoed in Scruton's terms (p. 5) that "by thinking with wine you can learn not merely to drink in thoughts, but think in draughts. Wine, drunk at the right time, in the right place and the right company, is the path to meditation, and the harbinger of peace."

Chapter 2 is devoted to his friends who made him “fall” for wine (or is it *he* who made *them* fall) and his acquisition of a 1945 Château Lafite, “the greatest year from the greatest of clarets,” to which I will get back later with a nice suggestion. The chapter ends on a remark (p. 27) concerned with the “new habit, associated with American wine critics like Robert Parker, of assigning points to each bottle” which should not only be “viewed with nothing but contempt” but also compared to “assigning points to symphonies, as though Beethoven’s 7th, Tchaikovsky’s 6th, Mozart’s 39th, Bruckner’s 8th all hovered between 90 and 95.”

In Chapter 3 Scruton goes for a walk (or is it biking?) on a Tour de France of wines, starting in Burgundy, down to the Rhône Valley, the Pyrenees, including Collioure (pp. 52–54)—where some editors of the *Journal of Wine Economics* have a very dear old friend—and ending in Bordeaux with Eliot’s description of a spiritual journey that applies equally to a journey through wine:

We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

The exploration also discusses wines that, at least to me, are not well known (p. 59), but “as with women and horses, the real best is the second best.” This is very similar to what Orley Ashenfelter and I decided to do when we have to choose a bottle of Champaign: Always go for the cheapest.

With much reason, Scruton does not think very highly of blind tasting (p. 34): “To think that you can judge a wine from its taste and aroma alone is like thinking you can judge a Chinese poem by its sound, without knowing the language.” We can all agree on this after having applauded wine experts at the Princeton AAWE Conference in June 2012, where a blind tasting was organized to reproduce the famous 1976 Judgment of Paris (see Taber, 2005). But this time New Jersey and not Californian wines were compared to the same French wines than in 1976, though from a later vintage. The ‘expert’ tasters concluded that out of ten red wines, nine (including Châteaux Mouton-Rothschild, Haut-Brion, Leoville Las Cases, Montrose, and five NJ wines) were (statistically) not distinguishable.¹

My only problem with the chapter is that Scruton defines himself as a *terroiriste*.² I am not since I believe that terroir is chemistry. This was already the opinion expressed by Johan Joseph Krug (1800–1866), a famous champagne producer, who

¹The judgment of white wines was similar. For details, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judgment_of_Princeton.

²I am grateful to Roger for correcting my spelling of the word as “terroirist” in a previous version. I preferred it without the “e”, an almost voluntary slip of the pen.

suggested that “a good wine comes from a good grape, good vats, a good cellar and a gentleman who is able to coordinate the various ingredients.”³ No trace of terroir.

Chapter 4 brings “news from elsewhere:” the Middle-East where wine was born; Greece where Bacchus, Dionysos, and more importantly, Eros used to hover; the United States; Australia, New Zealand and their misspelling of Syrah as Shiraz, the Iranian city of poets, gardens, nightingales and last but not least, wine; a few lines on South Africa, then Italy, Romania and Spain. But “travel narrows the mind, and the further you go the narrower it gets. There is only one way to visit a place with an open mind, and that is in the glass” (p. 84). Scruton had already warned the reader in chapter 3 (p. 54) not to read the “elsewhere” chapter: “After punishing body and soul with Australian Shiraz, Argentine Tempranillo, Romanian Cabernet Sauvignon and Greek Retsina, we crawl home like the Prodigal Son and beg forgiveness for our folly. . . [Claret] is the wine that made us and for which we were made, and it often astonishes me to discover that I drink anything else.”

This is for the “I drink” part of the book. Its author then moves to the “therefore I am” part which often needs much deeper philosophical knowledge than my very basic understanding of aesthetics only, which should but does not even include Immanuel Kant. Meanwhile, it rejoices me that even a man as serious as Kant “enjoyed wine and provided a pint bottle for each guest at his regular dinner parties” (p. 104). If this was merely a US pint (473 milliliters), I would have turned down his invitations, though even the imperial pint used in the UK (568 milliliters) would have left me quite unhappy.

