



Wines
with
Terroir

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Prologue

This little book is born from personal reflection on the culture of wine and its meaning in modern society. It is the result of a six-year journey around wine opinion and record, combined with reviews from a plural and dynamic oenophile discussion forum. A journey strongly inspired by the historical thought of Herbert George Wells, the character and charm of Hugh Johnson, the assertive philosophy of Bertrand Russell, the surprising vision of Aldous Huxley, and touched by the human authenticity of the works by Jorge Amado, the enigmatic insanity of Boris Vian, the irony of Eça de Queiroz, Machado de Assis and José Saramago, or even by Jonathan Nossiter's critical style. So I send eternal thanks to my father and my older brother for giving me in the form of bait, some of these seeds of knowledge and intellectual asides. This book is neither a wine guide nor historical testimony filled with beautiful images, or notes from wine taste courses. Nor even a technical glossary. It's essentially a passionate reflection on what wine represents, and I hope it appealing to the critical sense of consumers and professionals alike. It is an independent and spontaneous alert proffered by a recent producer with an informed but healthy distance from the powerful backstage of the wine industry. I hope it is an awareness call at a time when most journalism concentrates the strength of work on the least significant aspects. Wine writers forget, for example, to represent the hidden meaning contained in thousands of wine notes and taste descriptions. Taking time to reflect, and focus ideas to build new concepts that truly can help man devise a critical sense and, therefore, promote the culture of wine and the sensibility its enjoyment brings. Deep down, this is a book that lives the philosophical conflict of an era, a book that could wait for any number of years to be perfected. But doing so would misrepresent the reality of today, the context of now. To wait and live longer in the future than in the present itself, removes the pleasure of experiencing life, which would take away the pleasure of thinking in the moment and, therefore, to discover, to learn, to evolve, to dream and imagine what fulfilment might look like.

Paris, January 2008.

Introduction

The cultural history of wine is beautiful and mysterious, enthralling and deep rooted in Civilization. It stems from opportunistic agriculture, seeing the birth of early Civilizations in Mesopotamia and later in Egypt. Before agriculture, man was a hunter-gatherer with a burgeoning intelligence, making him a wild and relatively rare animal on the Earth's surface. From meals that were subsistence level adventures, through to the regular hours for eating and drinking. He stopped being an animal of chance to an economic and civilized animal! In ancient Greece of Aristotle and Pericles, that this nectar and its mythological outlines won a timeless place in Civilization. The magic and mystery around wine were glorified through Dionysus, starting a long-lasting relationship built on respect and excitement towards this nectar. Phoenician merchants introduced wine across different Mediterranean cultures while the Romans introduced the vineyards, planted with vigour, rooting them forever in Western cultures and traditions! Later, Europeans boarded the vineyard towards new continents.

Deep down, to know the history and culture of each location is essential to appreciate and assimilate the weaknesses and strengths of the wine Civilization. To study its forms in the past, to know the evolution of our bottled wines, to understand its curators, helps us understand the complex reality in which we operate and an awareness of the limits from which some mutation is possible to positively transmogrify a cultural, social or economic reality that no longer connects to the needs of the world today. It allows us to get answers from human errors, and to create solutions that could overcome the setbacks of the present preparing us for the challenges of the future. In an age where the homogeneity of the wine reaches a planetary outline, at a stage where man is increasingly transposed from Nature, at a time when fashion colludes with our desires to break sense abruptly with the past, it becomes urgent to reflect on the complex interaction of cultural and geographical factors, as much as historical details leading to the degradation of the wine's identity in Western culture.

The first text will guide the reader to the nature of wine, to its modern contradictions, addressing in a direct and uninhibited way the ethical and cultural values of wine and its role in contemporary society.. This moral conflict, created by the move to Civilization, both from the surrounding Nature and from the cultural past of each location, materialized, in this case, in a common globalization appreciation of wine without rules and respect for cultural diversity, representing a remarkable human achievement as much as a study of cultural adaptation. A danger threatening one of the last forms of folk art still alive in our planet: the wine!

In the second text we examine the wine and will look to understand what it is to drink reciprocally. We will discuss taste and the associated complexity; we will understand that our thinking and our critical sense are a function of the language we use. The discourse about wine takes notes, fixes and apparels personal thinking to go for increasingly complex ideas. We will be so shocked by the new trend of conditioning that gives us the impression that taste is a universal concept, whatever the culture of each nation or individual background. We will certify that common sense based on cultural values is the best way to fight against the rampant homogeneity of styles and tastes and what blind-tasting brings, without any doubt, the best way for some wine to contemplate human thirst for power and domain. Deep down, we will conclude that (real) wines live forever in our soul!

In the third text we will reverse perspective to look at the wine under a totally different light than books about wine taste exhaustively explore. We will discuss the historical function of wine in our culture, will distinguish between how to know and to recognize a wine, and recognise the relationship, and pleasure we get playing with wines, from this intimate relationship. We will keep in mind that there are new wines, old wines and wines from other cultures, and that, above all, wine connects with gastronomy, and also with Civilization, with culture, with the past!

We will end with a forth controversial text that will summarize what we can expect from all of us, from the majority of those who have responsibilities in the dangerous trail which wine takes exudes in our society... but about this text I'm not going to reveal anything in the introduction!

The texts adopt a personal chronology but they turn out to be mostly independent from each other. This book can be seen as a briefing book on the truth of wine! Good reading.

Chapter I: Wine, connecting Nature and Civilization

Terroir

Terroir materializes a bond of respect between Nature and Civilization. It's a word of French origin without translation in other languages, much as the Portuguese noble and profound word Saudade. Terroir is a particular union between soil and climate which when, articulated with a grape variety and with human genius, produces a wine with pronounced character and strong individuality. At its roots it is an intuition woven between climate, soil, grape variety and human knowledge (history, culture and science). The understanding of Nature and human observation show that certain locations give the vines in those places distinct sensory impressions. It is also intuitive that soils, climate, grape variety and knowledge, change and evolve year after year, giving Terroir different characteristics over time. It's a cultural expression that evolves. It is not an absolute truth because the links between the different components can change and even break. The excessive use of chemical products can burn a soil, water availability in that same soil also depends on climate, climate that seems to be changing. But the slow mutation of soils and climate show that the cut with Terroir is generally perpetuated by man!

Terroir is also a qualitative concept. It applies intuitively to locations that are able to produce fine wine. It brings together natural conditions that produce wines firmly distinguishable from others, without a logical explanation for this difference. With time in the bottle, wines of Terroir immortalize themselves and may surpass others in complexity. But the most exciting thing in Terroir is that its intrinsic value to a location is inimitable.

Another interpretation is possible. True wine respects its origins, its traditions, it's 'authentic genes', and not a mere lab product with yeasts and enzymes selected to give a certain result. Wines that taste and smell just like wood, or that smell like menthol, chocolate, vanilla, banana, and a myriad of flavours selected in the laboratory, with little input from the grape, are wines that flout their roots. Practice shows that the most Terroir-friendly wines invariably combine a purity of fruit with an earthy minerality. Examples that embody a living Nature, complex, rapidly changing, in full mutation, wines that rely on the cool light afforded by acidity. They are inimitable wines.

Silencing the expression of Terroir is to repress a diversity consolidated by Nature over thousands of years, revealing itself cynic in the ethic relationship with wine, with those who do it, with its historic record, with ourselves, deep down, with the roots of Terroir, with the roots of man.

Man

Man needs no introduction. Without human intelligence and effort neither the wine nor the Terroir would live. But should a wine producer be forced to choose between the creator individuality and the uniqueness of the Terroir? No, because they're both needed. A man without cultural context navigates adrift and all culture without individual expression is truly dead.

The answer given by a recognized Douro producer espouses a healthy balance: "As for the local/creator duality: quality wines are expressly from the location, no matter whom or what the creator is. It competes with the creator to give the best of his art to the available raw material. In other words, in this example: Earth, first; Creator, in parallel, to glorify what he's granted to create".

Only man can give voice to Terroir. Unfortunately, human behaviour transforms easily in a modern demonstration of affirmation over Nature, in the exaltation of an ego instead of a cultural identity.

Nowadays there are more wines that reflect the character of the creator than the uniqueness of Terroir. In respect to this will not be oblivious the central and deserved role a set of winemakers held in the wine industry. Some work for groups that produce wine in many regions, others manage dozens of technical consultancies for various producers, others design personal successful projects, influencing numerous followers. If this development of technical and professional competence results in a noticeable and positive evolution of the overall quality of wine, its downside, is that it contributes to a levelling of profiles and styles. In effect, technique gives a sense of power, letting man lessen the mercy of Nature. But the power conferred by technique is global, not individual, requiring a common direction, and an optimal market organization. Human power has a range like never before. All that is not human is viewed as raw material. Ends are not taken into consideration: only process expertise is evaluated. As the subjective extreme, this technical excess is another form of madness. Deep down, something that was born in a positive way risks to move against the diversity of wine, making the world smaller. To some extent, if all wines are similar, how to define the quality criteria?

Tradition and history

Tradition is a feeling that brings us closer to each culture's history. It's a way of thinking, of acting, which reflects a legacy from the past, an intuition that brings us closer to the people around us. This cultural value is built daily each time we assimilate a new concept or obtain knowledge, each time we improve a gesture.

The intentions and ethical values in the face of Nature and people around us are no different than they were in the past. Respect for Nature, for its diversity and for its authenticity are timeless values. The difference to the present is verifiable in the immediate through easy access to information and knowledge. World and life accelerate to a higher cadence, pushing us faster from our historical roots.

In wine, the allusion to tradition refers to a state of mind and not to a simple isolated gesture. The nature of this thought proves that a wine is not the work of a single person. It is the result of a constant and refined tradition. It is a popular art. This deep and complex bond of respect between Nature and Civilization suggests that we are facing the most civilized element of the world. Wine is an intense relationship of an understanding and respect for Nature.

It is important to know that the success of some current wines is not only the work of new and entrepreneurial generations. At a time when some wines boast about their old vineyards, it is pertinent to mention that these ancient vineyards were planted by earlier generations. Why hush Nature and culture? Many of us feel it on our skin: greed for profit is not a civilized gesture.

Deep down, the history of wine is a human story linked to geo-climatic conditions, to trade, to different tastes and to

the diverse sensibilities of each nation. Wine accompanies humanity in its achievements and progress, in its failures and dismal. Wine is a cultural value and a phenomenon of Civilization. But in the modern era, due to discoveries and inventions, the pace of change accelerated. Whether getting old or not, man sees time shorten. It's the practical effect of scientific progress. The future arrives in time with the present, while we are less able to get lessons from the past. Still, science doesn't explain the interaction of many substances present in wine that make it different from other beverages such as beer. Much of what man understands about wine is, the result of experience accumulated over the centuries, of his history, of his traditions.

