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EDITORIAL

Researchers in the field of intoxication studies (including alcohol and drug addiction) long ago established journals for the dissemination of their findings, but these publications have essentially served the medical and social sciences. Recently, with the increased activity in research into the relation between intoxication and literature, a need has developed for a periodical that will serve this emerging specialty. DIONYSOS: The Literature and Intoxication TriQuarterly solicits articles, book and article reviews (retrospective as well as current), film and theater commentary, poems and short stories, interviews, research and critical notes, research in progress, letters and queries, bibliography, news items and conference announcements; in short, work and information on any aspect of the relation between intoxication and the cultural/aesthetic scene. We intend to cast our net widely. The purely clinical and pathological may best be left to others, but having said that, we will be concerned not arbitrarily to limit our enterprise.

One of the curiosities of modern criticism is that its preoccupation (one may urge, its obsession) with the mental and emotional states of writers and their creations, with the abnormal, indeed, with the bizarre, has nonetheless excluded or trivialized one of the more pervasive of all human conditions: intoxication. Other great taboos have fallen one after the other. Do we not now have a right to a public airing of the most intimate details of a writer's sex life? Do we not treat with the most meticulous reverence such details? Indeed, has not our enlightenment advanced greatly since the time of Samuel Johnson, who equated fornication with theft? Yet one taboo remains: the serious analysis of drink, drunkenness, addiction, and intoxication, an area best left, one gathers, to social workers, politicians, and comedians. But this will no longer do. The time has arrived for serious critical and scholarly work to be done, as Thomas Gilmore definitively demonstrated in his rich study of literature and drink, Equivocal Spirits, both with the destructive and the creative dimensions of intoxication. We notice in the latest edition of Professor Gohdes' Bibliographical Guide to the Study of the Literature of the U.S.A. index references, for example, to alienation, behaviorism, bohemianism, eschatological thought, gestalt psychology, and Sunday schools. Perhaps in the next edition intoxication, addiction, and alcohol(ism) will be added.

THE DRUNKEN WIFE IN DEFOE'S COLONEL JACK: AN EARLY DESCRIPTION OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION

Nicholas O. Warner

The current wisdom in alcohol studies is that modern notions of alcoholism as a progressive, addictive disease emerged only in the late eighteenth century. In an article of importance to anyone interested in the history of alcoholism, Harry Gene Levine showed a decade ago that the "idea that alcoholism is a progressive disease--the chief symptom of which is loss of control over drinking behavior, and whose only remedy is abstinence from all alcoholic beverages--is now about 175 or 200 years old, but no older."[1] Grounding his discussion of alcoholism in Foucault's theories regarding the appearance of a new, medical view of madness in the late eighteenth century, Levine notes that the "first clearly developed modern conception of alcohol addiction" appears in the work of the American physician Benjamin Rush, beginning with his oft-reprinted pamphlet, An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits, first published in 1784.[2]

Yet more than sixty years before the first edition of Rush's Inquiry Daniel Defoe described a pattern of compulsive drinking that strikingly anticipates the modern view of addiction. Defoe's description of an alcoholic woman should be taken as a qualification rather than a contradiction of Levine's overall argument; as Levine himself points out, the "concept of addiction did not spring full-grown out of Benjamin Rush's head; rather it was the result of a long process of development in social thought" (150). But Defoe does require us to modify Levine's assertion, following M. McCormick, that "Only in 19th-century fiction does the modern alcohol addict appear" (154n).[3] In fact, such an addict appeared in an early eighteenth-century novel which, if not as famous as Robinson Crusoe or Moll Flanders, is among Defoe's more highly regarded works--Colonel Jack, published in 1722.[4] As we shall see, Defoe's depiction of this character raises interesting questions not only about Defoe's attitudes toward drinking, but toward women as well.

There were, to be sure, a few who anticipated the modern addiction theory even before Defoe, to say nothing of Rush and other late eighteenth-century analysts of addiction mentioned by Levine. In first-century Rome, for instance, the philosopher Seneca discussed what we would now call alcoholism in his eighty-third epistle, to Lucilio, reprinted with brief commentary by E. M. Jellinek in 1942.[5] According to Jellinek, Seneca "made clear distinction between acute intoxication and alcohol addiction," and noted the "escape nature of addiction, so frequently stressed by modern psychiatrists . . ." (302). It seems, however, that Seneca viewed habitual drunkenness not as a physical addiction to alcohol, but as an overwhelming compulsion to be intoxicated. The drunkard, writes Seneca, is "a man who is accustomed to get

drunk, and is a slave to the habit" (304). Seneca's attitude here parallels that of early American colonists, as described by Levine: for them, "'addicted' meant habituated, and one was habituated to drunkenness, not to liquor" (147). Other early forerunners of modern conceptions of alcohol addiction have been mentioned by historians of alcohol,[6] but nowhere do we come so close to such conceptions as we do in a passage from Colonel Jack. Although Defoe does not call chronic drunkenness a disease, he describes the progressive, step-by-step, disease-like process of alcohol addiction, and emphasizes the addicting properties of alcohol itself rather than the moral weakness of the drinker. (On this last point, however, the passage is an anomaly in Defoe, who generally expresses scorn for the moral irresponsibility of heavy drinkers, e.g., in The True-Born Englishman. which we will return to later in this paper.)

