
H-France Review Vol. 17 (September 2017), No. 155

Rod Phillips, *French Wine: A History*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. xi + 335 pp. \$34.95 U.S. Notes, bibliography, and index. (hb). ISBN 9780520285231

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Blending a sweeping survey of existing works with a nuanced analytical touch, this is a grand history of France's wine. Rod Phillips covers a vast timespan and a hugely diverse array of different sources: a challenging task, but one which has been deftly met. Allowing ample pauses for story-telling amidst the narrative sweep, Phillips' book is impressive and entertaining in equal measure, addressing French wine long before there was even a France.

Wine's importance lies in its multiple strands of meaning: as the focus of sustained economic activity, the centrepiece of evolving social practice (in production and consumption), and as a canvas for depicting broader stories about culture, values, and desire. *French Wine: A History* attempts an ambitious task: to tie together the many competing trends of France's regional wine cultures into one unitary story. As such, Phillips acknowledges from the outset that this will mean a steadier eye on the big names: Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne and (to a lesser extent) the Languedoc-Roussillon. The depth with which periods are covered is intuitive, and the book focusses its lens as it moves on. Whilst the first chapter offers the reader a *récit* of some 1,000 years and more, chapter eight narrows to a mere 15 years of coverage. This is motivated in large part by the availability of sources and by the pace of development. Yet, this does not represent the "acceleration of history," which Pierre Nora cautioned historians to guard against; indeed, whereas Nora was interested in the *lieux* "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself," Phillips finds himself fascinated by the places that wine has done the same.[1] From tombs and sunken ships, to historical pips and paraphernalia, Phillips finds moments of traction that combine to create a history of wine in the distant past to the present day.

This builds on Phillips other related publications *Alcohol: A History* and *A Short History of Wine*, and establishes what will surely become an essential reference on the topic. Its forebear, Roger Dion's totemic work on the history of French wine, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France* (released in 1977, though with newer editions) sees ample reference in Phillips' footnotes, and is duly lauded in the introduction. As Phillips notes, however, this book both goes further in time span than Dion's work, and presents the material more accessibly (notably, the books are 335 to 768 pages respectively). By coincidence, Didier Nourrisson has likewise published his own *Histoire du vin* at nearly the same time, covering a similar period and topic.[2] Nourrisson's sub-sections and block-quoting of sources make the analytical themes a little more explicit and the book's grand sweep a little easier to navigate, and in that it has a slight advantage. Nevertheless, as Phillips points out, his is the first major synthesis of French wine history in English, and it performs that role admirably and with considerable style.

Phillips is open to the multiple phases and iterations of globalization and interconnections that have characterized the history of wine. In the earliest stages of this history, wine follows the patterns of colonization and expansion (followed by emulation and assimilation). So, we hear about established

classical trade networks discernible from sunken ships containing the equivalent of half a million bottles of wine. Indeed, wine was held up as an agent of acculturation to Greco-Roman norms: “viticulture, along with urban life & constitutional government [w]as one of the benefits of civilization” (p. 12). Phillips traces this thread through the establishment of vineyards in France (near Gaillac), into the work of Edward Gibbon, who contrasts the savagery of the beer-drinking Germanic tribes with the cultured wine-drinkers they would displace. Yet, the Fall of Rome that Gibbon described didn’t sever the history of wine, and Phillips shows how it rather decentralized production, leaving regions to develop more distinct characters. As the church adopted wine in the sacrament, and places like Reims became tied to royal functions, the wines produced by these bodies and in these places became imbued with their own social and cultural weight.

Yet good wine is never simply the result of graft or skill. In Phillips’ second chapter, he addresses the significant climactic changes between 1000 and 1300, which saw populations grow and cultivation expand in turn. Trade winds were likewise as important as the weather. We hear much of European trade networks, and the importance of English and Dutch tastes in shaping the market for French wine. English preferences for the lighter bodied Claret in the earlier period helped establish Bordeaux as a trading centre and one of the homes of French wine (p. 46). The Dutch penchant for fuller bodied reds shaped production patterns again, as winegrowers sought to anticipate the market in a sort of Early Modern ‘Parkerization.’^[3] Far from simply dictating taste, however, these influences brought invention. The Dutch developed new technologies of transport, helping fuel global distribution by ensuring that wine survived transport more readily (p. 73). So too did the Dutch preference for ‘burnt wine’ help establish the brandy trade and the development of Cognac and Armagnac as recognizable styles. Alongside trade and innovation in spirits, invention could be a little more obscure. This period also saw the development of sparkling wines, and Phillips tackles the myth of Dom Perignon—attributing the mythologized monk’s discovery of the Champagne method to the English scientist Christopher Merret (pp. 84-85). Another famous British name which crops up is that of the philosopher John Locke, who—like Samuel Pepys—became a devoted fan of French wine, and Haut Brion in particular. Locke’s pilgrimage to visit the vineyards that produced his favorite tippie is an entertaining inclusion, but also furnishes an early discussion of what would come to be known as *terroir*, as Locke ruminated on soil type, vineyard orientation, and varietals under cultivation (p. 88).