But alcoholic degree has risen sharply...

Let us so confirm that we live in an age when wines reflect the character of its creator.

We recall that until very recently the rule was to have wines with 12% to 12.5% and not wines that, overnight, reached values above 14%, say 15%, well into the cocktail style. If the merit of a wine is an assertion of cultural identity, materializing a Terroir, why then has the alcoholic degree risen sharply in recent years? If it is true that the overall quality has risen, it is also true that this improvement is severable from the excessive increase in alcoholic degree.

After we prove lots of wines and read numerous professional testimonies, we came to the conclusion that, for the most part, modern wines reflect the character of the creator and a uniform market demand at the expense of cultural identity. The central problem stems from an intuitive finding: as a diluted wine has no subject to express a Terroir, wines that are too rich or too alcoholic mask the complexity and mineral subtlety of that same Terroir. Perhaps we live in a world of Brutus: elegance fails to thrive.

Besides being born alcoholic, these wines are in general presented arch masked, boasting another serious defect: their aromas and flavours remain unaltered in bottle. They only lose energy. They lack even the wine's main natural preservative, acidity. To open a wine with the referred characteristics after a few years is to face a shapeless youth. Similar to the sensation of drinking exactly the same wine we met in youth but with tired aromas and flavours. It did not evolve, did not reinvent itself, and did not achieve complexity over time. Deep down, it ceased having life. When a wine looks itself in the "mirror" at 20 and sees the face from 15 years ago, something's not right. It's because it needs to wake up. It remembers plastic, it is not bio degradable! Is there a more blatant example of attempt against the life of the wine?

This truly unsettling aspect in the evolution of modern wines, the increase of alcoholic degree, is explained not only by economic issues imposed by the competitive market, but also by oenological fashions. The grapes are harvested in a higher state of ripeness, theoretically the ideal point of phenolic ripeness, partly because a new line of thought made school in oenology, partly because global warming seems to be an unavoidable reality. The vines are also grown differently, associated with exceeding leaf surfaces, favouring the production of sugar in the grape. The yeasts that turn alcohol are increasingly adamant, holding up fermentations beyond alcoholic degrees unimaginable ten years ago. But what few say is that all this feeds an abusive dependence on tartaric acid, an element often used in the grape to compensate for the wilful lack of the substance in the natural state. It is used as solution, not as prevention.

This artificial change feeds acidity in the mouth that stimulates the taste buds but that does not prevent the weight of an over dimensioned body. We salivate, salivate over and over. We fail to perceive the aromatic definition given by retro nasal in the mouth tasting. Wine loses its soul, loses the aromatic traces of its identity, of its Terroir. A key element in the life of a wine is conditioned, its main preservative, the acidity! It's plastics industry in its pure state.

To make things worse, most wine critics enjoy these alcoholic styles that present an immediate volume and sweetness in the mouth, displaying round and soft textures accented by jam like flavours. The right wine for a one minute analysis. It is not surprising that critics behave this way when several critics congratulate themselves for tasting one to two hundred wines a day! The consumer accommodates because they too, have found what they are looking for, in an existence lived at the speed of light, are strong sensations and someone to tell him what to do...

But forgetfulness separates us from the collective memory. We often forget that these thoughtless gestures erase a state of mind, erase the culture, moving us away from the people around us. It is not surprising that loneliness dangerously installs itself in modern society... and that the chemical industry takes benefit through the increasing use of anti-depressants...

Will it be possible to go back? Yes, let there be human will. Fortunately some producers are already struggling against this excess, interpreting Nature in a balanced way, working the vines in this direction. In three years, some producers managed to lower the average grade below 14°. In parallel, an increasing number of informed consumers, who drink wine regularly, are starting to search for more digestive wines, with edges, which also require more time for contemplation before springing his living potential. It's a return to origin and historical balance.

A commitment

There are agricultural commitments that more rigorously ensure the originality of a wine, confirming the expression of Terroir. Some contemporary currents highlight the usefulness of organic practices including biodynamic, which are based on the exclusion of herbicides, insecticides and other chemicals that directly or indirectly destroy the vitality of a soil, or on the rejection of oenological practices such as racking, filtration, cold transits, and artificial yeasts, addition of sulphurous and other arbitrary operations.

However, standard agriculture practice starves a wine, without tacit human intervention wine quickly becomes vinegar. Wild Nature also needs discipline! Suddenly breaking with a legacy of generations, families who have spent years perfecting certain gestures to make wine more civilized, is also in contempt of Terroir and associated traditions. In effect, many ideologues with no scientific preparation deviate from the vine and the wine some necessary ingredients for its proper development and balance.

Regardless of the practice undertaken by the producer, which today is subject to a lot of marketing, the most important value is the respect and permanent contact with Nature and the traditions that surround it. Man must approach Nature, and live side by side, and must work the vineyard daily, avoiding convenient shortcut solutions. The practice that best expresses a Terroir is strong dedication and everyday human labour. No wonder avant-garde practices like biodynamic, that mix mysticism, are not only materialized by men and women with a good dose of Cartesian scepticism, a posture that allows them to practice biodynamic scientifically, but also by people living the vineyard with an additional intensity.

Perhaps, trying to be as organic as possible but pragmatically, is a good compromise. There are also varieties that more naturally find the desired minerality, letting Terroir and harvest speak for itself. But all this is only possible when Nature dwells in living soils, where biodiversity is still felled, still relates... or when we do not limit the wines of the world to some "miserable" ten varieties in a universe of thousands!

What should we know about the Old World

Old World is a characterization given to countries maintaining traces of a millennial culture, in our case the planting of the vineyard, with varieties and original practices intrinsically linked to the people and traditions of each place. France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Austria and Greece are obvious examples.

The history of wine in European countries goes back hundreds of years, commencing its serious journey in ancient Greece. The Phoenicians and Romans took on the important task of disseminating this culture across continental Europe. The varieties with names that you have certainly heard, such as Touriga Nacional, Baga, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay or Alvarinho, are a legacy of the Old World.

Opening global markets, theoretically based on the self-regulation of supply and demand, allowed the Old World to create "new worlds". Perhaps for that reason and by force of the "collective individuality", the economic phenomenon has also become cultural. And it is here that the values defended by the Old World, a cultural identity associated with a physical space, lose some consistency. Let's remember the story of the XVIII century and a text published in the fascinating book "A world history of wine" by Hugh Johnson. "The recriminations from dealers about the quality of the Port wine caused a severe reaction from the producer's spokesman: The English traders know that the best wines of the trading post became excellent, but they wish the wines to exceed the standards set by Nature. According to them, the Port should burn as liquid fire in the stomach, as gunpowder for cannon, they should at the same time have ink colour, the sweetness of sugar from Brazil and aromas and flavours similar to the spices of India. They began to let secretly know that it was necessary to add brandy during fermentation to give it strength, and add elderberries for colour". I realize, when thinking about the formation of my personal taste, that he has little of Anglo-Saxon. At the same time, researching our winery history, I confirm that Port wine was created in Portuguese soil but elaborated for the English taste. So why will I be "forced" to like Port wine? What would Port wine be if it had been created and perfected for the Portuguese palate? We all know the answer to this cultural dilemma.

The desire to distinguish the Old World from the New World is a further error of generalization. Authenticity is a common value. But maybe it is a historic lesson for old Europe.

To some extent, the colonizing power of the past five centuries is being slowly colonized by market law and New World style wines... turning the television on or going to a shopping centre are enlightening experiences!

For the consumer, in the global world, it is important to know that there is a bit of everything. The only difference between these two worlds, is the prevailing trust in the existence of a tradition in old Europe that promotes location at the expense of the varieties that compose the wine. In the style of a geographical and cultural puzzle that, unfortunately, has been poorly defended by the producers who let marketing permit banality. There are precise rules, marks on the ground that delimit plots. The existence of these rules is an Old World advantage. Mankind has always lived by them,

why the new prophets try to convince us of the benefit from a market without rules? The Old World is only Old when it innovates within an ethical relationship with the present and with its history.

What should we know about the New World

As mentioned in the previous text, New World is a dubious word. Historically, this New World is the result of a modern extension of the Old World, meaning of Portuguese, Spanish and English, Irish, Dutch, French, Germans, Poles, raised as Phoenicians and Romans of modern times. Let's get back again to an interesting passage published in the book "A world history of wine" by Hugh Johnson. "Let's see what Captain Arthur Phillip of the Royal Navy, governor of the first English colony in Australia predicted in September 28, 1788: in a so favourable climate, the cultivation of vines can achieve perfection, and if no article of Commerce demobilize settlers, the New South Wales wines are likely to be sought eagerly and become indispensable at European tables". Even today New World wines rhyme with perfection, not so much with difference and identity.

In part, the New World is a concept inherent to a location which, for not having indigenous varieties and consequent secular tradition, ended up subject to a winery colonization. Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile and the United States are the most striking examples. In some cases this colonization has already taken place long ago. Just remember that Europeans arrived in various parts of the world in the XV century. In effect, there was enough time to take root with these new locations, create traditions and build a new history. But the global outbreak has also attracted new investors, mostly pure industrialists, without any emotional bond to the locations, thereby cutting with a tradition that was rooted in time. Definitely, and in the pursuit of adaptation, man tends to spoil everything he touches. It is important to know that the term New World is not associated with new producers on the market... otherwise Portugal would be, for sure, a New World country. In this chapter it will be easy to find a glaring example. Let's compare the history of our noble and mythical wine Barca Velha, crafted by the hands of Fernando Nicolau de Almeida, an exception in Portugal, boasting fifteen beautiful crops that began in 1952, with the story of the noble and exceptional Australian wine Grange from Penfolds, which was also initiated in the decade of 1950 but already with fifty-two crops that earned it the status of best wine in the world by now! To compare the history of some New World wines with some Old World myths could be an essay, say, ridiculous as the new fads of Portuguese wine still don't even have ten years of history! In a distinct way, the New World also felt the need to adopt an interpretation which values the variety that gave origin to the wine in detriment of the site. No wonder why the concept of Terroir is criticized. Another important aspect of the New World was soil where there is no evidential knowledge of the surrounding Nature in support of wine growing. It is also possible to exclude bad generational habits although, unfortunately, everything is allowed and there are no rules. Nothing impractical regardless if there was a cultural and historical consciousness behind it. But it is industry crafted on capitalism and supported by a strong technical component that prevails and moves in a space without rules, de-characterizing something that never came to take root.

Finally we forget how "new" the New World is. In Bordeaux the adjacent terrains to the properties of the Grand Cru Classé are all occupied. In Burgundy all hills were classified, leaving only available areas of no interest to the planting of

vineyards. In Chile there are cows and horses still grazing on farms with potentialities to produce quality wines. In fact there is still a lot of "gold" to be extracted in the New World, and hence its special charm.