Defoe's description of the addictive power of drink appears in the first-person account by the narrator, Colonel Jack, of his marriage to a young widow. At first, Jack's wife is "the "best humour'd Woman in the World," and he lives with her in happiness "without the least Interruption for about six Year" (240). But after her "lying inn" with the last of three children, this paragon of wifely virtue takes to drink, originally as a remedy for a lingering cold:

> In being so continually ill, and out of Order, she very unhappily got a Habit of drinking Cordials and hot Liquors; Drink, like the Devil, when it gets hold of any one, tho' but a little, it goes on by little and little to their Destruction; so in my Wife, her Stomach being weak and faint, she first took this Cordial, then that, till in short, she could not live without them, and from a Drop to a Sup, from a Sup to a Dram, from a Dram to a Glass, and so on to Two, till at last, she took in short, to what we call drinking. (240)

What is most striking here is the clear sense of the inexorable momentum of alcoholism. Little by little, step by step, Jack's wife's tolerance for alcohol increases, thus requiring increasingly large doses of alcohol. In the next paragraph, Jack goes on to reveal his disgust with his wife's degenerating appearance, but his overall description still emphasizes alcohol's incrementally addictive powers, rather than his wife's moral failings:

> As I likened Drink to the Devil, in its gradual Possession of the Habits and Person, so is it yet more like the Devil in its Encroachment on us, where it gets hold of our Sences; in short, my beautiful, good humour'd, modest, well bred Wife, grew a Beast, a Slave to strong Liquor, and would be drunk at her own Table, nay, in her own Closet by her self; till instead of a well made, fine Shape, she was Fat as an Hostess; her fine Face bloated and blotch'd, had

> not so much as the Ruins of the most beautiful Person alive; nothing remain'd but a good Eye, that indeed, she held to the last; In short, she lost her Beauty, her Shape, her Manners, and at last her Virtue; and giving her self up to Drinking, kill'd her self in about a Year and a half, after she first began that cursed Trade . . . (240)

Ironically, Jack's wife, like many another alcoholic, was once an unusually light drinker:

> Never was a Woman more virtuous, modest, chaste, sober, she never so much as desir'd to drink any thing strong; it was with the greatest entreaty, that I could prevail with her to drink a Glass or two of Wine, and rarely, if ever, above one, or two at a time. (241)

But then, returning to the topic of how his wife started drinking, Jack elaborates on the insidious means by which intemperance "comes upon us gradually and insensibly" (241). He explains that his wife's nurse

> press'd her, when ever she found her self faint, and a Sinking of her Spirits, to take this Cordial and that Dram, to keep up her Spirits, till it became necessary even to keep her alive, and gradually increased to a Habit, so it was no longer her Physick, but her Food; her Appetite sunk and went quite away, and she eat little or nothing, but came at last to such a dreadful Height, that <u>as I have said</u>. she would be drunk in her own Dressing Room by Eleven a Clock in the Morning; and in Short, at last was never sober. (241)

Even more explicitly than before, Jack traces his wife's alcoholism to the innocent use of liquor as a medicine; the passage is notable in being one of the first literary texts to trace a drinking problem to the medicinal use of alcohol. That this was a serious concern of Defoe's is also suggested in his satire, <u>The True-Born Englishman</u> (1701, which condemns physicians who, like the nurse in <u>Colonel Jack</u>. prescribed liquor for all that ailed one. English doctors, Defoe tells us, "their <u>Galen</u> here resign, /And gen'rally prescribe <u>Specifick Wine</u>." while "The Surgeon's Art grows plainer ev'ry Hour,/And Wine's the Balm which into Wounds they pour."[7]

But the <u>Colonel Jack</u> passage just considered is also significant because in it, Jack's wife exhibits several common symptoms of alcoholism as we know it today: increasing occasions of drinking and increasing dosages on such occasions; loss of appetite; substitution of alcohol for proper meals; and morning drinking. Even the seeming hyperbole of the concluding phrase about being "never sober" presumably means that Jack's wife was not a binge drinker, but rather one of those alcoholics who, as George Vaillant observes, drink "more or less continuously," rather than sporadically.[8]

In addition to these traits, we soon learn that Jack's wife suffers from alcoholic blackouts, with dire results. A villainous gentleman of her acquaintance, after having made both Jack's wife and her maid drunk with liquor, proceeds to lie

> with them both; with the Mistress the Maid being in the Room, and with the Maid, the Mistress being in the Room; after which, he it seems took the like Liberty with them both . . . 'till the Wench being with Child, discover'd it for her self, and for her Mistress too. (242)

Feeling at first no remorse over these incidents, Jack's wife eventually comes to be "truly ashamed of" them, at least "in the Intervals of her Intemperance." Finally, having "kept up from the leu'd part" of her behavior, she "retain'd the Drinking part," alcohol having become "necessary for her Subsistence." Continuing this way, "she soon ruin'd her health, and in about a Year and a half . . . she died" (243), thus ending her drinking career in a manner tragically common among alcoholics, even if at an unusually accelerated pace. (The speed with which Jack's wife succumbs was doubtless prompted in part by Defoe's need to get on with his novel, and not to get caught up in a sub-plot about the slow demise of this particular character.)

