

BOOK REVIEW

Istvan Jasdi: Serenade in the Vineyard

Jasdi Pince Ltd. 2010. 180 pages.

The main reason that it is worthwhile to read István Jásdi's book (Jasdi, 2010) is that if someone perhaps would have neglected to love life for some reason up to this point, by reading this book, he or she can now make up for that hiatus.



Figure 1. Cover page of the book

The book is a series of journeys. At the beginning, the author starts off in a big city, via the pragmatic life of an

economist, then by taking a brave transition, shifts to the lifestyle of the countryside, to the unpredictable life of a grape cultivating, winemaking entrepreneur at the northern shores of Lake Balaton, amidst the rain-soaked muddy soil and heat-stricken vineyard alleys. The once famous bishop's estate is wasting away, the book tracks the tales of former landowners, select grapevines, prosperous and bitter decades alike. We can rekindle the past, the old, sometimes desperate, but occasionally more fortunate eras of human existence, the commercial transactions, the deserted land, dying cellars, diseased vines, and the struggle to save it all.

All of a sudden, a man and his wife show up from the large city and breathe new life into the slopes. Once again, there will be snipping and pruning, the grapevines will shed new tears; there will be harvests, new barrels in the cellar, visitors in the house and laborers among the vineyard rows. We can follow the grandiose cycles of nature from the winter hibernation of the grapevines, through the thousand year-old minerals hidden in the soil and the life-nurturing sunshine, thirst-quenching rain and smooth breeze to the harvest and final produce, assisted along by a year-long industrious labor of human intervention all the way to the bottled fine golden nectar. The book is a serenade transposed into prose, an authentic confession of love embracing grape cultivation, wine, winemaking, and all the external factors that nurture the grapes of Csopak.

The journey unfolds as we find ourselves in France, introducing the techniques and tradition of winemaking there, then, transitioning to the sub-Carpathian region, where laborers in the vineyard have come from. Roman-era vineyard cultivators come to life on the pages of the book and other skilled predecessors who left us all they knew, such as the protestant priest who translated the classic works of French winemakers from Napoleonic times. Suddenly we hear music, once a year in the vineyard, the world-famous Bartók quartet plays the works of Beethoven and Dvorak (hence is the title "serenade in the vineyard").

The author is a cross between rational and spiritual endeavors. During his journey he is led by a desire to learn and understand the myths of human existence, yet reveals a more pragmatic mode to educate us about the logical historical building blocks of natural processes and our responsibilities therein. His perceptions, such as “*Solidarity is a new-found recognition of interdependence*” could be motto-like mission statements of the European Ecocycles Society, together with the words of Albert Szent-Gyorgyi (Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1937) from his poem “*Psalmus humanus*”:

*“God! Let me praise you with
The enhancement of that tiny point,
Entrusted to me in your Creation...”*

Reference

Jasdi, I., 2010. Serenade in the Vineyard. Jasdi Pince Ltd., Budapest. pp. 200 (in Hungarian)

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