Join both worlds in the same glass

The two worlds can offer different products. But in oenological terms, in terms of respect for the specificity of each location, deep down in ethical terms, if we joined the two worlds in the same cup we would find a balance we would be innovating within an ethical relationship with the present and with history. That would be good news for the consumer. The Old World is undergoing an identity crisis stimulated not only by maintaining some obsolete practices but also triggered by an abrupt cut with the good practices of the past. While in the New World the main motivation of a producer is not only his passion for wine, as well as the business opportunity that such investment represents, in the case of the Old World, for decades, it witnessed the handover of bad testimonies between parents and children, always neglecting technical preparation and vocation. Fortunately for wine, there are cases where the transmission of Terroir was included on knowledge, generation after generation, giving as a result the great wines of the world. But in most cases the environs were too rural and the people relatively poor for the preparation to reach the winegrowers. Deep down, what happens in Europe today is an inevitable period of renovation, in this case hampered by its huge size and social traditions. In this renewal is the danger of the appealing cut with the past. Instead, the New World has used intelligence over heart and producing results consistent with the numbers required by the global market.

It is also clear that a legacy and solid tradition are not enough. Sweat and preparation, beliefs and work are necessary. It is necessary that the Old World understands some New World reasons for success and knows the great wines produced in this world. Tasting, , travelling, and exploring the positive aspects of globalization! But never in order to produce copies. The New World has had this constructive stance. If we analyse it crudely, the history of the New World is based on acquired learning with models of quality from the Old World. This Brave New World has no prejudices; it is not elitist, knows and admires the best wines produced in old Europe. But it is also important not to pursue a purely economic model capable of killing the identity of wine. The two worlds must sweat, and work genially, but should also cling to their Terroir and their culture to keep the identity of the wine alive.

In fact the Old World becomes younger and the New World longs in acquiring the patina of time! In some cases this adjustment led to excess, the abrupt break with the past, a little vanity and need for affirmation. Fortunately, in other cases, it has allowed the creation of truly exceptional wines, wines with the ability to reinvent them within a pride for the culture of each location.

Intelligence is also part of Nature

Human intelligence is revealed when a transformation, such as wine, reflects the beauty and mysteries of their habitat of origin. Nothing better for the cultural balance than to allow the inhabitants in urban areas to feel Nature's scents brought about by wine!

For this reason, more respectful wines are, of course, wines that smell and taste of their original varieties, to the aromas and flavours of the surrounding Nature, batches that reproduce the warm or cool climate that is the basis of the harvest, batches that reflect the soil structure, specimens that have their own character within what Nature can offer in a... natural way. In short, wines that go far in the depth and definition of its structure without thus masking, their identity. This interpretation allows the evolution within a diversity of styles in the world of wine, to keep alive the plurality and complexity of the wine, to give voice to different cultures.

I also believe that the concept of Terroir has a lot of human input because, in the end, wine is worth what a man is worth, that is, intelligence and working with Nature. But this intelligence must be used with a comprehensive understanding of the natural environment that surrounds us. The better we know Nature the more we can respect and discipline it. It would be a lack of intelligence to go to the point of breaking this necessary balance between man and Nature. Unfortunately, we are heading towards such a break. In favour of a purely qualitative speech, dissenting from authenticity, there have been many breaks. As a critic we assume our share of responsibility.

Let us finally remember that to claim the power to do what we want is a matter of style but also of Terroir and culture. The transmission of Terroir is included on knowledge. Let there be intelligence to ensure that handover!

Diversity ends when...

Diversity ends when we seek an ideal image of wine. When we take a self-centred and selfish attitude, like, "what do I want today?", "do I like this more than that", instead of "who am I?", "where do I come from?", "what's the story that this wine tells me?", surely we are chasing the easy choice, of convenience and consumption.

But there is another factor, one of an industrial nature, which dilutes diversity. The factor of scale and practical implementation. It's not functional to bottle a bunch of grapes, but it makes sense to bottle a specific batch. As it is more understandable to say that the human being is constituted by a head, torso and limbs instead of by a set of molecules. On the other end of the scale, the greater the volume the lower the expression of Terroir. But that doesn't mean that the wines with volume are bad or uncharacterized. Volume wines that we might call more democratic, are those that eventually might not have a Terroir or a well-defined identity but fortunately still entice many consumers to drink wine. A contradiction. These wines should continue to exist, trying to find a pragmatic but honest balance. But regardless of any wine, the consumer has the right and obligation to raise the question of respect for the Nature and cultural identity of each location.

Giving up respect for other cultures leads to decline

Let us travel a bit to the past to better assimilate some ethical issues touched on in earlier chapters. If the Phoenician traders embarked on the dissemination of wine in the Mediterranean basin, it was ultimately the Romans who planted the vineyard in the cultures of continental Europe. It's hard to assimilate the extent of the West's Romanization because few historical testimonies were perpetuated. But it is suspected that the Romans were skilled in the destruction of local

cultures, imposing their Civilization and taste through a disproportionate power. More certainties, however, seem to exist on the causes that led to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Some historians point to a period marked by abundance and extravagance of pleasures, by a generalised spirit of consumption, and an increasing seemingly willing abdication of respect for others. A statement of power without rules that, as we all know, sank.

The Middle Ages lived under the influence and authority of the Church and its habits. Thanks to the different ecclesiastical currents, the vineyard and the wine embedded itself definitively on our Civilization, gaining a unique cultural diversity. This sharing of the wine, materialized with respect for the nature of each location, was an affirmative phenomenon despite the wisdom confiscated by the ecclesiastical power.

In effect, a globalization of wine founded on a dissemination and implementation of new discoveries allows the contact with a widely disperse range of wines, coming from different cultures and developed through various techniques and local traditions. There is also a common and accessible language, the wine tasting, that quickly allows knowing what happens in a certain place. It is a "Go travel... by going inland". The expression that has served as a slogan to promote home tourism in Portugal should be taken strictly with regard to contact with other cultures through the wine.

But when that globalization is orchestrated without rules or criteria, copying one and then another, it degenerates into a phenomenon of irreversible homogeneity that, in all logic and historical evidence, favours power at the expense of taste, in this case, consumption. In effect, regional differences are eradicated at the expense of a multicultural unity imposed by force or economic power.

If the absence of testimonies permitted alleviating the consequences of Roman rule in previous cultures, let's at least consider that the causes of the fall of that Empire serve us educationally. It is important to respect the diversity of the wine cultures and traditions scattered to the four corners of the world by sharing and respecting them. Unfortunately, power strives to erase our relationship with the past, allowing the imposition of new tastes, creating a climate where history no longer has any meaning. But that deletion of memories is an immediate cause for the loss of identity and the consequent end of wine culture in modern society.

Glorifying identity is also dangerous

If the previous text alerts us to the dangers of cultural unity imposed by force and economic power, the following text warns of the equally dangerous glorification of an identity. Let's evoke, therefore, the crucial role played by the Portuguese in the development of Civilization and on its dissemination.

When the Portuguese conquered the South Atlantic they were at the forefront of navigation technology. A respect and commitment supported by foreign thinkers, many of them Jews, ensured that the acquired knowledge was directly translated into practical applications. But these circumstances, a testimony to our entrepreneurial spirit, strength and enthusiasm, were soon doomed to failure. Some passages of the book "The Wealth and Poverty of Nations" by David S. Landes are enlightening. "In 1506, Lisbon saw its first pogrom, which left two thousand "converted" Jews dead. From then on, the intellectual and scientific life of Portugal descended into an abyss of bigotry, fanaticism, and purity of blood. (...) The descent was gradual. The Portuguese Inquisition (...). In the meantime, the crypto-Jews, including Abraham Zacut and other astronomers, found life in Portugal dangerous enough to leave in droves. They took with them money,

commercial know-how, connections, knowledge, and those immeasurable qualities of curiosity and dissent that are the leaven of thought. (...) By 1513, Portugal wanted for astronomers; by the 1520s, scientific leadership had gone".

Only memories have remained, preserved in the epic poetry of Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, who sang those who unveiled the invisible routes "on hitherto uncharted waters". All pride. As noted by the Bombay Governor in 1737: "The crown of Portugal has long maintained possession of their territories in India at the expense of a regular and not insignificant annual expenditure, purely driven, it seems, for reasons of honour and religion".

If the valorous Portuguese departed overseas, as the visionary Afonso de Albuquerque, had the gift of curiosity and sharing with Eastern cultures, the subsequent claim to monopolize and glorify the profits of this share, well expressed by the Treaty of Tordesillas, and soon condemned to failure. In the case of European experience in the East, it was not so much the lack of respect for cultural diversity that dictated the failure. It was instead the greed of wanting to enjoy and glorify those achievements, of immobilizing them, the stupidity of staying stuck to the past. Once again, an extreme assertion of power that, as we know, also submerged.

Suspicion of a cultural conflict

With these kinds of reflections, the gift is to bring the discussion of wine to the ethical level, forgetting ideologies, forgetting the conflict of generations. Indeed, the economic systems determine the future of Civilizations. We all need a bit of bread and wine to survive and there are already many of us trying to survive. In several cases it is obvious that this economic system hides the cultural and individual expression of wine, proven by the extended test of various wines in recent years.

How then to explain the globalization of taste? By the world's market dimension? By the existence of universal values and pleasures? By the industry's adjustment to the market? By the dogmatic discourse of wine professionals? By the change in consumers toward disseminated individual opinion? The issue of globalization may actually have something to do with evangelization: the industry places their bishops, criticism prophesizes and the consumer accepts the reality presented to him. But the mould is slightly different: in this case, the evangelist is himself indoctrinated by the believer dominating will. Nothing like a beautiful market survey! In effect we are all responsible for the global outbreak.

Looking at the endless puzzle of individual realities, the ethical pathway will pass by the effort that professionals should do to materialize the complexity of the wine and the effort that consumers should do to meet its diversity. Sweat is part of growth and intellectual development. Simple and complex cannot cohabit peacefully. Knowledge, experience and culture are the best way to fight against trivialization; they are the best way to avoid an announced ethical conflict between those who try to know and those who do not want to know.

As in any conflict, the respective opponents have a tendency to exaggerate points of view. The expression of Terroir must be defended by everybody. But it is by trying to innovate within a new ethical relationship with the present and history that wine may have a future as cultural and agricultural product. The defence of the natural, the simple, must be understood pragmatically and not materialized in a setback. Intelligence is also part of Nature. Sometimes I feel that the extremists, whether industrial or purists, possess more of belief than ethical backup. And, as we know from the history

of mankind, religion and ethics are two different worlds. Sustained diversity is the ethical compromise that will prevent the industrialization of Terroir!