Thus far we have concentrated on the ways that Colonel Jack reveals an awareness, however limited, of alcohol's addictive power. But another aspect of Defoe's text, though not germane to addiction per se, requires some attention here--that of gender. On a first reading, the description of Jack's wife may seem to modern readers, as it originally seemed to me, to propound the all-too-familiar view that a drink-abusing woman is particularly reprehensible, certainly more so than an equally drink-abusing man. As Marian Sandmaier has pointed out, "Throughout Western history, women have been subject to more restrictions on their alcohol use than men, and have been punished more harshly for their defiance of sex-typed drinking codes."[9] And Defoe's novel, with its account of a woman's loss of looks, sexual appeal, and virtue, might well appear to constitute yet another instance of the sexist discourse about women and drinking that pervades many works of literature, especially by male authors. But after a closer look at Defoe's text, especially in relation to his other work, I cannot honestly say that I find Defoe guilty of sexism or a double standard--at least as far as drinking is concerned. To be sure, in many ways Defoe accepts his society's attitudes about the subordinate role of women, and one could easily find instances not only of such attitudes, but of a misogynistic streak as well in Defoe's work; we need look no further than Colonel Jack itself, with its cataloguing of Jack's sufferings at the hands of his four wives, of whom five. the title page whimsically informs us, "prov'd Whores." But when the topic is drunkenness, Defoe's condemnations cut across all sorts of lines, including that of gender.[10]

To begin with, Colonel Jack's narrative of his wife's

misfortunes with drink is, despite its revulsion at her physical and moral decay, more sympathetic than Defoe's usual diatribes against drunkards. Jack expresses anger and dismay about his spouse's drinking, and enraged hate toward her wine-pouring debaucher, but the dominant tone of his account is unhappiness over the disintegration of his once tranquil family life. And several times he expresses feelings of tenderness or pity for his wife. He notes that her seducer "took the Advantage of her being in Drink, and not knowing what she did" (240); because of this, and because Jack "loved her so well, and was so sensible of the Dissaster of her Drinking, being the Occasion of it all," he goes on to say that he could not resent her infidelity "to such a Degree as I had done in her Predecessor," who consciously and cynically betrayed him (242). Rather, Jack "pity'd her heartily" (242), and grew "disconsolate and discouraged" (244) at her untimely death. Of course, we might view Jack's supplying his addicted wife with liquor as misguided kindness, contributing in part to her death; but be that as it may, Jack's wife herself certainly seems no worse, and actually somewhat more sympathetic, than other drunken characters in Defoe. In Moll Flanders, for instance, published the same year as Colonel Jack (1722), Moll scathingly describes a lecherous male drunkard:

> There is nothing so absurd, so surfeiting, so ridiculous as a Man heated by Wine in his Head, and a wicked Gust in his inclination together; he is in the possession of two Devils at once, and can no more govern himself by his Reason than a Mill can Grind without Water . . . his very Sense is blinded by its own Rage, and he acts Absurdities even in his View; such is [sic] Drinking more, when he is Drunk already; picking up a common Woman, without regard to what she is, or who she is . . . such a Man is worse than Lunatick . . . ."[11]

More humorously, but with equal disdain, Defoe excoriated all segments of English society for their dissolute ways in his long poem, The True-Born Englishman. Differences of class, trade, wealth, or education make no difference whatsoever when it comes to drunkenness, and gender is not mentioned at all. "The Country poor do by Example live," writes Defoe, and he goes on to castigate not only the poor, but especially the gentry, "Drunken Clergy," and the "Swearing Bench," as well as an assortment of scholars, physicians (as we saw earlier), poets, statesmen, soldiers, and musicians. All social groups are guilty of making "Drunk'ness . . . the Darling of the Realm: (47-48),[12] and all, unlike the wife of Colonel Jack, come in for bitingly scornful denunciations of their drinking.

