

Marcel Lachiver — *Vins, vignes et vigneron*s : histoire du vignoble français. Paris: Fayard, 1988. Pp. 714.

*Vins, vignes et vigneron*s surveys the history of French wine and vineyards from their origins in the Gallo-Roman period to the present. The organization is simultaneously chronological and regional. Most chapters include subsections on Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Languedoc as well as other regions — Alsace, Champagne, Île de France, Orléans, etc. — as they rose to, or fell from, importance. Sandwiched into this organizational scheme are two chapters dealing with the techniques of viticulture, one describing traditional methods, the other exploring the challenge of disease in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the ways viticulture has changed in response.

The account is not simply historical, but also developmental — how the French wines we know today came to be. There is a light, but nonetheless discernable, progressive gloss, a Whig theory of wine-making, which colors the final chapters in particular. Lachiver takes the reader on a journey, full of false starts, like the meteoric rise of the La Rochelle vineyard in the twelfth century, and dead ends, like the triumph of the gamay grape in eighteenth-century Parisian vineyards, to reach the perfection of present day Médoc, Côte de Nuits and Sancerre. The one region which history has excluded from this march toward perfection, and which provides a counterpoint to it, is the Languedoc. From an early start in Marseilles in the second century BC, through centuries of isolation by a wine trade oriented North and West, the Languedoc achieved its heyday in the nineteenth century, not from producing quality but quantity. Yet, Lachiver suggests a satisfactory end to this story too, the development of “une boisson de table à base de raisin (boisson dite uvale), une boisson très faiblement alcoolisée, titrant aux alentours de deux degrés, mais conservant les arômes du vin” (568); what Bundundy is to muscatel, Languedoc is to become to wine cooler.

Despite this rather silly conclusion, Lachiver's book tells a serious and often fascinating story of a product, a trade and an agriculture, all influencing one another to produce multiple patterns of development. Beyond the constant variables of weather, soil quality, geography, type of grapes, technology and tastes, other factors intrude, not the least of which is politics. For example, Lachiver suggests that Bordeaux's triumph over La Rochelle was linked more directly to the fortunes of the Hundred Years' War than to the innate superiority of the Bordelais vineyards. More conclusively, he argues that the decline of Parisian vineyards dates from a sixteenth-century law prohibiting commercial wine trade within twenty leagues of the city, and that the battle between Mâcon and Beaujolais was decided in the latter's favor, largely because Beaujolais lay within Lyon's custom's zone, while wine from the Mâconnais had to pay a hefty import duty. Finally, of course, he notes the preponderant role of politics, European as well as French, in preserving the Languedoc vineyards today.

Lachiver's subject is immense, even for seven hundred pages; inevitably, the treatment is uneven. The first few chapters, tracking the growth of grapes, wine production and markets throughout early medieval France are disjointed with little sustaining argument. In this period, with, at most, regional economies, little besides the fact of growing grapes and making wine links the various regions. Here, the story Lachiver tells is little more than a compendium of brief chronicles of unfamiliar vineyards. The concluding chapters suffer in the opposite directions — too overweighed with the consciousness of the end result (the present) and too familiar. The chapters on phylloxera and its combat, on the crises of overproduction and the Languedocian revolt bring no new information or understanding to a story as well

known to social and labor historians as to wine history buffs. The best sections of the book are its central chapters on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the developmental thrust becomes dominant. Here, the effort is clearly to understand viticulture in the past rather than to place it on the path to the present. And here, Lachiver's own expertise emerges to provide a clear and complex argument missing elsewhere. Author of *Vin, vigne et vigneron en région parisienne du XVII<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (1982), Lachiver uses his rich knowledge of the Parisian vineyard to contrast with the more familiar story of the birth of Champagne and the triumph of Bordeaux. His theme is the impact of the available market upon wine production and the interaction of geography, technology and politics to define availability. A case in point is the rise of Beaujolais to prominence in the eighteenth century. At first, stimulated by inclusion within the jurisdiction of Lyon, Beaujolais vine-growers found an ever increasing market in Paris, facilitated by a customs advantage (Beaujolais was within the *Cinq Grosses Fermes*) and by a transportation advantage, beginning with the Briare canal opened in 1642.

Wine and vineyards are the subjects of this book; only incidentally does Lachiver explore the history of vine-growers and wine-makers, the third subject of the title. The themes he develops are drawn from economic history—shifting markets and developing technologies — rather than from social history. In a book of over seven hundred pages, he devotes a scant seven to the culture of the growers. Readers interested in social history will find Leo Loubère's oral history of 20th-century French viticulture, *The Vine Remembers: French Vignerons Recall Their Past* (1985), a valuable supplement.

*Vins, vignes et vigneron* joins a legion of publications on the history of French wine. Lachiver draws heavily on his own monograph on the Parisian vineyards, on René Pigassou and Charles Higounet's work on Bordeaux, on René Gandilhon's research on Champagne as well as Roger Dion's magnum opus, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France, des origines au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1959). One of his book's merits is its bibliography, running to over fifty pages. Within this vast literature, however, it is difficult to see exactly what place Lachiver hoped to fill with this new survey. Wine buffs will be better satisfied by one of the many excellent monographs on the history of the particular object of their affection, be it Bordeaux, Beaujolais or something more esoteric. Historians, especially economic historians, will find here much of interest, but little which is new. Again, they are better served by the monograph literature. Perhaps, in France, there is always a market for a new book on wine; if so, such readers will not object to one as comprehensive and readable as this.

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Andrée Lévesque — *La norme et les déviantes : des femmes au Québec pendant l'entre-deux-guerres*, Montréal, Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1989, 232 p.

Profiter pleinement de sa sexualité, sans accoucher à chaque année, s'avère impossible pour la Québécoise de l'entre-deux-guerres, à moins qu'elle défie les prescriptions de la norme morale et légale. C'est là le nœud du drame que décrit