Appreciating the identity of wine

Should we value each wine's identity? The intuitive answer is yes. But the problem is not the naturalness of the answer but rather on appreciation and acceptance of the wines that answer yes to this question.

Postmodernists often criticise the resistance to new trends. They argue that novelty is all that matters. A situation which also suits the critic that sells annual guides. The consumer, who doesn't even have time to think about his life, subject to work and his own infinite appetite for distractions, is a pawn under marketing law. Unfortunately, in the wine industry, words such as character and originality were increasingly expensive. The evolution of viticulture and oenology, associated with a world of global information and a favourable economic environment coinciding with the opening of several markets, allowed that a group of trained individuals have easy access to the latest fashionable recipe. In a way, making a concentrated wine, robust, full of alcohol and fruit, soft, all ready to drink since its early years, in short, one of those which impresses on the first impact, takes the risk of becoming a technical triviality. The cloning of varieties is a fact. The soul of wine subjects itself to conditioning practices that remove its expressiveness. Most consumers have resented in recent years that we all drink more of the same, in addition to drinking less due to the difficult digestion of high grade wines. In short, the imitations predominate over the originals, the reproductions over the essence of wine, over the essence of Terroir. It is necessary to change this sad trend and value the wines identity.

A puzzle of cultural designations

Fortunately there is some hope. Let us dream. If a producer achieves a good wine more naturally, if wines resemble increasingly similar, the future qualitative concept should necessarily be oriented towards diversity and character. This paradox drives the need to distinguish the wine through the theme of the Terroir.

DOC systems, registered designation of origin, are not perfect, much more can be done but, above all, they value a location and the man in that environment. A globalized world of wine practiced without rules may have adverse and irreversible effects on the identity of each region. Current examples begin to unravel the suicide of a globalization without rules.

To explore the identity of each sub-region will set up a cultural approach that will revitalize the individual identity of wine. The quality designations will have to be replaced by cultural designations. In effect, one must explore the identity of each small sub-region, not only as a drive for quality and to incentive the consumer but also for tourism issues and equality between different regions. A larger number of denominations require the formulation of more stringent laws, adapted to the characteristics of the rural area, with boundaries and well enacted rules. A natural contribution to raising quality.

Some designations already exist after all

But it turns out we can use or adapt the sub-regions inserted into their respective existing designations of origin in Portugal, creating new delimitations in parallel. Here are the existing national sub-regions, regularly absent from our labels. Is their existence known?

DOC VINHO VERDE: Sub-Região Ave; Sub-Região Baião; Sub-Região Basto; Sub-Região Cavado; Sub-Região Monção; Sub-Região Lima; Sub-Região Paiva; Sub-Região Sousa. DO Alvarinho. DOC DOURO: Baixo Corgo; Cimo Corgo e Douro Superior. DO Porto. DOC TÁVORA-VAROSA. DO TRÁS-OS-MONTES: Sub-Região Chaves; Sub-Região Planalto Mirandês; Sub-Região Valpaços. DOC BEIRA INTERIOR: Sub-Região Castelo Rodrigo; Sub-Região Cova da Beira; Sub-Região Pinhel. DOC DÃO: Sub-Região Alva; Sub-Região Besteiros; Sub-Região Castendo; Sub-Região Serra da Estrela; Sub-Região Silgueiros; Sub-Região Terras de Azurara; Sub-Região Terras de Senhorim. IPR LAFÕES. DOC BAIRRADA. DOC ENCOSTAS DE AIRE: Encostas d’Aire; Sub-Região Alcobaça; Sub-Região Ourém. DOC RIBATEJO: Sub-Região Almeirim; Sub-Região Cartaxo; Sub-Região Chamusca; Sub-Região Coruche; Sub-Região Santarém; Sub-Região Tomar. DOC ALENTEJO: Sub-Região Borba; Sub-Região Évora; Sub-Região Granja-Amareleja; Sub-Região Moura; Sub-Região Portalegre; Sub-Região Redondo; Sub-Região Reguengos; Sub-Região Vidigueira. DOC SETÚBAL. DO Moscatel Roxo. DO Moscatel de Setúbal. DOC PALMELA. ESTREMADURA: DO Óbidos; DO Lourinhã; DO Alenquer; DO Torres Vedras; DO Arruda; DO Bucelas; DO Colares; DO Carcavelos. ALGARVE: DOC Lagos; DOC Portimão; DOC Lagoa; DOC Tavira. DOC MADEIRA. IPR GRACIOSA. IPR BISCOITOS. IPR PICO.

Many others can be instituted.

Chapter II: Man seen by wine

Apparent reciprocity

We take a singular passage written in the latest book by Jonathan Nossiter which fits like a glove to real life. It is the transcription of a catalogue from a German wine importer in the United States: "Here's what I think we're after: a point of utter receptivity because we're seeing ourselves seeing the wine. Oh it's all very Zen. But I am ever more persuaded it is the way to pleasure and sanity. If we don't see past ourselves, our discrete palates, we can't get past what am I getting from the wine. The process starts and ends with "I". What am "I" getting? What do "I" think (how many points will "I" give this wine?), and all I can say is if you drink wine this way I sure hope thou don't make love this way, because your partner's going to be very bored".

Indeed, when seeking for an ideal image of the wine we don't do more than hide an inner frustration. To imagine that the act of drinking wine is a state of apparent reciprocity, intuitively helps us to adopt an attitude of respect before the wine, before its location, its people and its history! It is a useful reflection that will help us build an attitude of respect for others, in this case, for wine and its diversity. Moreover, experience tells us that the characteristics we look for in wine have a lot to do with what we look for in people! Deep down, "Tell me what you drink, I'll tell you who you are!".

Taste (or lack thereof)

Taste is a complex concept when we imagine the labyrinthine world of widespread information in modern society. Nowadays I am led to think that there is no time or inclination to build a taste or to reflect on its complexity. We live with the impression that taste is a universal concept, whatever each people's culture or each individual's past. Misfortunes of a market economy practiced without rules. The need to present heightened business results degenerates into a need to comply with the coldness of numbers. In effect, it is more important not to disappoint than to startle. It's more important not to fail than to reflect. As Jonathan Nossiter refers in his book "Le goût et le pouvoir", "it is a borderless consensus of said luxury. Effectiveness, consensus, planetary democracy". Indeed, there is a societal pressure for each individual to live faster, or to consume more, making him unable to complete a considered choice or even to establish a relationship with his past.

How the consumer is affected by the pressure of the consumer industry? Aldous Huxley gives us the answer to this question by a philosopher psychiatrist, Dr. Eric Fromm: "Our contemporary Western society, in spite of its material, intellectual and political progress, is increasingly less conducive to mental health, and tends to undermine the inner security, happiness, reason and the capacity for love in the individual; it tends to turn him into an automaton who pays for his human failure with increasing mental sickness, and with despair hidden under a frantic drive for work and so-called pleasure".

For this reason, rejoice the consumers who are going through an existential crisis in his relationship with modern wines! "Where there are symptoms there is conflict, and conflict always indicates that the forces of life which strive for

integration and happiness are still fighting". The simple act of building a taste is a symptom of inner conflict. Taste is an interaction of cultural, geographical factors and historical personal circumstances. It is the ethical relationship that each individual adopts with his identity and the world around him.

For this reason, the only way to build and defend it, is interpreting the historical richness that makes the uniqueness of individual culture. To like what the neighbour likes is a lack of good taste.

Jonathan Nossiter launched a profound invitation to reflect with the phrase: "it's an invitation to participate in the pleasures of adult tastes, salinity, minerality, acidity, while (American critic Robert Parker) and most people lead us to a childlike taste, of sugar. It is the infantilization. The demagoguery of the easy". Although provocative, the phrase has a kernel of truth. That's what frightens us. How can a child become an adult with good taste, with curiosity for the complexity of flavours, if he spent his life eating frozen and canned foods, drinking Coke and eating gums, if he didn't grow up in a familiar gastronomic environment, if he didn't see his parents cook natural foods? Eventually, one day, this child will have an adult taste and will want to drink wine. But what will his taste for wine be like? Will he have good taste or bad taste?

Inner Terroir

In the universe of opinions on the world of wine, to say "I like it" is not the same as saying "it is good". It is natural to think that we're always right about what we like. And in case anyone points out that we are wrong in our opinions, we feel naturally harmed and close the opinion debate with the phrase "there is no accounting for taste". But personal taste used as single element in evaluating a wine tells more about us than the wine itself. It doesn't say whether the wine is good or bad, does not tell us the story of this wine. But it helps us, doubtless, to build a personal taste.

In fact, we believe that each of us has a different mix of Terroir. And that each of us should express it with sincerity and naturalness. To do this it will be necessary to ask the questions: "who I am"; "where do I come from?". Wine would gain from it.

When we look at our life journey we feel as citizen of the world, the beach, the countryside and the city. We don't have a well-defined Terroir, we have a mixture of several, essentially based on tolerance and diversity, on the respect for our past, on the search for the authentic, on a will to discover new interpretations. What we fail to understand is those people who exclude others. Only an endless variety of wines enables us to build taste. Which brings us immediately to the next chapter...

Ailments from universal taste

Common sense based on cultural values, knowledge, experience and culture, are the best way to fight against rampant globalization of styles and tastes. This intuitive appeal to the purity and freedom of expression is a virtue in a world where imitations predominate over originals. Why forget that in the course of its evolution, Nature always fought to ensure that each individual was different from other individuals?

Inevitably, the wine is closely connected to money as any other object of desire. The consumer market gives us the impression that we decide and choose based on the knowledge of our personal taste. Planetary hypocrisy. By choosing a wine from a particular region at the expense of another, we decide on the basis of apparent personal taste. Unfortunately we forget that these two wines are equal to each other, have the same taste, the same style, the same thickness, have the face of universal taste offered by a luxury consensus! That is, some marketing campaign or a specialized journalist has already decided for us! A subtle job of conditioning, partly imposed by specialized critics, which makes us believe that the best wines are those that crush our palate with sweet flavours and those that bear a given image.

We recall a modern gustatory dogma imposed by the Cartesian mind supporter of over ripening. The vegetable touch that some red wines present in his youth is attributed to deficient maturation of the grapes. To our personal taste the subtle presence of this sensation is far from unpleasant. It can be quite desirable and tempting, a natural tonic sign that reminds us of an element of Nature, escaping the sad light of wines marked by fruit excess. Moreover, nothing like certain greenness in youth to win with dignity over the passing of the years in the bottle. In the name of what value should an individual give up his personal taste? On behalf of a universal taste? Taste is not an exact science requiring a common organisation. Nor is it the anarchy of thought. It is the understanding of the individual past, a cultural past that relates to the awareness of the present and the ways of its transformation...