There is, then, nothing in the episode of Colonel Jack's wife to contradict James Sutherland's precise statement that compared with other "writers of his period [Defoe] held unusually liberal ideas about women," or Juliet Mitchell's view that Defoe's works express his own "particular type of feminism."[13] The main subject of the Colonel Jack passages is not woman drinking, but

drinking itself, and its power to addict. In exploring this subject, Defoe accomplished at least two things of which he was doubtless unaware: he made an early, tentative step toward defining alcoholism not as a vice but as an addiction to a particular substance, and he presented English literature with its first recognizable alcohol addict in the modern sense of the term. He also managed to describe a woman drinker, and even to condemn her drinking, without invoking a sexist double standard or indulging in gender-specific moralizing. For all of these reasons, the Colonel Jack passages occupy an unusual and noteworthy place in the history of literature and intoxication.[14]

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NOTES

1. Harry Gene Levine, "The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America," Journal of Studies on Alcohol 39 (1978): 143. Subsequent references to this article will be given in the text.

2. Rush's first, 1784, edition was published in Philadelphia by Thomas Bradford. For a concise, informative account of other early proponents of medical models for alcoholism, and the hostility to such models, see Berton Roueche, The Neutral Spirit: A Portrait of Alcohol (Boston: Little, 1960) 103-09.

3. See also M. McCormick, "First Representations of the Gamma Alcoholic in the English Novel," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol 30 (1969): 957-980.

4. All citations from this novel will be taken from the following edition, and will be given in the text: Samuel Holt Monk, ed., Colonel Jack (London: Oxford UP, 1965).

5. See E. M. Jellinek, "Seneca's Epistle LXXXIII: On Drunkenness," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol 3 (1942): 302-07, which includes the Loeb Classical Library translation of the epistle. Future citations from this source will appear in the text.

6. See, for example, Roueche 103, and Gregory A. Austin et al., Alcohol in Western Society from Antiquity to 1800: A Chronological History (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1985), xvii, 41.

7. Defoe, The True-Born Englishman, in The Shakespeare Head Edition of the Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1927), XIV, 47. The link between various alcohol-laced nostrums and alcohol abuse among women has been well-established for the nineteenth century; however, I have been unable to find any evidence that women were more prone than men to such medications in eighteenth-century England.

8. George Vaillant, The Natural History of Alcoholism (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983) 142-43.

9. Sandmaier, The Invisible Alcoholics: Women and Alcohol Abuse in America (New York: McGraw, 1980), 24. On conventional attitudes toward female drinkers in literature, see Sheila Shaw, "The Female Alcoholic in Victorian Fiction: George Eliot's Unpoetic Heroine," in Rhoda B. Nathan, ed., Nineteenth-Century Women Writers of the English-Speaking World (New York: Greenwood, 1986) 171-79.

10. For an illuminating discussion of Defoe's complex, often contradictory views of women, see Shirlene Mason, Daniel Defoe and the Status of Women (St. Alban's, VT: Eden, 1978).

11. G. A. Starr, ed., Moll Flanders (London: Oxford UP, 1971), 226.

12. For all of his fulminations against excessive drinking, Defoe passionately defended English distillers, arguing that they encouraged "tillage and industry" and generally benefited the English economy; see Timothy G. Coffey, "Beer Street, Gin Lane: Some Views of 18th-Century Drinking," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol 27 (1966): 673; and, for a sense of the complexity of Defoe's views of distilling, Austin 299-300.

13. Sutherland, Daniel Defoe: a Critical Study (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971), 175; Mitchell, "Introduction," Moll Flanders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 21.

14. I would like to thank Dr. Ralph M. Crowley for first drawing my attention to the presence of drinking in Colonel Jack, and Professor Thomas B. Gilmore for suggesting several improvements to this article.

MIXING MEMORY WITH DESIRE
THE FAMILY OF THE ALCOHOLIC IN THREE MID-CENTURY PLAYS

George F. Wedge

> I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
> I only know that summer sang in me
> A little while, that in me sings no more.
>
> --"What Lips My Lips Have Kissed"
> Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alcohol dependency is classified as a "family" disease because the dependency of one member affects the emotional health of the whole family. In "Alcohol and the Family in Literature,"[1] Carol Ghinger and Marcus Grant observe that in novels the alcoholic is presented "as an essentially solitary figure, isolated from normal family connections, whilst in most plays, the alcoholic is located more within the family contest." Whether this generalization could withstand rigorous investigation is debatable, but it is true that dramatic form is effective in portraying emotional disorders induced in a family by alcohol dependency.

Family response to alcohol dependency is either functional or dysfunctional. Functional behavior addresses the drinking rationally, neither hiding the problem nor allowing it to disrupt family life. This course may not arrest the drinking, but by stabilizing family life, it improves the chances of doing so. Dysfunctional behavior, or "co-alcoholism," the more common response, is reactive rather than active. Co-alcoholics deny that the source of problems in the family is drinking. When things go wrong, they cover up for the alcoholic, sacrificing individual and family welfare to maintain the denial. By protecting the alcoholic and the family from adverse consequences, they enable the alcoholic to go on drinking. This course merely maintains a family cycle of trauma and cover-up.

