

ONE BOTTLE:

THE 2009 FRANÇOIS GAUNOUX POMMARD “LES GRANDS EPENOTS”

BY JOSHUA BAER

Tan Doaji said: “Watch the fires burn from across the river.” During the Liu Song Dynasty, Tan Doaji became a general, and earned respect as a man of wisdom, but Emperor Wen feared him. When Tan Daoji said, “Deceive the heavens to cross the ocean,” he spoke of the virtue of distracting one’s enemy. When he said, “Loot a burning house,” he spoke of the virtue of attacking a preoccupied army. And when he said, “Borrow a corpse to resurrect the soul,” he spoke of the virtues that lie hidden in abandoned traditions. Tan Daoji’s most famous quote is, “When all else fails, retreat.” After the fall of Huatai, Emperor Wen summoned Tan Daoji to Jiankang, accused the general of treason, and had him killed.

Zhou Enlai said: “China is an attractive piece of meat, coveted by all, but it is very tough, and for years no one has been able to bite into it.”

Kung Fut-zu said: “If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate the people.”

Xunzi said: “Human nature is evil. Goodness is caused by intent.”

Of himself, Mao Zedong said: “I am a lone monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella.” Of life, Mao said, “It’s always darkest before it becomes totally black.” And, of the United States, Mao said, “If the U.S. monopoly capitalist groups persist in pushing their policies of aggression and war, the day is bound to come when they will be hanged by the people of the whole world.”

Lao Tzu said: “Running a large country is like cooking a small fish.”

Ai Wei Wei said: “I don’t think it’s worth discussing new directions in the context of Chinese art—there were no old directions, either. Chinese art has never had any clear orientation.” After being imprisoned by the Chinese government for eighty-one days, Ai Wei Wei built six fiberglass dioramas of his prison cell, of the bed in his cell, of his guards, and of himself, eating, sleeping, and using the toilet in his cell. The dioramas were smuggled out of China and exhibited at the Venice Biennale. When the iPhone was released in China, Ai Wei Wei said, “Everyone wants an iPhone, but it would be impossible to design an iPhone in China because it’s not a product. It’s an understanding of human nature.”

Deng Xiaoping said: “It doesn’t matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice.” Deng survived the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. In January of 1976, Zhou Enlai died. In September of 1976, Mao Zedong died. In 1978, China agreed to allow foreign investment in the coastal province of Guangdong. When Guangdong prospered, Deng said, “Poverty is not socialism. To be rich is glorious.”

For the last thirty-five years, China’s economy has grown at an average of ten percent a year. According to various estimates, China will pass the United States and

become the world’s largest economy sometime between 2015 and 2020. Over the last ten years, China’s economic growth has created millions of Chinese millionaires, and at least six hundred Chinese billionaires. Like tycoons all over the world, China’s tycoons collect art, fast cars, and French wine.

In their new movie, *Red Obsession*, co-directors David Roach and Warwick Ross document the impact of Chinese money on the price of French wine. During the 1980s, first-growth Bordeaux like Château Lafite Rothschild, Château Haut-Brion, and Château Margaux could be bought for \$1000 a case. The same wines now sell for \$1200 to \$1500 a bottle.

If you love French wine you may have asked yourself how long you will be able to afford to drink it. The answer is, for the rest of your life. If Chinese taste in wine can be distilled into one word, that word is “brand.” Like wealthy people everywhere, Chinese tycoons have more money than taste. People with a surplus of money and a shortage of taste always buy expensive, famous brands. In China, Lafite Rothschild, Haut-Brion, and Margaux are trophies first and wines second. God forbid that a man of wealth should be seen drinking a wine that is anything less than world famous.

Which brings us to the 2009 François Gaunoux Pommard “Les Grands Epenots.”

Pommard is a commune in the Côte-d’Or region of Burgundy. The name Pommard harkens back to Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit trees, and one of the *numina*, or guardians, of the kitchen.

In the glass, the 2009 François Gaunoux Pommard “Les Grands Epenots” walks the line between garnet and scarlet. The bouquet blends the ancient with the modern. This is a time traveler’s bouquet, a moment without a narrative, a nose where everything happens at once. On the palate, Gaunoux’s Pommard is as smooth as a black stone at the bottom of a river. The finish makes you wait, then it rewards your patience with a rush of emotions. While it is possible to drink this wine and hold back a tear, it is not recommended.

The wines of Pommard are the opposite of trophy wines. There are no grand cru vineyards in Pommard, only premier crus, and there are no one hundred-point wines. Because they are not “big” wines, Pommards do not perform well in blind tastings. Where they do perform well is during moments of truth: at dinner, with family, with a roast chicken, and among the best of friends.

Will China change the world, or will the world change China? Anyone in a hurry to answer that question would do well to remember the old Chinese curse: “May you live in interesting times.”

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wines and good times, one bottle at a time. The name “One Bottle” and the contents of this column are ©2013 by onebottle.com. For back issues, go to onebottle.com. Send comments or questions to jb@onebottle.com.