Imagine the reverse. The world of wines being equal to each other. Then looking at us, human beings, and deciding to make a natural selection. Would they wipe out all men without standardized taste in benefit of a common taste? Let there be sense.

A suitable speech

We think that the wine's speech is intrinsic to each of us, it's an instant, is a variety of styles that must be respected and maintained. It's another example of Terroir! If we don't develop a broad language there will be no critical sense above the immediate experience of I like, I don't like, because language is the instrument of thought. The discourse about wine takes notes, fixes and apparels personal thinking to go for increasingly complex ideas.

But the problem arises, eventually on the side of professionals and critics. There are some accusing them of impounding the wine's speech, a professional speech that raised a barrier between the public and the beauty of wine. It appears that this discourse focuses too much on the sensory description of wine forgetting the historical and human links essential for a complete understanding of wine. But this focus on a sensory speech is no more than a shield for professionals and critics to maintain a consistent day after day. In effect, a wine critic is forced to choose between a brief exposure and the inability to expose. As the tests go on, one after another, to abbreviate becomes a necessary evil, the task of the one who abbreviates is to improve a work that, although limited, will be valued by the consumer.

However, the barrier rises when the critic is limited to taste and organizing his wine tasting notes. Unfortunately, many critics and wine professionals forget to explain their view of the wine and the associated ethical values. They rejoice for having a vast experience and a permanent knowledge acquired through thousands of wine proofs a year. In this context, and hoping to keep alive the connection with the consumer, many of them adhere to sensationalism, either in writing

or in the election of the best wines. These lists change radically from year to year, in a sort of apparent democratic eagerness. I understand it as sensationalism. The consumer is only moved by novelty. But this posture might not be a surprise in a society that elected sensationalism as the primary journalistic criteria.

Some ask in parallel to the "reinvention of a new more simplified language of wine". But it is not exactly what the North American wine critics do, the most influential in the world, responsible for the globalization of wine tasting? What is the practical result of this simplification? Was it the globalization of taste or their individual affirmation?

The complexity of some wines indeed requires a delicate and varied language. The fight between so many different sensations and emotions, the interaction between varieties, soils, climate, man and history is a complex world. All themes have their own environment because speech is an expression of freedom; it is the affirmation of an identity.

Blind-tasting or blindness

The blind-tasting of a wine without knowledge of the origin or the label is undoubtedly the best way for a wine to contemplate the state of emotional madness enhanced by advanced technique. It is the best way for a wine to contemplate human thirst for power and domain.

The values of modern society gauge the credibility of a critic by concepts of seriousness and impartiality. The blind-tasting of wine, without knowledge of the origin and the label, is one of these conceptions often used in resolving a difference of opinion around the wine. Its staunchest defenders argue that blind-tasting is the only fair way to evaluate a wine because it ensures a necessary distancing from suggestive factors, for example, a label and an origin or a third party opinion.

If this premise ensures, with some efficiency an immunity to the factors set out, it ends up giving in to the unexpected taster behaviour. In effect, when placed "blindly", it is likely that an individual allows himself to be dominated by his prejudice and pride, inducing the wine in error. Those who have read the book *On Blindness*, by José Saramago, understand that blindness leads to intellectual disorganization, leading an individual to break with the basic values of society, in this case the wine proof. The "blind" taster turns into a selfish entity merely fighting for his credibility. From experience, in blind-tasting situations, it is not the wine that is evaluated but the taster. This uncertainty is the major criticism that can be made to the wine proof in blind-tasting.

Finishing: blind-tasting used in the evaluation of a wine may reveal intelligence in communication and coherence in speech, but it's evident that this model leaves little room for manoeuvre to intellectual pleasures and historical affinities essential to pleasure. Blind-tasting is not a cultural act and may even prove to be cynical in the ethical relationship with wine, with those who do it, with history, with ourselves, deep down, with the roots of the Terroir, with the roots of man. It becomes a modern manifestation of affirmation in the face of Nature, the exaltation of an ego instead of a cultural identity.

But it isn't all bad. There are no absolute truths! Wine proof in blind-tasting is an excellent training exercise for the senses. To further the test technique, the perception of a texture, the framing of an acidity, the balance, the harmony, the definition, the complexity degree, the best method is indeed blind-tasting. Essentially because what is at stake are conceptual values which should be perfected. A critic must practice it regularly to keep his test method calibrated, to

validate new values and cementing acquired ones. But each time it convinces us more that it shouldn't be used in the evaluation. Because wine taste in blind-tasting can easily become a "blind test", an essay On Blindness!

Wines live forever in memory

Wine is animated by a life of its own. As they pass us an emotion, a story, several sensations, a feeling, the wines stay forever in our memory, the wines become alive in our existence...

To express the sensory dimension of wine, we searched for help on the note of a wine proof that always remained in our memory, one that expresses an emotion that we won't ever forget: "The wide entrance, quiet, makes us imagine an orchestra that takes place in the various corners of the palate. After a few seconds there is the order of the conductor and the symphony begins. The aromatic bars grow in tone, in an orderly fashion, in harmony, and, sometimes, momentary lapses and lush recoveries. It does not end, reappearing at spaces. It is in these moments of contemplation, yes the wine persists in memory, that great wines can happen. We then learn that they are great because the body withholds the endless jolts of an amazing acidity and not because this acidity supports the endless jolts conferred by the bad temper of the alcohol". In effect, there are ill wines, cheerful, grave, beautiful, ugly, fat, thin, elegant, tough, big, small, false, true, honest, humble, pretentious, insolent, annoying, gloomy...

To remember gives life and character to the wines. Necessarily, the wines with aging aptitude, a course where the great wines are enriched and the others degrade, are the wines that live. The stupid modern mania of drinking young wines, in the first years of life, over the excess of fruit and wood, can be considered a vinous paedophilia.

A simple emotional bond gives life to a wine. The wine cellar of an uncle of ours reflects well the contrast between past and present. His wine cellar is imperfect, consisting of some popular labels of the years 60, 70 and 80 of the last century. This uncle never wanted to be an expert but always withdrew pleasure from wine. His wine cellar is alive and gives great pleasure to discover. We already opened several bottles there. The simple sensation of feeling the emotion that they represent for the uncle, transforms them into a link to the past and history, improves them immediately in the cup. All of them alive, all of them with the wisdom of the time spent in the bottle. Whenever we visit him we look forward to the incursions to his cellar to discover these relics, a pleasure that resembles searching for an old book in a forgotten library.

The fact that we can keep the wine as a cultural product is necessary so that, on a daily basis, we can share all our emotion, our knowledge and our passion for wine with the people around us. I am convinced that the Cartesian simplification used in the absolute classification of a wine leads to the detachment of the consumers, annoyed by a cold and reductive analysis. Perhaps individuals who do not derive special pleasure from a purely mechanical analysis, despite dominating it, are able to emote with the history of a brand or with the way a wine won over the passing of the years. Basically, consumers seeking an emotional link with the sensory dimension of wine, people who are moved by the fact that these wines recall something... Can the Terroir simply be the conscience of our past, of our life, of the people around us, of the smells that surround us?

Only a living being is able to convey a story, to tell us about a place with pride. The wines that can are the true wines of Terroir.

Chapter III: Wine seen by man

The meaning of wine

After all what is the meaning of wine in contemporary society? A cultural and agricultural product or a simple urban commodity? A product of the land and the people that work it or a simple product of the agro-food industry? A key element to the table or a plaything of aromas and vanity? A little bit of everything?

The historical role of wine in Europe was always identical to that of water, ie, to refresh and accompany meals of each time and place. It is not surprising that the traditional styles were provided with some greenness which confers them a refreshing ability and palatability, a power of hydration. Man has always looked at wine as a product of his region, able to keep up with distinction to his gastronomic culture. It was also produced on the basis of the local Nature and traditions. It is no coincidence that the best wine/food liaisons are born of this natural and cultural relationship. Imagine a red produced a cool region, in a landscape of woods, wetlands, crop of vegetables and plenty of bird hunting. The best gastronomic liaison to this wine would surely be a hunting dish accompanied by sautéed vegetables. In this European function, fluidity, balance and freshness of a wine are essential qualities. Man sees wine as a cultural and historical link, as a shared emotion.

But the new empire of Anglo-Saxon consumption and some other countries that arrived later to wine consumption started to use wine as a kind of appetizer. Taste a wine before or during the meal, but in a manner independent to the gastronomic flavours and textures, cemented in these modern societies. This new function of wine has required sensual features, mixed power and strength. Instant emotion. An effective approximation of a commodity. A real search for a basic pleasure. A vanity fair. These styles in strength also contributed to the increase in the alcoholic degree. But, in this format, the wines lose their refreshing ability and palatability.

We all know that the Anglo-Saxon markets are the most important in the current era. The more consumerist too. Of course, the consumer of those parts has freedom to have his taste and style preferences. Can and should do it. Like all the other cultures are also entitled to their preferences. But the market law and the need for volume to sustain a powerful industry, increasingly enforces the alcoholic style to satisfy the majority present in these new markets.

This throwing away of the identity of the wine in each region for the sake of purely commercial and universal values is the path to decline, for the suicide of collective memory. Is a removal from an adult taste, is the frustration of knowing that there is room for the affirmation of identities, ours included. Remember that there is still room for reconciliation with wine and its basic values. Everything will depend on our will.

Scoring wine

To assign a specific number to a wine is an essay of enormous difficulty and subjectivity. Is an essay that can have validity in a given wine proof context, a specific day, but is likely to be compromised when multiple wine proofs are carried out days later. Question then, does it make sense to score a wine? Unfortunately it does, justified by the alerts that we left

in some previous chapters. Moreover, it is fair to distinguish the best wines, differentiating the producers who work in an ethical plan with the wine and its local culture. The problem is not so much in a classification but in the clarity of criteria exposed to the consumer. The main danger comes from convenience criteria such as: the more power a producer has the better his wines are scored; or, the more a wine approaches the universal consensus that it is better so is its classification.

The need to score a wine fairly implies an analytical job. We're not talking about a simple liquid material but of people and lives that conceived and created it. In fact, a human and not a material component are criticized, contrary to what many might imagine. A bottle of wine is a "product" that speaks of wine varieties, people and places. For this reason, the classification of a wine cannot be frivolous. Instead it shall be supported by an analytical component, framed in a historical space and time, framed by the respect of traditions and different cultures.

But it is also important that this analytic aspect does not remove the passion for wine, namely, doesn't hide the purity of sensations and emotions, the authenticity of its history, the uncertainty of pleasure. In most cases, these are emotions that lead us to the discovery of new values and qualities, which remain forever in the memory, which become part of our personal experience. Emotion and experience are acquired only if we get to know better the history associated with each region, each grape variety and each producer, in order to frame, capture and understand the weaknesses and virtues of each wine.