In passing, Scruton evokes the great philosopher Avicenna who lived in Isfahan (Persia) during Islam’s Golden Age (980–1037 AD); he was a wine *aficionado* who recommended drinking at work defying “the Koranic injunction against wine, citing it as an example of sloppy reasoning,” (p. 109) that does not take into account whether it is a small or a large amount. Scruton (p. 133) also points to the fact that “in *surah* xvi, verse 7 of the Koran wine is unreservedly praised as one of God’s gifts. As the prophet, burdened by the trials of his Medina exile, became more tetchy, so did his attitude to wine begin to sour, as in *surah* v verses 91-92. Muslims believe that the later revelations cancel the earlier, whenever there is a conflict between them. I suspect, however, that God moves in a more mysterious way.”

Scruton is also quite skeptical that the vocabulary used by so-called experts to describe wine is of much help (pp. 125–126, 134, 137): “If I say of a wine that it has a flowery nose, lingers on the palate, with ripe berry flavours and a hint of chocolate and roasted almonds, then what I say conveys real information, from which someone might be able to construct a sensory image of the wine’s taste. But I have described the taste in terms of other *tastes*, and not attempted to attach a meaning, a content, or any kind of reference to it. The description I gave does not imply that the

³ See also Gergaud and Ginsburgh (2010).

wine evokes, means, symbolizes or presents the idea of chocolate; and somebody who didn't hit on this word as a description of the wine's flavour would not show that he had missed the meaning of what he drank or indeed missed anything important at all. Our experience of wine is bound up with its nature as a drink [which] endows wine with a particular inwardness [and] intimacy with the body [that is not] achieved by any smell, since smell makes no contact with the body at all, but merely enchants without touching, like the beautiful girl at the other end of the party. . . . Nothing else that we eat or drink comes to us with such a halo of significance, and by refusing to drink it people send an important message—the message that they do not belong on this earth.” Useless to add that I fully agree.

The last two chapters deal respectively with wine and whine, and being and bingeing. Though Scruton has something to say in favor of Puritanism, he castigates the ease with which (p. 140) “puritan outrage [and in particular, prohibition, but also sexual behaviour] can be displaced from one topic to another, and the equal ease with which the thing formerly disapproved of can be overnight exonerated from all taint of sin.”

He vehemently protests against “the humourless mullahs,” and the misuse of drinking, but also rejects the idea that fermented drinks are just shots of alcohol, and insists on their social functions across civilizations and time (pp. 144–160): “The burden of my arguments is that we can defend the drinking of wine, only if we see that it is a culture, and that this culture has a social, outward-going, other-regarding meaning. . . . When people sit down together sipping drinks, they rehearse in their souls the original act of settlement, the act that set our species on the path of civilization, and which endowed us with the order of neighbourhood and the rule of law.” But he has not much against drinking alone, and ends with a few words from the Chinese poet Li Po (700 BC), the same poet whom Mahler used in his *Lied von der Erde* (though in a very approximate translation):

A cup of wine, under the flowering trees;
I drink alone, for no friend is near.
Raising my cup I beckon the bright moon,
For he, with my shadow, will make three men.

Scruton knows that the best (including Li Po's poetry) should be kept for the very end. The *bouquet* (of the wine, but in French the word is also used for the finishing of a firework) comes with the Appendix: *What to drink with what*, though here the second *what* does not stand for food, but for philosophers.

St Augustine (p. 178): Drink a glass of Moroccan Cabernet Sauvignon, though “the *City of God* requires many sittings, and I regard it as one of the rare occasions when a drinking person might have legitimate recourse to a glass of lager [which I did in Odessa, while reading Scruton], putting the book to one side just as soon as the glass is finished” [which I did not do, since I had three glasses, each of which containing half a liter].