An emotional "set" frequently encountered in such families is preoccupation with recovering an idealized past, a time remembered as more stable. Many drinkers drink to forget, to escape to a more pleasant, less guilt-ridden past. Co-alcoholics frequently engage in a similar delusional behavior, living as if the present were a simple continuation of the shared past, as if the person they love had not changed. The most extreme form is a wish to escape life itself, the freedom Edmund in <u>The Long Day's Journey Into Night</u> experiences in the fog:

> That's what I wanted--to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself. . . . Don't look at me as if I'd gone nutty. I'm talking sense. Who wants to see life as it is, if they can help it?

An excellent example of obsession with the past occurs in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. a novel saturated in alcohol. After the first party Daisy attends at Gatsby's house, Gatsby explains to Nick that he wants Daisy to say that she has never loved Tom, to leave Tom and marry Gatsby "from her house--just as if it were five years ago."

> "And she doesn't understand," he said. "She used to understand. We'd sit for hours--"
>
> He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.
>
> "I wouldn't ask too much of her," Nick ventured. "You can't repeat the past."
>
> "Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"
>
> He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

Whether this longing to repeat the past is engendered by disappointment, as in Gatsby's story, or disappointment intensified by alcohol, it is an obsession that may be viewed as a tragic flaw. Nick lacks the status or the nerve to confront Gatsby and alter the course of events, and becomes witness to tragedy. To live in the past, one must deny everything that has happened since; the past would not be so irrevocably lost had not some intervening event or emotional trauma disrupted the normal continuity of past into present.

Obsessive nostalgia is only one emotional displacement that may affect alcoholics and co-alcoholics; however, a study of the interaction of nostalgia and alcoholism in Williams, O'Neill, and Inge illustrates that understanding alcoholism may deepen critical reading of a number of works in which alcoholism is a thematic or sub-thematic subject. The plays discussed are particularly strong examples of this interaction: Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), O'Neill, The Long Day's Journey Into Night (1956), and Inge Come Back, Little Sheba (1950). Each focuses on alcoholism in the family context and on a debilitating obsession with reliving the past.

In A Streetcar Named Desire Blanche DuBois is practically without family. Evicted from the Flamingo Hotel, she seeks refuge with her only living relative, her sister Stella Kuwalski, and Stella's husband Stanley. She tries to maintain an appearance of ladylike grace and ease, the manners and coquettish charm she learned as a girl on what was left of the family plantation, Belle Reve. All but the house and twenty acres, according to Blanche herself, her "improvident grandfathers and father and uncles and brother exchanged . . . for their epic fornications." She spends all her energy on an attempt to deny this fact and to deny the

consequences of her traumatic marriage, her husband's suicide, her promiscuity before and after the loss of Belle Reve. She seeks to hide the truth from others by her long rejuvenating baths, her make-up, her dress, and subdued lighting, vainly manipulating details of the present to mimic the past. She hides the truth from herself with an alcohol haze.

But Blanche is not merely alcoholic; she suffers from other mental disorders as well. At times, she dissociates from her surroundings without chemical aid. Alcohol does not create illusion for her; it merely assists in deepening and prolonging illusion. She has developed too high a tolerance for it to give adequate release from the pain of living in a world that stubbornly refuses to accept her illusions or delusions as fact. It is not that she doesn't know the truth: she knows how and why her husband killed himself, why she feels a heavy responsibility for it; under pressure from Stan she can produce the papers that are all that is left of Belle Reve; under the influence of alcohol, she uninhibitedly reveals herself to the collector from The Evening Star as indeed forward and promiscuous. All these she denies; to herself, she remains the innocent maiden to whom a sensitive young fiance wrote the poems locked in her trunk.

After Blanche says she will burn these "love letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy," Stan asks "What in hell are they?" Blanche responds from that part of herself which distinguishes fact and fancy:

> Blanche (On the floor gathering them up): Poems a dead boy wrote. I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can't! I'm not young and vulnerable any more. But my young husband was and I--never mind about that! Just give them back to me.
>
> Stanley: What do you mean by saying you'll have to burn them?
>
> Blanche: I'm sorry, I must have lost my head for a moment. Everyone has something he won't let others touch because of their--intimate nature . . .

No longer young and vulnerable, but unable to let go of the memory of her first young love, Blanche longs to relive with Mitch the charmed moment of sexual awakening, assisted by the magic of subdued lighting and a drink or two.

Both Stanley and Stella recognize that Blanche is in a desperate place. Stanley's consistent co-alcoholic response is scornful confrontation. Certain from the start that she is not what she seems, once he learns the truth, he tells it to Stella, to Mitch, to Blanche, a rare picture of the strong, silent man as town gossip. Although Stanley drinks heavily, he appears not to be alcoholic and has little at risk in confronting Blanche. On to her tricks, so to speak, and tired of her make-believe, he

confronts her repeatedly and crudely.