In a society saturated with information and with profit-orientation as a testimony of value, failure management is difficult and complicated to live with. And in a world where a critic proves thousands of wines a year, the worth of an absolute rating values the behaviour of a well-trained and routine individual, the "technicist", to the detriment of wisdom, of knowledge, of sensitivity. This practice extols the comparative factor over the differentiating factor, consumption at the expense of pleasure. No wonder that the current references in world critique come from American society. And also that the coherent and intelligently masked wines are favoured.

As with everything in life, power is the worst enemy of itself, it is an invitation to deception. This misconception is often observed in some "well established" criticism.

Knowing wine

Currently, many wine critics and, consequently, most oenophiles, assign a capital place to aromatic wine proof and its description. This systematic process of lessening a wine to its olfactory qualities is, in practice, an act that can conceal the knowledge we have acquired of a wine, a place, a culture. And because memory guards olfactory images more easily than the complexity of textures and subtleties of the proof of mouth, this systematic process of aromatic valuation invariably develops the recognizing ability more than the knowing ability. Doesn't even wonder that this sweltering of the aromatic component stimulate laboratory wines. What's the desired aroma? Come the enzyme, come the additive. Unfortunately, this approach is also a result of the pressure to which most critics are subject. When a critic is compelled to prove a large number of wines over one morning, for example, more than one hundred, the reflection and the ability that stand out are the recognition, the apprehension of an image, not the knowledge of wine that implies time for understanding and conviviality. Maybe that's why we consider that the mould, in which many of the current unfair blind

tastings are conducted, creates situations of injustice to the many different wines, fresh, subtle, different, with particular textures, wines from one location.

To know a wine is knowing to associate a particular aroma, which by itself has no value, to the texture and structure that give shape to that wine. The expression of a Terroir and the temperament of a wine are offered by the understanding of the tannic texture, by the understanding of the definition of acidity, by the structural balance between elements, by the way all this associates to the purity and the aromatic singularity conferred by a grape variety, soil or climate. These indicators will tell much more of the wine and its origin, its Terroir, the person who produced it, than a reductive nose proof.

To reinforce this notion, we transcribe a passage written by Michel Bettane, singular French critic, on one of his brilliant articles, where he analysed similar thematic: "what would you think, for example, of a Titian painting specialist that contented to show you a picture of the master, saying: «in the left corner there is blue, in the right corner yellow, a beautiful yellow, perfectly pure, reinforced by a sublime red in the centre of the composition»?" We could wind up, what to say of a wine tester that is pleased to recognize 20 different aromas in a wine?

To know a wine is to feel its character, its temperament, absorb and assimilate the transmission of values inculcated by a particular grape variety, location, climate by the people who make it. To recognize a wine is to identify its form and content; is to perceive by association. We therefore propose that consumers put into perspective the importance of an aroma and make an effort to connect it with properties such as definition and balance, elegance, framing it with its body and structure, trying, in this way, to feel in the wine a kind of inner music which sometimes goes unnoticed... Otherwise, relax and wind down with the aromas of vanilla, chocolate, caramel, coconut, menthol and many others easy to recognize...

Between knowing a wine or recognizing a wine there is an acceptable difference. Will be, perhaps, the distance that mediates between knowing the identity of a wine and recognizing the sweet flavours of fashion!

Getting pleasure from wine

In essence wine is a simple pleasure. This is the most important parameter in its valuation. However, and this is what makes wine an extraordinary product, a good part of the pleasure of wine is intellectual!

To enjoy the fine wine, in relation to other products, is to have the possibility of contacting with the Terroir, with the people who make it and work with it, with its history. Enough to taste and travel! Believe that this link causes an additional emotion thanks to the relationship we have established with a place or with the people who inhabit it. Many of us already felt it. Because many of us were moved by wine. That emotion also stems from the refining of the senses and from life experience. So the best way to withdraw pleasure from a wine is to come close to its place of origin, either through contact with the land and its people, or the living of its history and traditions. If we value the complexity of Terroir, fundamental connection between soil nature, plant life, fruit constitution, human knowledge and wine quality, this process eventually results in pleasure, originality, personality, variety, typicality, identity.

We still believe in the existence of a noble human tendency to value, for example, a producer who can explain the why of his wines, who respects the Terroir, rather than a producer who reaches a given result out of luck or vanity. We hope, also, that there is similar feeling in every critic who can support his options.

For reasons mentioned in the previous chapters it is complicated for a critic to withdraw pleasure from wine. We could even ask, why should the critic taste wine in totally different conditions from those in which the consumer drinks the wine? The consumer drinks wine in a minute, and more so in the blind? The history of a wine doesn't move? The culture and difference don't emote? The pleasure of sharing? When someone buys a wine there isn't also an intellectual idea externalized by the person who produced it behind the purchase? Don't forget that knowledge is an important argument for exemption and coherence.

Finally, and above all, wine needs time to be interpreted and sensed. Wine is not an instant. Open up the fine wines and mingle with them for two or three days. From one day to the other everything changes. It is a state of mind. And, therefore, it's an integral part of our culture.

Relating with wine

We discussed in the previous text the pleasure of wine. We recalled the possibility of establishing an emotional connection with the nectar of the gods. The Greeks and Romans were not demagogues! I would go further by saying that we can establish an accomplice relationship with wine; we can have our imaginary wines. Just want to live and feel, just follow a course of life.

In this troubled path we could easily imagine the seduction that the lush and appealing, exotic wines would awake in the early stage oenophile. Initially it is a different contact because it is based on the search for lush wines, filled in fruit concentration, smooth, round, sexy. Past this phase the following are narrower, balanced ways. We discovered, so to speak, drier profiles, fresher, more complex, profiles which mark the difference with strange aromas of wet earth, of leather, with a purity of excesses free fruit. We then came into contact with some reference wines. A part of the curiosity satisfied, we burst a solitary phase, where we essentially looked for the difference, wines tarnished by history, wines oddly strange, mysterious, which require from us more than the simple wine proof, compel us to read and study the constraints that lead such a difference to be present inside the glass. These are the true wines of Terroir, of our Terroir! Finally, to establish a relationship with wine is an endless journey, of constant travel, of departures and returns, of emotions and disappointments. We learn to love wine whatever colour it may have. We try to understand and frame the wine we drink. We explore different gastronomic connections, become sometimes philosophical, poets. But, above all, we come to better understand the wine. We build a memory that relates us with wine in an authentic manner!

PS: The difficulty that most of the modern "rich" producers have to establish a connection with the local cultures, with its people and their traditions also helps us to understand the preference for softness and fruit concentration. They lack, of course, knowledge of wine... But if they evolve, devoting, can we expect, perhaps, more wines of Terroir in the future?

Playing with wine

Wine is to be taken seriously, but not too seriously. Having the ability to play with something shows that you acquired the full understanding of its context; it is the ultimate expression of knowledge and intelligence. We can and we must play with the wines. We can make them go through unthinkable and unsuitable gastronomic liaisons (usually it is the wine that gets the last laugh...). We can offer an elegant and fresh wine to someone who requested a powerful chewy style, and vice versa. This is a way that will help erase some prejudices concerning wine!

Infidelity in wine

Is infidelity compatible with the love of wine?

Infidelity is a natural feeling of passion and discovery. Everything is new; everything can be different and more intense in a society that champions quickness. Infidelity helps us to evolve, help us to live every moment on a singular manner, helps to support a healthy diversity of traditions. It is also synonymous with building a sharp critical sense, with the curiosity to know wines produced in different Terroir. It is also the best way to ward off prejudice. Why homogenise the wines of the world? Why waste the disturbance caused by infidelity?

In wine infidelity doesn't compromise love. When the feeling for a wine matures, passion turns into faithful love to a style or brand. Fidelity and infidelity form a symbiosis of love with the wine. In this respect, it is best to follow a principle of biodynamics. Maximizing competition and sexual confusion between different plants is still the best way to maintain the vitality of the vine and wine.

Just be wary of the cadence of novelties with which the current market lives... or quickens... That is a masked nod to disloyalty...

New wines...

Who remembers having recently drunk a wine aged more than ten years? Who remembers opening a bottle bought at random in a wine store about fifteen years ago, a wine store which (by the way) has already closed its doors? Who remembers to have daily kept in mind the existence of this bottle in his personal cellar? That is, who remembers having travelled back his personal memory? Who remembers having felt the essence and the spirit of a wine?

It's sad but few remember any of that. Alongside the concern inherent to the increased alcoholic degree, there is perhaps a more terrifying fact: most wines, today, are drunk in its early years, including the generous, known for their longevity. The reasons have been pointed out in this book: universal homogeneity, loss of cultural values and traditions, forgetfulness of historical connections, lack of time, strong emotions, and loss of gastronomic sense, among others. A real erasing of collective memory.

In effect, the mentioned concerns, increased alcoholic degree and loss of longevity, are interconnected. The desire or need to drink the wines in their youth, in the maximum expression of the fruit, but still at a primary stage, I would say

basic, involves more alcoholic styles. Styles that suffer from all the ailments set out in the chapter dedicated to the increase in the alcoholic degree.

But almost all professionals would have us believe otherwise. Eventually the oenological evolution nowadays allows gathering durability and readiness. However, it is still too early to digress about this much more profitable junction from the commercial viewpoint. Insufficient years have passed for us to find out if most of today's readiness will be allowed consistent durability. Intuition points to the frustrating loss of longevity.

The pleasure of drinking a new wine relates to the need to keep it in memory to feel it later again. The new wines of the modern age are beautiful wines in the true sense of the word. They are soft-bodied wines, although well built, turned, able to capture immediate attention on the first olfactory contact. A wine that without "modern make-up" might not display a natural beauty "as beautiful" as that. A wine that has the beauty of form, not the beauty of content, nor the wisdom of time.

Old wines...

The magic of an "old" wine is sublime. It's an intensity of taste without strength, it's the absolute fascination. To open a bottle of old wine is to favour the sharing, the discovery, without fear of facing its faults. It is not the display and ostentation of a perfectly painted model. But that's the problem; many of us would have more pleasure in strolling arm-in-arm with a he or she 20-year-old model than with any of our male or female best friends!

"What contributes to the longevity of a wine is its natural life, is the balance of its soul". The fine wines change with time in the bottle; they lose in power what they earn in character. No wonder that the true wines of Terroir are the only ones known for their touching aging potential. It is enough to remember the best Terroir in the world. No wonder such analogy because Terroir equals inner life. For this reason, drinking an old wine is the only way to truly feel the Terroir, feel the contribution of soil and climate that arise in youth invariably masked by the character of the fruit. However, distrusting the bad evolution in the bottle of several modern references blistered by contemporary critics, we confirm that current wines have little respect for the Terroir of origin. They march towards planetary homogeneity. They will never be great wines!