Bacon (pp. 181–182): “Any discussion of his insights should, I think, proceed by the comparative method. I suggest opening six bottles of a single varietal—say Cabernet Franc—one from the Loire, one from California, one from Moravia, one from Hungary, and if you can find two other places where it is grown successfully you will already have given some proof of the inductive method—and then pretending to compare and contrast, taking notes in winespeak, while downing the lot.”

Descartes (p. 182): “As the thinker who came nearest, prior to the Monty Python, to stumbling on the title of [my] book, Descartes deserves a little recognition. . . . He has ended up as the most overrated philosopher in history, famous for arguments that begin from nothing and go nowhere. I would suggest a deep dark Rhône wine [that] will compensate for the thinness of the *Meditations*.”

Spinoza (p. 182): “The last time that I understood what Spinoza meant by an attribute it was with a glass of red Mercurey, Les Nauges 1999. Unfortunately, I took another glass before writing down my thoughts and have never been able to retrieve them.”

Kant (p. 184): “And when it comes to [his] *Critique of the Judgment*, I find myself trying out [several wines], without getting any close to Kant’s proof that the judgment is universal but subjective, or his derivation of the ‘antinomy of taste’—surely one of his most profound and troubling paradoxes, and one that must yield to the argument contained in wine if it yields to anything.”

Nietzsche (p. 189): “Although we should drink to the author of *The Birth of the Tragedy*, therefore, it should be with a thin, hypochondriac potion, maybe a finger of Beaujolais in a glass topped up with soda-water.”

Husserl (p. 189): “I recommend three glasses of slivovitz from Husserl’s native Moravia, one to give courage, one to swallow down the jargon, and one to pour over the page.”

Sartre (pp. 190–192, passim): “Sartre’s great work of philosophy, *L’être et le néant*, introduces the Nothingness that haunts all that he wrote and said. . . . If ever I were to read Sartre again, I would look for a 1964 Burgundy to wash the poison down. Small chance of finding one, however, so there is one great writer whom I shall never again revisit—and I thank God for it.”

Heidegger (p. 192): “What potion to complement the philosopher who told us that ‘nothing noths’? To raise an empty glass to one’s lips, and to feel it as it travels down—noth, noth, noth, the whole length of the tube: this surely is an experience to delight the real connoisseur.”

It’s now time for me to conclude. Obviously, due to his publicly admitted very conservative leanings, Roger does not mention that Karl Marx’s family were the happy owners of a vineyard on the Ruwer, an affluent of the Mosel. The family sold

it, but there still exists a Karl Marx wine, of which I own a bottle that lies in my (not air-conditioned) cellar and at which I look from time to time. This is a bit like Roger whose bottle of 1945 Château Lafite “accompanied me through life’s turmoil’s like a talisman, but that I judged too good to share, except with that special person whom I had never met, and too good to drink alone unless to mark some new beginning.” (p. 26).

I promise to open my Karl Marx wine if Roger visits me. But then, in all fairness, he should come and have his 1945 Château Lafite with me.

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TADASHI AGI and SHU OKIMOTO: *The Drops of God*, vol. 1-5, New York: Vertical Inc., 2011, 432 pp., ISBN 978-1935654278 (vol. 1) (paperback), \$14.95. 2011, 416 pp.; ISBN 978-1935654292 (vol. 2) (paperback), \$14.95. 2012, 416 pp.; ISBN 978-1935654360 (vol. 3) (paperback), \$14.95. 2012, 392 pp.; ISBN 978-1935654391 (vol. 4) (paperback), \$14.95.

Introduction

I approached *The Drops of God* (DG) as a serious skeptic. After all, how could a career economist steeped in neoclassical theory find kinship in a 400 page comic book? Surprisingly, DG made short work of my inner skeptic, as my curiosity gave way to genuine interest before yielding entirely to the charms of my first full length graphic novel. Perhaps the contrast itself is the appeal – the animated storylines offer a welcome respite from the left brain-dominant world we economists inhabit. I recommend readers of this journal seeking an entertaining diversion to consider