Stella indulges Blanche's daydreams, so long as they do not affect her; she denies for as long as she can what Stanley says about Blanche, ignores the extent of her drinking, seeks to protect her from the consequences by, among other things, giving her money. She confronts Blanche only for taking "entirely too much for granted." Significantly, Stella's acceptance of her own sexuality elicits this minor confrontation with Blanche. As if she found it vaguely shameful she says, half to herself, "I can hardly stand it when he is away for a night." On all other points, she accepts what Blanche says.

Stan repeatedly confronts Stella as well as Blanche, but the two women are locked into a pattern of denial so strong that even extreme trauma cannot fully break it down. At the end of the play, Stella's denial of the reality of Blanche's life is complete; she denies what Stanley has done, saying: "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley." She is trapped between loyalty to Blanche and her need to deny Stanley's brutality. She knows she must commit Blanche, but remains emotionally unable to admit the truth, asking, "What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?"

Family dynamics in <u>The Long Day's Journey Into Night</u> are different in operation but strikingly similar in their source. Mary Tyrone is addicted to morphine, her sons, Jamie and Edmund, are alcoholic, and her husband, James, is at least a borderline alcoholic. They blame their drinking on her morphine addiction, a neat form of double denial that allows them to avoid confronting Mary and to go on drinking. As Edmund puts it: "Well, what's wrong with being drunk? It's what we're after isn't it? . . . We know what we're trying to forget." Drink dulls their response to Mary's vivid evocation of the past; the self-mockery in Mary's midnight ramble is more than they can bear to watch sober.

Sporadically, the men attempt to confront Mary. But rational confrontation is beyond their daring; they fear the violence bubbling in themselves and know the more subtle springs of violence in her. James blames himself for Mary's condition; had he not married her and obliged her to bear their sons, she would not be addicted. Edmund is extravagantly aware that his birth was the start of her addiction. Jamie blames Edmund, is jealous of him, and deeply denies his own wish to have Mary all to himself. The Tyrone men have an investment in Mary's morphinism: successful confrontation would mean losing their excuse to drink. Everyone is bust protecting everyone else from the consequences of somebody's addiction.

At the center of the addictive cover-ups is Mary. She does not suffer, as Blanche does, from some other mental disorder. Mary dissociates only with difficulty, through recourse to

morphine and alcohol, and the stages of her dissociation are gradual. Through much of the day, she is aware of what the others think or do, even though she may cover up with apparently dissociative responses. The precise moment at which her long day's journey is calculated to arrive, the moment at which it arrives long day after long day is the moment of sexual awakening: "Then in the spring of my senior year" she says, "something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time."

Like Blanche, though for different reasons, she hides from reality: a husband who is penny-pinching, rather than heroic, who has to travel on the road with his production of The Count of Monte Cristo. who leaves her alone in hotel rooms to go out drinking more than he should. She blames herself for this deterioration and loses her faith. "None of us," she says,

> can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever.

Like Blanche she finds that poetry yellows with time, that she needs the magic of subdued light and a drug to believe there ever was poetry.

Mary's men, aware that her struggle is essentially a battle against herself, strive to protect the family from her repeated attacks upon its pretense of equilibrium. They grudgingly work together to preserve such sense of family as there is, yet vie among themselves for Mary's love. They criticize one another for drinking, but not in productive ways; that would require admitting the truth about themselves. They lack the brute strength and self-satisfaction of a Stanley Kowalski and are afraid of the danger to Mary's sanity of such confrontation. Thus, each willingly inhabits a place as shadowy as Mary's: Edmund has the fog, Jamie the days when he was Mary's only son, and James his acting success before he became mired in his Monte Cristo role.

This is a desperate play; family dynamics have been so adjusted as to maintain a pattern of dysfunctional behavior indefinitely, like a suspended crystal ball, running on its own power, that will send sparkles across a dimly lit room long after the dancers have gone.

Come Back Little Sheba focuses directly on co-alcoholism. Doc Delaney has been sober for almost a year and shows in a number of ways that he is making appropriate progress in his sobriety. When the self-pitying Lola says, "I can't sleep late like I used to," he consoles her with the realistic observation that "habits change." When she says "I oughta be gettin' your breakfast, Doc,

instead of you gettin' mine," he says, "I have to get up anyway, Baby." Such exchanges show that Doc is learning to deal rationally with his own emotions and with Lola. Her co-alcoholic behavior has outlasted his active drinking and is a significant source of his relapse.

The center of Lola's inability to cope with her daily life is her desire to repeat the past. Lola substituted the dependency and cuteness of Sheba for the child she lost; her dreams of Sheba are displaced mourning. She encourages the romance of Marie and Turk, seeking a vicarious repetition of her youthful romance with Doc. Like Blanche and Mary, Lola longs to recover innocence, to recapture the moment of sexual awakening.