Invariably, the wines subtly endowed with small human flaws, confronted by Nature, necessary for the evolution in the bottle, are invariably immortalized in memory. Why? Because these wines give us the possibility of reviewing ourselves in its faults and virtues, in its authenticity, in its frankness. Let the beautiful wines to unimaginative consumers.

At times we have heard, and we tend to agree, that those who don't appreciate old wines have little understanding of wine. I would complement that they also know little about flavours and cuisine, about life and culture. Only the excellence of tertiary aromas acquired with aging are up to fine gastronomy!

Wines from other cultures

One day we asked a group of oenophiles the reason that led them to buy foreign wines. Most replied that they were looking for wines with different characteristics from national wines rather than about the absolute value of foreign wines. This answer surprised me in a society that tends to frame life by purely quantitative criteria. Interestingly, many of these oenophiles had stated earlier that a wine should be enjoyed only by what it shows in the glass, despite what, eventually, we can expect from it. Now when we categorically elect the criterion of difference over quality, we are already contradicting our answer for the first bit. We are unconsciously valuing the cultural differences, the diversity, and the historical elements that make the differences between the wines of the world.

Later, in an interview conducted by a well-established journalist, we were asked if we thought it was appropriate to include in a wine guide, most of which referred to Portuguese wines, half a dozen foreign wines? The answer was intuitive. But the main reason for the inclusion is, undoubtedly, the contact with different realities. It is not, in this case, to live the permanent dilemma of whether wines from a particular region are better or worse than the others. We will surely come across both situations. In essence, what is at stake is to know wines from other regions, from other latitudes, other climatic frameworks, wines made with other grape varieties, by people with different cultural habits, people with differentiated oenological practices, with unique stories. And all this diversity of factors and situations will eventually result in different styles, in different wines. Some better, some worse, but above all, dissimilar. And it is from the contact with this heterogeneity that knowledge and critical awareness in relation to wine are born.

To taste wines from other cultures is like travelling in space and time. It's to imagine a diversity of landscapes, of grape varieties, of people, of different cultures. It's not a competition, it's an understanding, it's an emotion that leads us to know countries like Chile, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, New Zealand, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico, the United States, Canada, India, China, or closer to us, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Greece, Switzerland, Lebanon, Morocco, among others.. A hymn to diversity. In essence, what can be said about a foreign wine with universal taste?

Wine that mingles with gastronomy

If we think about Portuguese gastronomic culture, extraordinarily diverse and rich, we have no doubt that the dominant taste is European. Olive oil connects much better with a good acidity. Wine is health, the tannins are nutritious. But then why offer us wines with ever higher alcoholic and residual sugar levels, wines that simply erase the identity and diversity of our gastronomy? The problem is the result of the convergence of two factors (a and b):

a) On the one hand, the exposure and the importance of the international market require domestic production to adapt to a new taste. In effect, being the Portuguese local demand very specific, it is not a reliable indicator of the tastes existing in other markets. Thus the producers have been forced to produce easier wines, reliable and attractive, of direct profile and reasonable price or, in other cases, turned to more sophisticated tastes, of high value and, probably quite different from the average Portuguese consumer taste. This obvious sign of change to global markets was established by some domestic producers in recent harvests. As a general rule, the alcoholic degree of wines skyrocketed to above

14%, requiring subsequent acidic correction, well in the flamboyant style... The evils of globalisation... The smaller are suffering..

b) On the other hand, "people are generally lazy and avoid thinking, appreciating and understanding a wine that appears different to them. We would add that, nowadays and increasingly more so people do not want to abandon normality, opting for consensual living standards."

In effect, the imposition of styles with a high alcoholic content, remove the capacity and refreshing taste of wine. These are wines that require the presence of a glass of water during the meal or the ingestion of numerous glasses of water before bedtime, unlike other styles that contain within itself this power of hydration, well in the secular style. Are styles that have no gastronomic sense. Instead, if a wine respects how a dish is prepared, if it respects the different components of this dish, of course it must be a wine that will respect the diversity of cultures and traditions, it must be a wine of Terroir.

Chapter IV: When everything gets complicated

What to ask the producer

The producer is the craftsman who dates Nature, who cherishes and protects the vines, who disciplines the wild temperament of fermentation so that, in the end, we can make contact with a civilized and passionate liquid. He combines the qualities of farmer and artist, effort and passion. It's in his hands to respect the fundamental balance between location and creator. We must expect wines with soul, qualitatively beyond reproach, personified, that reflect the identity of their place of origin but also the mind and consciousness of its creator.

Only the value assigned to wine by a producer is contradictory with what he finds on the market. The good producer doesn't move away from the wine. He lives too absorbed by the need to control and discipline it. In many cases he doesn't dominate the analytical instrument of wine proof. To identify an aroma is not part of his concerns. He looks for a certain faultless style. Instead, a consumer is not part of the professional world. Of course, the expectations between producer and consumer are divergent and, however, we're speaking of the same wine!

Don't be surprised that the excessive competition created by a globalization practiced without common sense forces many of them to rethink their products. In most cases, the man with the tie convinces them to produce sugary styles to meet the "new" consumer. Proof that the balance between Nature and Civilization possibly begins in the consumer.

But everything is explainable. Coincidence or not, most producers who long for a coherent and consensual style came to wine in the last decade. These newcomers look for an ideal image of wine. As we warned in another chapter, this is a step for the loss of identity.

More intricately, these new producers have no will or patience to wait a few years or generations to develop a relationship with the roots of Nature. They act without references to the past, to culture and tradition as civilized act. By misunderstanding Nature, these new producers bound themselves to respond to economic issues imposed by the competitive market. They approach their taste parameters to the homogenised international profile. Fortunately, their wines have an easily recognized and therefore boring taste, the taste of globalization, honey, wood, and shoot the works. It would be more interesting for them to use the cosmopolitan characteristics to contact and understand custom wines. Not for copying them. A producer should not seek to make a great wine because it has no meaning, it doesn't exist. A producer should bottle the energy that exists in every spot where the vineyard is cultivated.

With the consumers help it is possible to ensure the existence of producers who make wine in an agricultural and popular mould. It's a human challenge; it's a problem that the wine Civilization must solve. It's important to defend the existence of the Terroir.

The more a producer is productive, the more he will depend on the vitality of the next intervening actor in the production chain, the distributor!

What to ask the distributor

Distributors are kind of an invisible bridge between the producer and the consumer. They develop a backstage work. A relevant work for the dissemination and promotion of wine in the world. If this bridge lacks ethical sustainability, there is no possible contact between consumer and Nature.

For this reason, a distributor is asked to not take on the role that the Inquisition took in the 16th and 17th centuries! But, unfortunately, sometimes we feel that the wine world forms a sort of Inquisition in disguise. The distribution of wine is strictly controlled by "taxmen sent by the Holy Office". The big supermarkets are an example. The oenophile education is controlled by critics that posit new trends. There seems to be an index of recommended wines, resembling the "gigantic list of 1624 – the most recommended (books) to save the souls of Portugal". No wonder, with this attitude, that the oenophile thought declined over the past few years. The consumers lack curiosity. "The (oenophile) people are so little curious that no man knows more than what's strictly necessary to him".

In the global society distribution still concentrates a power that surpasses every other element of the (commercial) chain. No wonder that many producers diversify its business to distribution. A producer with no distributor will hardly be tasted by the consumer. Large-scale production cannot function without large-scale distribution. But this large-scale distribution raises reliability problems that only the largest producers can solve satisfactorily. The small, without their working capital fund, are in severe disadvantage. In competition with the large, they lose their position as independent producers. The afore mentioned analogy with the sad history of Southern Europe in the 16th century then gains modern day equivalence. Unfortunately, the way of homogeneity will lead necessarily to the concentration of power in the distribution and a use of this acquired power. Today it is already happening. The producer who disagrees with universal opinion is rapidly antagonized and reduced to a level of mental insanity or complete stupidity.

The distributor still has an important role in the diffusion and dissemination of new concepts. The distributor shall not overprice the bottle excessively. But consumers should also expect an intellectual construction of the wine from the distributor.

The globalisation in all directions has deeply touched the distribution of wine. Small distributors, as a rule, have two options: either become large or disappear from the market. Those who become great are compelled to make a living from volume and competitive prices. They live from brands that have better market flow and assume themselves as reliable suppliers of the global market. The opposite of Terroir. For the focused reasons, we understand, intuitively, that Terroir wines are intended for the ability of the next player in the commercial chain: wine stores and restaurants.

What to ask the wine store

In the recent past the wine stores played a key role in the dissemination and promotion of wine. Their owners travelled to meet new producers, spending endless hours inside the vineyards. They proved wines and, in many cases, the choice of certain lots and barrels was their responsibility. They assumed the role played by the modern critics and distribution. But then everything changed with the economy of scale. Nowadays critics and distribution occupy the traditional role of the old wine stores. They discover the producers before the shopkeeper.

The modern wine store has become essentially a showcase of products related to wine. In addition to being a place of discovery, the wine store assumes a certain role to fend for the consumer whenever he needs. The resulting degradation of the knowledge of wine that once existed in these spaces also leads many oenophiles to contact the production directly.

Regardless of all, a wine store of Terroir is a space for sharing and transmission of knowledge. It reflects the marked character of its owner, it is different, it has some natural flaws. By itself, when it exists, this human capital attracts the consumer, being a pole for dynamism and fantasy. The conversation, the debate, the discovery.

The criterion for selection of wines, the good recommendations adapted to the cuisine that we will be experiencing, everything justifies their attendance.

But many existing wine stores succumb to the temptation of homogeneity. In them we find the repetition of the same labels, good and bad. We face a too sophisticated setting for a popular product. It lacks the traditional "glamour" of wine. It loses the timeless clutter of a traditional wine store, it follows a standardized way.

Many also suffer from a disease that keeps us mindlessly away from old wines: bad wine storage conditions. They forget one of the markets where they could truly make a difference in the fight against the large and normalized distribution. In effect, they are a reflection of the way we consume, of our education and social organization. The shopping centre pilgrimage mirrors the degradation of our society. A culture of good taste is missing so that the wine stores can maintain, they too, their Terroir and their identity. The lack of money doesn't justify everything. You can't buy good taste. The priorities were reversed. Anachronistically, the hope for a cultural future of wine lies partly in the specialized wine stores located in the centre of urban spaces.