The success of wines like Haut Brion, and the resultant recognition and celebration of varying qualities in wines meant that a gap opened between those for whom wine was part of their daily diet, and an increasingly elite community of connoisseurs. Numerous factors, prominent amongst which was a disastrous harvest in 1709, pushed up the cost of wine and triggered an explosion in vine planting at the start of the eighteenth century. The tensions between quality and quantity again emerged as increasing status was afforded to “bourgeois wines” or “good vigneron”, which enjoyed greater prestige than “vins de boisson”. Grape varieties were recognized as central to this distinction, and by the mid-1700s, eleven families of grape were recognized as being under cultivation in France (pp. 104-106). Likewise, trade with England was affected by preferential trade deals with Portugal which swallowed up the market for basic wine and drove an export market in luxury French wines (p. 112). Yet luxury and connoisseurship sit ill at ease with the Revolution, and we hear of how disorder was fueled both by the consumption of wine and by rebellion against its direct taxation, as outlined elsewhere by Noelle Plack.^[4] Wine production spiked after the Revolution, as churches were stripped of their vineyards, taxes on production were lowered and the conditions for mass expansion were set in place.

Here too it seemed that it was not only Napoleon’s revolutionary legacy at stake, but also those of his subordinates. A new winemaking method called *Chaptalisation* (adding sugar to grape must before fermentation) was made famous by one of Napoleon’s ministers Jean-Antoine Chaptal, and proved controversial in the wine world. Though he referred to his trick as ‘skill’ (pp. 131-132), it would later be deemed fraudulent, and the cause of much discord amongst France’s winegrowers. Chaptal’s dabbling helps draw out a recurring theme in Phillips work: the ways in which fraud has been conceived,

identified, and then prosecuted as winemaking and the appreciation of the product has grown over the centuries. Protecting value (by banning the misrepresentation of provenance, for example) was often seen as being as important as protecting health (by banning lead treatment to sweeten wine, for example). Protecting the integrity and safety of French wine was a key part of creating its identity, as Kolleen Guy has shown for Champagne (pp. 184-186), and this is a touchstone throughout the long history of French wine.[5] Again, this lends another clue to understanding the ambiguity of the phrase *terroir*: connecting the medicinal properties of wine with an assessment of its quality which was simultaneously romantic and regulated. In this vein, the relative stability of the nineteenth century (with comparative peace between 1815-1870) created the sense of a “golden age” for wine, and this was framed both by the 1855 classification of Bordelais wines (which denoted First to Fifth growths as markers of quality), and the expansion of railroads and canals which saw regional wines find a market beyond their own borders. As drinking wine flowed throughout France, and its quality counterparts became reinforced in law and custom, the tenets of the contemporary wine market were established.

The French Revolution, however, was by no means the greatest disruption of France’s wine history. The Phylloxera louse, imported accidentally on American vines, ravaged France’s vinelands and nearly halved the area under vine between 1862 and 1914. Solutions were found in grafting, though not before the economic, social, and physical damage had been done. Phillips picks up the thread unraveled by Elizabeth Heath, by discussing how Phylloxera saw winegrowers themselves grafted onto the land in Algeria, seeking new territories in which to cultivate the vine (pp. 168-172).[6] There is, in addition, some focus on anti-alcoholism campaigns before the First World War (pp. 176-177), though it would have been useful to see their persistence acknowledged and emblematised by things like Mendès France’s famous glass of milk. What grumbles there are about coverage, however, can be assuaged by the scope of the work and its relative brevity. Likewise, Phillips’ account of the Grande Révolte of 1907 is good, though at times feels lightly sourced, and as a result disappears quickly from view. It could stand some reference to Félix Napo, or Rémy Pech alongside the work of Jean Sagnès.[7] Yet, it would take a book the size of Dion’s to achieve this, and as a result alienate a large section of its readership. Here, the economy is well made, and although the lighter touch might irk a specialist, it is in service of a broader readership and clearer analytical thread.