Lacking recourse to a drug, Lola spins fantasies around what her environment offers, sometimes manipulating reality itself to create the desired illusion--the radio program Ta-boo, her "fifteen minutes of temptation"; chats with the postman, Mrs. Coffman, the milkman; her clearly manipulative, vaguely voyeuristic interest in Marie and Turk, who she mistakes for the innocent maiden she once was and the dashing young suitor that was Doc. Only Mrs. Coffman is confrontive, saying, "The only way to keep from missing one dog is to get another," and "You should get busy and forget her. You should get busy, Mrs. Delaney." Such comments seem brusque and unfeeling, but as later events show, Mrs. Coffman is not unfeeling and can give support in a real crisis. Her remarks in the first act contain good advice for a person trapped in self-pity.

Doc chooses to take the course Stella takes with Blanche, enabling Lola to continue her debilitating fantasy life by cooking for her, consoling her, showing interest in her concerns, and not criticizing the condition of his home. His motives are mixed: on the one hand, he finds her fantasy attractive; remembering the antics of the dog appeals to him, and he reminds Lola he has offered to get her another dog, as if he missed Sheba almost as much as she. He shares Lola's perception of Marie as innocent, indulging his own mild fantasy that she is a daughter, another young, pure, desirable Lola. On the other hand, he feels guilty about this fantasy and about Lola, because he seduced her, because he has not given her children, and because his alcoholism has encouraged if not engendered her emotional miasma.

Doc and Lola dwell in a shared, albeit differently perceived, past. Doc's guilt because he "had to" marry Lola makes it easy for him to project innocence upon Marie, symbolically the young Lola, and concupiscence upon Turk, an alter ego for the lustful side of himself. And Lola can play the voyeur because she projects upon Marie and Turk her own memory of the beauty of her romantic liaison with Doc, wishing for Marie and Turk the children she never had. Doc's alcoholism is the center of their preoccupation with the past. He has let go of the alcohol, but

cannot let go of the guilt, which he has transferred from alcohol to sex.

Ultimately, Lola's indulgence of Marie and Turk precipitates the crisis. Doc's discovery that Turk has spent the night with Marie shatters his belief in Marie's grace and spirituality; it turns to a revulsion akin to Blanche's: "--on the dance floor--unable to stop myself--I'd suddenly said--'I saw! I know! You disgust me . . .'" For Doc the consequence is madness, the madness of drink, a drunken spitting out of his own ugly self-hatred for having debased the innocence, grace, and spirituality Lola represented to him.

All these emotions surface in his befuddled and poisonous, truly intoxicated, conviction that Lola knows Turk stayed the night: "You were running a regular house, weren't you? It's probably been going on for years, ever since we were married." As he had transferred his tenderness for the young Lola to Marie, he now transfers his anger at Marie to Lola. Hell may have no fury like a woman scorned, but surely the second best thing is the fury of a mama's boy who thinks he trapped an innocent girl into marriage and has suddenly come to believe that he was the innocent one all along.

The denouement of this play offers hope for a future in which the pain of alcoholism is relieved for both alcoholic and co-alcoholic. Doc has apparently blacked out the violent confrontation that preceded his admission to treatment. He knows he has said things that require forgiveness and fears that Lola may not forgive him, may even leave him. She responds "Daddy! Why of course I'll never leave you. You're all I've got. You're all I ever had."

When he speaks of going hunting and perhaps keeping a "sad-looking old bird dog around the house," she says she'd like that, and shares her most recent dream, one in which Doc replaces Turk as athletic hero and she finds Sheba dead, but does not stop, heeding Doc's urgent "We can't stay here, honey; we gotta go on." This in turn leads directly to her admission that Sheba is gone, that her grieving for their dead child is completed. At the end of the play Lola is ready to release the past and "go on" with doc, together, as he had urged in her dream.[2]

Blanche, Mary, and Lola deny not only their association with addiction but the truth about their loss of innocence. The more they try to relive the past, the more it becomes a trap; yet, to exist in the (diminished) present creates intense pain. Each is willfully self-deceived; denial is as strong in co-addicts like Stella or James or Lola as it is in addicts like Blanche or Mary or Doc. Doc knows the truth about himself even as, after eleven months of sobriety, he reaches for the bottle. Just so, the co-alcoholics know the truth about themselves even as they continue

their self-defeating recourse to thoughts and dreams of what might have been.

Blanche, Mary, and Lola seek to recapture innocence because they feel guilty that romantic love and passion faded into a barely recognizable ghost of itself, with violent, wrenching shock for Blanche, but no less truly for Mary, whose husband has never lived up to his talent, or Lola, whose husband's inability to forgive himself for their indiscretion implies an inability to forgive her. They seek to feel, as they once did, competent and worthy of love rather than incompetent and worthless. They seek the youth, virginity, and maidenliness that characterized them at Belle Reve, the convent, and college, settings important because they are associated with the last days of their sexual innocence.

