

When I was a feckless young man I lived in Europe, from 1973-1983, and during that time I became interested – the way a *guy* is interested; no room for any other passion – in wine. And I promptly became a wine tourist, and one of the places I visited right away was of course Burgundy. I lived in Munich, and Burgundy was closer than, say, Bordeaux, plus it was far more interesting and hospitable.

While in Burgundy knocking around like a clueless *apassionata* I stumbled upon a domain off the main routes, in a corner of Beaune. Let me repeat I *lucked* upon it, but let me also take a small degree of credit; when I tasted the wines, I knew they were special. I bought what I could afford.

I returned a few years later. No appointment; just showed up. Arrived as a busload of Belgians was pulling away. The proprietor was doddering through the room consolidating the remains of tasting glasses into a large plastic bucket. “Ah, he’ll top up with that,” I assumed. As if! When all the glasses were emptied, our *vigneron* placed the bucket on the floor and issued a shrill whistle. Whereupon his *dog* trotted in from who-knows-where and proceeded to lap up what must have been several hundred Dollars’ worth of 1er Cru Burgundy. (Somehow I can’t quite imagine a similar thing taking place in, well, Pauillac.)

This time I had more money and I’d learned to allocate a lot of my Burgundy budget to this domain, and so I bought, and bought, and bought.

And tonight the very last of those bottles is being drunk, on New Years’ Even of 2006. I shipped it back from Europe along with its companions. One of these was opened for a neighboring importer whom I wished to impress, and who promptly picked up the agency and has been successful with it for two decades.

Tonight’s bottle didn’t look promising. There were at least three inches of *ullage* and let’s face it, I didn’t store it properly. But these wines appeared indestructible, and a couple months ago another old bottle from the domain had been wonderful. So, once more into the breach. You all know the feeling – the final bottle! You can’t stand to part with it, and in a strange way you almost *want* to wait till it’s past its best; perversely, it’s less heartbreaking that way.

The color is fine; mature of course, but not decayed. It needed decanting to separate it from its heavy gritty sediment, and even after 48 hours vertical, the best I could do was leave an inch in the base of the bottle. The bouquet of this wine is a force of spirit. If truffles had orgasms they might emit this fragrance *in flagrante*. Soy, sandalwood, shiitake....you know: Burgundy. Like the fat-cap on a roast after you studded it with cloves, both sweet and caramelized and bloody – you know: Burgundy!

On the palate the tannins are durable and un-polished, the way they used to be. Honest, nothing to be ashamed of. The fruit, or its echo, is something that reminds us how we blow silly things out of proportion. I could try and say what it

tastes like, groping for literalisms, but I'd rather say it makes me want to forgive. It melts away the trivial grudges I've clung to. It even says, *next year will be better, next year you'll let it go, let the kindness come.*

Now our roast is being carved, and my sweetheart and I will sit down to dinner. The wine smells like all the sweetness of the country, like the redeeming kindness of people. Thank you, old Albert Morot, for this Beaune Bressandes, 1969.

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