

# I Giveth This Wine a 93

**When the greatest writers in Western Literature apply their brilliance to reviewing wines, expect the triumph of style over substance.** BY TIM MORIARTY

**P**eople who demean wine critics are perhaps unaware that rating and reviewing wines—as the tasting panel of *Wine Enthusiast* does issue after issue—is a long and honorable tradition. Some of the finest writers of our culture started out rating wines, before their careers as playwrights, novelists and poets were fully realized. We scoured the archives of Western Literature and found the lost wine notes of some of these writers. We reprint them here for historical/literary purposes.

*Take me for a fool, but should wine not have a nose? And having it, blow it? In the nose of this Sauvignon Blanc is but the infamy of peach, the promise, as from a swain, who shall speak peach in the heart of his honey-queen's eyes, but forgets peach when his pleasure is spent. In the mouth, thou mayst in it behold fruit, but content you with pear that in blossom bestrides the chalkiness and custard upon the bosom of its angular, crisp backbone. How like a Chardonnay doth it chew, but only in the finish doth it fulfill its promise, the swain and his queen, gamboling in grass that has late been soiled by kittens.*

—William Shakespeare

*I bought the wine at Tito's for a fair price. I brought it back to my flat. I meant to open it with a stiletto. It was a damned good one. I'd taken it from a Basque at a dancing club in the Quarter. There was a girl. I took the stiletto. I removed the foil. I jabbed the cork and twisted. The cork turned to meal. I jabbed again. Pieces of the cork were on the table. There was sweat, and a sound like a horse whinny. It was me. I got up and then opened my door and then went to the Quarter to Lady Brett's and then I borrowed her corkscrew and came back. I twisted the worm down. I lifted. But now more of the cork came out, and the rest went down. I filtered the wine, using the girl's knickers, the girl that was with the Basque. And then I had a glass and then put it down and then I had another. It was a wine I did not mind drinking. It tasted fine and the label was white and had a cottage on it.*

—Ernest Hemingway

*The nose of this Chardonnay is big and plush, like the sofa some Beverly Hills pasha invites you to sit on before he sends you on a wild goose chase to nowhere. Once you take your first pull, though, it's over, like an alderman's promise, like a date with a chorus girl after you ask to borrow a sawbuck to pay the tab. It opens buttery and leesy but then the oak takes over, and any chance the stone fruit ever had is gone, like a stoolie being sweated by some dick with a grievance in a prison with no key. But the finish is sweet, like the kiss of a dame right before she clocks you with a roscoe and takes you for a ride down a rain-dark street called Lonely. It could use some time—and maybe a slap across the kisser—to pull together.*

—Raymond Chandler



*You had better sit down as I give my report/I don't like this wine/It comes up short/The nose of this Cab/Is really rather flaccid/And the balance is off/It's way too acid/It's badly overoaked/I got oak 'til I choked/There's a hint of citrus sweet/But it's smothered by peat/I do not like the way it drinks/I do not like the way it stinks/I do not like it by the acre/I do not like it, silly winemaker!*

—Dr. Seuss

*Take me to the moon, I silently implored the wine as it cascaded cascadingly into the gleaming, sparkling glass. My lips trembled tremulously, seeking the lip of the sparkling, gleaming glass. How could I have been so foolish as to think that the wine, even as it pulsed from my lips to my heart, could equal the enchanting wine I shared with the marquis in his drawing room that magical night so long ago? That wine carried me, with the rapture of love, up over the peaks of ecstasy into the sky, not only in this life but into the infinity of the paradise of love. It betokened a dream from which I hope never to awake. This wine will not do. Simply will not do.*

—Barbara Cartland

*This wine has the color of roadkill. It has the mouthfeel of something a bunch of bored 14-year-olds might concoct out of diner condiments. Its nose is like a mummy's dirty underwear. It tastes like ape boogers fried in grackle poop and stomped by a thousand rhinos with nuclear hoof rot. I liked it!*

—Dave Barry