Chapters seven and eight span France’s experience of two World Wars, from the *pinard* (or wine allowance) distributed to soldiers during the First World War, to the dislocation of defeat and Occupation. Phillips makes use of Adam Zientek’s dissertation on soldier’s wine rations, to discuss the important role that wine played in the Great War: sustaining the viticultural economy, fortifying fighting men, and symbolically fueling France towards victory.[8] In the rebuilding that took place, France moved in steps towards its law protecting the provenance of products in 1935, allowing regions like Burgundy to begin to establish a more nuanced identity, as in the work of Philip Whalen.[9] Campaigns also promoted consumption, as production boomed in the Languedoc and Algeria. Such joined-up thinking, however, was swept away by defeat and the inauguration of the Vichy regime’s bad faith government. Misrule and garbled policies undid the remedial work of the *Statut viticole* of 1931, and rebuilding had to begin in earnest.

Curiously in comparison to its early comparators, the most modern chapter, covering the rebuilding from 1945 to the market of the present day, feels the sparsest in depth. The tone shifts towards a more discursive note, and the anchor points of the narrative seem a little more moveable. Instead, there is a long discussion about consumption and the role of *terroir* from the 1970s, but little corresponding sense of agency for winegrowers. This section felt like it needed to do more to build on Marion Demossier’s work on consumption and Thomas Parker’s work on the construction of *terroir* if it was to stand out, and perhaps this discussion could have been rooted more historically as with earlier chapters.[10] Though high-profile moments like the 1976 Judgement of Paris, and Aimé Guibert’s championing of resistance to Mondavi are mentioned (p. 276), there is less engagement with broader tussles with the European Union (of which it would appear there is a single mention in the book), or with other

contemporary national competitors (although Algerian independence is covered, Spanish accession to the European Union is absent). Instead, we see a longer discussion of what terroir means both in theory and practice, including how it has been protected by labelling laws, which pick up on the long-running theme of protecting provenance. Again, however, in this excellent book, these gripes around coverage are but grumbles for a modernist, even if they do make the latter part of the book feel less robustly historical than earlier sections.

The key themes that Phillips returns to are consumption (both refined and uncritical), fraud (in spirit and in fact), and the establishment of brands through trade; these are the foundations from which to understand larger ideas of terroir and prestige. Phillips expands on and contextualises previous work, while producing a book that is as approachable as it is authoritative. It ably sketches out the ways in which that engagement has been a vehicle for broader competition and cooperation within and beyond (changing) French borders. This is not a story of continuous development nor easy progress, but of rupture, conflict and negotiation across centuries. This is a grand history, both in scope and in style, ably covering the highlights of France's long engagement with the fruits of the vine.

[1] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: les lieux de mémoire." *Représentations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24. doi:10.2307/2928520.

[2] Didier Nourrisson, *Une Histoire du Vin* (Paris: Perrin, 2017)

[3] Parkerisation refers to wines being altered to anticipate the tastes and favour of influential American critic Robert Parker and his publication *Wine Advocate*. The term was popularised beyond the wine world by the film *Mondovino*, directed by Jonathan Nossiter in 2004.

[4] Noelle Plack, "Drinking and rebelling: wine, taxes and popular agency in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1791," *French Historical Studies*, 39:3 (2016), pp. 599-622

[5] Kolleen Guy, *When Champagne Became French* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[6] Elizabeth Heath, *Wine, Sugar, and the Making of Modern France: Economic Crisis and the Racialization of French Citizenship, 1870-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Owen White is currently working on a history of wine production in Algeria and this will help to develop our understanding of this area. Both have recently co-written a dossier in *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 35:2 (2017), 76-132.

[7] Félix Napo, *1907: la révolte des vignerons* (Toulouse: Privat, 1971); Rémy Pech, *1907 Les mutins de la République : La révolte du Midi viticole* (Toulouse: Privat, 2007).

[8] Adam Zientek, "Wine and blood : alcohol, morale, and discipline in the French army on the western front, 1914-1918" (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2012).

[9] Philip Whalen, "Burgundian Regionalism and French Republican Commercial Culture at the 1937 Paris International Exposition", *Cultural Analysis*, 6:1, (2007): 31-69.

[10] Marion Demossier, *Wine Drinking in France, An Anthropology of Wine Culture and Consumption in France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); Thomas Parker, *Tasting French Terroir* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

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ISSN 1553-9172