What to ask the restaurant

We live in an age that gives increased significance to the association between gastronomy and wine. It is natural that it should be so because, in effect, the obtained satisfaction level depends largely on the harmonization between both. A menu and a wine list must work in unison, assuming the same wavelength and showing an obvious complementarity. For this reason, the least we should expect from a restaurant would be a respectful treatment of the wine. But the dismaying margins adopted in restoration reflect the current concept of democracy: to take advantage of the ignorant and make fun of those who know! He who runs the business lacks sensitivity and intelligence to understand that he cannot rely only on the simple concept of turning a pleasure into a consumer product.

Unfortunately, the way wine is handled in the restoration is revolting. Degrading packaging conditions, repugnant glasses service, anaesthetic service temperatures. Not to mention the standardization of the wine lists, subjected to the law of global consensus. Fortunately, there begins to emerge isolated spots for hope.

This misunderstanding of wine is serious and, undoubtedly, contributes to consumer accommodation. To eat, to sit at the table twice a day is one of the most important acts of life, it is a necessity. It's at the table that feelings flow, ideas emerge, reflecting reaches dimension. Many discussions and understandings start at the table. Wine allows for feelings to better express themselves. This turning of a necessity into a pleasure is a civilized act that deserves to be accompanied by good wine. It's at the table that wine expresses itself, makes itself understood, and explains its origin and diversity to us. To move away democratic access to wines in the restoration has surely contributed to the affirmation of styles lacking identity, equal to each other.

What to ask the critics

In this text I will be also talking about my role in the world of wine, captured from over six years of wine criticism. It will be criticizing the criticism. Unfortunately for some, fortunately for others, critics are also part of that cake called "Mondovino". They are a natural extension of the consumer and not an extension of the production, as many still believe. To criticize is part of history and Civilization, is part of human knowledge.

In this sense, the consumer should expect critical personality from a critic, knowledge, coherence, support of arguments, independence and historical accuracy. But should he also expect a little excitement? No doubt, because wine is culture and conviviality. To criticize is an individual exercise, a subjective interpretation, an emotion, an effort of clarity in the criteria exposed to the consumer. It turns out to be an evolutionary process of constant learning in the hope of reaching certain forms and concepts sooner than most.

But do the critics assume this posture? Unfortunately, the profession is not paid its weight in gold and so the critic depends on the generosity of the producers that place their wines at his disposal, many of them risking a negative note. It results almost counterproductive that the critic development of knowledge is partly acquired with the support of production. For many this support might jeopardize the final objectivity of the critic. Involuntarily, the critic can be benevolent to the wines forwarded to him, more often than not, accompanied by naive offers such as an extra box of 6 bottles for the day by day. But pressure can go much further. The arrogance of advertisers is overtly known as well as the incomprehensible conditioning strategies such as paid travel and accommodations. Real criticism is a lonely road, the critic must manage with accuracy and detachment the inhibition and conditioning attempts on his opinion. This individualism fosters natural vulnerability. The critic who fights for total independence finds himself, more often than not, faced with the difficulty that such attitude stems in modern society, isolated in the defence of his beliefs, alone against the criticism brought by the ruling power. Making mistakes brings consequences. To be right too. That's good. Unfortunately, most critics don't escape the current rule of journalism, moving away from previous purposes, assuming a kind of freight journalism, of convenience, which sustains friends and advertisers, which work towards a luxury consensus. Beware! Only on freedom and independence can constructive and impartial criticism be based.

In effect, if it is important to maintain a cordial relationship with the wine industry and its agents, the critic must be well aware that the consumer has to be defended, protected by hook or by crook, even if such a stance implies to be misunderstood by a producer or not receiving samples the following year. Even worse, producers and agents take the toil of selecting the submitted wines. Perhaps used to journalism by convenience. But if the exposed elements of courage vouch for the critic's independence, they do not guarantee its infallibility. He can be wrong about an assessment. But that's why he tries to prove a wine more than once when there is doubt and that's why he makes an effort to enlighten on the criteria exposed to the consumer. To search for different opinions and to advocate his arguments in public debate, such as discussion forums, also indicates fearlessness and seriousness.

However, most critics are pleased to list endless wine tasting notes, in its essence also equal between them, even more at a time when wines truly come together. They focus the strength of their work in what least concerns. They forget to squeeze the juice from these thousands of notes and wine taste descriptions, reflecting, fermenting ideas, building new concepts that can truly help consumers to devise a critical sense and, therefore, to promote the culture of wine. They too yield to standardization, to the universal consensus of said luxury. As the wines, also the wine guides are increasingly alike. Some with more, others with fewer wines.

Finally, what about a consensual critic? Synonymous with power, the consensual critic also has much of a ballerina, purposefully approaching his taste to that of the majority, which is, to approach the lack of taste. He stays attached to this commitment, becoming predictable and, arguably, boring. Fortunately there are some opposite stances. But this effort on behalf of cultural diversity and its historical values have not yet been fully understood by consumers who, in many cases, prefer the hype. In effect, to adopt a criticism that respects Terroir is usually seen as an incoherent act in the eyes of a "Cartesian" society. More often than not, when professional competence, criteria and classifications are called into question or qualified, despite published choices being taken and advocated with conviction.

What to ask the consumer

For being immensely large, consumer analysis suffers more from statistics and the need of the author to abbreviate and generalize. Without him, the culture of wine and the parallel industry would not exist. The consumer is the most powerful link in the chain; his decision will dictate the rules in the future. He represents the market. Globalization further accentuates his power because market demand causes a progressive adjustment of production to consumer taste. Maybe that's why it is important to expect a good deal of morality, critical sense, supporting arguments, personal taste and freedom of cultural expression from a consumer. But reality is different. Today's consumer is too predictable, that is, useful to the global consensus.

Unfortunately, our consumer society remains interested in consuming "McDonald's diet, Coca-Cola, energy drinks and Cocktail Mixes". Just look at the consumption of various plastic foods sold in our many service stations and shopping centres. Or the insane prices of drinks in bars and restaurants, although without complaint. It has become common to pay a small fortune for an alcoholic glass bottom, especially geared to assault the palate! The worst is, when it comes to wine, that most consumers settle into drinking dominant mediocrity, at the lowest possible price, without any sense of taste and well below the price indispensable to quality. A culture of good taste is missing. How I understand our children!

When they reach the age of consuming fermented beverages, they face the advantage of insipid "juices", with aggressive and industrial flavours.

Fortunately, throughout history, it was not necessary to rely on the requirement of wine consumers to drive some producers in the way of discipline and responsibility, respect and understanding of Terroir. However, this evolution of respect for the Nature/Civilization binding doesn't reach all producers at the same time. There always remains a majority able to fill the supermarket and wine store shelves with dubious quality wine, equal to each other. In addition, one witnesses the passive stance of consumers, especially those who drink all that is served to them. It's urgent that the consumer starts living the essence of wine, discussed in previous chapters, and don't give up that role to a small group of critics and well-meaning producers. Let us agree that consumer immobility promotes the critics influence and, in turn, his own ignorance. It's an incentive for lack of critical sense concerning wine. It's a permissiveness with the alarming way that current wines follow towards homogeneity. Doesn't the consumer yet realize that this stance only encourages producers to invest in easy wines, without identity, which understandably allow a faster return on capital? Wines which don't respect the Terroir?

As consumers we must strive to discover and live the mysteries of wine and its culture. Only with dedication we can have any chance of contributing to a balanced future of wine, with respect for the identity and culture of each location. We weren't born with a sense of good taste but, if we want to, we can cultivate it!

Epilogue – Wine, agent of cohesion and cultural identity

The difficulty in a book that addresses ethics and discussions around taste, eventually being paradoxical, is the difficulty of balancing a continuous critical attitude towards our surroundings without falling into an authoritarian and biased review. Let us not forget that until very recently, and mainly due to economic issues and historical heritage, all of us had to eat what they put on the dish, down to the last crumb, without protest.

So it is pertinent to ask: where is the complete truth? Is truth in the numerous wines equal to each other, democratically accessible to all consumers, or is it in the wines of Terroir that make us dream landscapes and distinct cultural flavours? Is truth in the harsh reality of the wines of volume consumed in the sadness of everyday life or is it in the unique wines that we preserve for moments of passion around wine? What led Afonso de Albuquerque to climb aboard a caravel towards the Indian seas? What brings Hubert de Villaine to bottle the legendary wines of Romanée-Conti?

Wine is a sunbeam that illuminates Civilization. It's a cultural network that extends to most of the planet. Due to its commodity value wine facilitated contact between distant cultures. Contributed to the progress of Civilization. It is therefore urgent to civilize the globalization of wine. If globalization has made us citizens of the world, allowing us to have access to unique and different wines produced in the four corners of the planet, it is important not to forget that, as native language, the identity of wine is a cultural element of cohesion. If Portugal follows universal consensus, as there has been in recent years, it will lose one of its main elements of cohesion and cultural identity. The defence of Terroir, of wine's culture and traditions, are a measure of our identity. To erase this collective memory will lead us only to cultural suicide.

To all consumers of globalization, today numerous and therefore powerful, I ask intelligence and common sense in understanding of the opinions. Express yourselves; take time to reflect because I feel you indifferent. I still consider that most men and women are probably sufficiently honest and reasonable to be entrusted with directing their own destinies. Moreover, the survival of the cultural identity of wine depends on the ability of those large majorities to make realistic choices in the light of solid and plural information. A solidity which depends on a real journalism, independent and rigorous, not on a convenience journalism that brings imperfect reasoning to the attention of others.

Unfortunately the current market trend, instead, tends to deform the cultural and historical facts, appealing not to reason, not to clear individual interest, but to passion and prejudice, including human vanity. We forced the consumer to take action based on insufficient facts, guiding him in an unclear rationale. And that individual, unfortunately, increasingly opts for normality. In effect, market reflects more the will of the powerful than the hopes of the ordinary man.

Finally, I ask the professional for sensitivity and balance in understanding Nature and industry. The new generation that invaded Portugal surges with better technical preparation but still shows shocking lack of culture and historical knowledge about the regions where they work. In many cases working on all of them. To thrive within oenological turf they abruptly cut with the past, limiting themselves to respond technically to the economic issues imposed by the competitive market, adapting hopelessly to universal law.

Some seize this dangerous path. They realize that it's fit for Man to praise two fundamental aspects of wine. On one side, its wide variety of taste according to the grape varieties, the Terroir, the culture and traditions. On the other, his particular gift for ageing, to evolve. Misrepresenting this natural way of life will only create flawed reasoning generated by the economic power offered by globalization. However, they forget that this planetary power must also reconcile freedom and individual initiative, must reconcile culture and identity, and must respect the history of Civilization.

The struggle for the defence of each location's identity is a global challenge. It is the combination of balance between the affirmation of our past and spiritual openness to the future. I now leave you so that I can civilize myself with the taste of Nature! Better, I'm going to drink a wine with Terroir!

TIAGO TELES