These three plays provide evidence supportive of current treatment modalities that deal with addiction as a family illness. But it is equally true that with better understanding of the disorder has come an additional tool for understanding literary works. There is a value in noting that three distinguished (and, incidentally, alcohol dependent) playwrights present a remarkably consistent picture of one aspect of alcoholic thinking--obsessive nostalgia. The cross-reference among the plays (and others that deal with alcoholic characters) is itself revealing. It would be potentially of value to literary studies to consider as well how the pipedreams of the drunks in O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh contrast with the nostalgia of these women, how the drinking of Birdie in Hellman's The Little Foxes, of Martha in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, or of the women in the novels of Jean Rhys differs in source and function from the behavior of the alcoholics in these plays. The quantity of critical discussion which uses our growing knowledge of addiction and co-addiction is small; the corpus to which it could be applied is relatively large.

The plays discussed in this paper are congruent in their assessment of the effect of alcoholism upon family structure and highly instructive to a society which even in 1989 too readily views alcoholism not as the illness it is but as immoral behavior which can be controlled by the exercise of will power. In these plays, we are told that compulsive drinking sometimes springs from an illness characterized not by depravity but by an obsessive desire to recapture a time of innocence, to relive the first blush of pure love. For, strange as it may seem, Doc and Lola, James and Mary, Mitch and Blanche are really Romeo and Juliet disguised as tragic clowns.[3]

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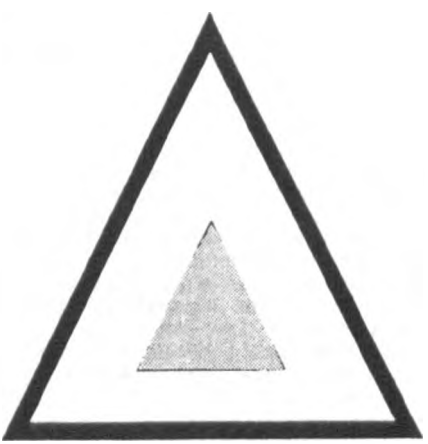
NOTES

1. Carol Ghinger and Marcus Grant, "Alcohol and the Family in Literature," in J. Orford and J. Harwin (eds.) Alcohol and the Family (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 25-55.

2. Lola has, in some ways, followed steps parallel to those Doc took in his AA recovery. She has "admitted that [she] is powerless over" time "and [her] life has become unmanageable." The initial effect of this change in focus is a series of behavioral changes (cooking, cleaning, energetic cooperation in her life with Doc) that signify a change of inner direction; these changes also closely parallel the practical course initially suggested by Mrs. Coffman.

3. The technical literature on co-addiction owes much to the chapter on the family in Alcoholics Anonymous. Excellent and highly readable non-technical accounts of alcoholism, co-alcoholism, and creativity may be found in John Wallace, Alcoholism: New Light on the Disease (Newport, RI: Edgehill, 1988).



WRITING CHEEVER DRINKING

John W. Crowley

Scott Donaldson. John Cheever: A Biography. New York: Random House, 1987.

In his earlier books on Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Scott Donaldson has proven himself to be among the most perceptive of our literary biographers, and he has shown a sensitivity--all too unusual for biographers of alcoholic writers--to the effects of drinking on his subjects' lives and works.[1] This understanding is also evident in John Cheever: A Biography (New York: Random House, 1987), a remarkably frank and detailed portrait of the writer who, according to Thomas B. Gilmore, "shows the most thorough and diversified familiarity with drinking in modern American society."[2] For all that he knows and tells about Cheever's drinking, however, Donaldson still underestimates its centrality to the writer's career.

Cheever was, likely, born to drink. His father's father died of delirium tremens induced by alcohol and opium; his father had sunk into his own alcoholism by the time John was born in 1912, and he grew worse after he lost his job as a shoe salesman during the Depression; Cheever's brother Fred, to whom he often said he was "morbidly close" (53), was also a drunk, whose occasional spells of sobriety never lasted. Like his father in his cups, Cheever tended to blame his strong-willed mother for all the turmoil of their unhappy household. Both were especially resentful of Mrs. Cheever's commercial enterprise: the antique shoppe she opened to compensate for her husband's lack of income.

Cheever's was a troubled childhood, from which he habitually escaped into daydreaming and storytelling. By the age of eleven, he had determined to become a writer; and when he was expelled from prep school at eighteen, he promptly embroidered upon the incident in a story accepted by The New Republic--thereby launching himself on a long and distinguished career. He soon moved to New York City, eking out a subsistence living from book reviews and free-lance work, and retreating to Yaddo (his second home) as often as possible. In 1935, he sold his first story, the first of over a hundred, to The New Yorker. As his literary fortunes improved, he courted Mary Winternitz, whom he married in 1941. Even in these early days, Cheever "drank a lot" (53); and when he enlisted in the army during World War II, some of his hardest-drinking buddies "thought he was overdoing it" (105).

In 1951, at a well-lubricated Greenwich Village party, Cheever drunkenly fell out of a window--he clung to the idea that he had been pushed--and nearly killed himself. But this was only the beginning. During the 1950's, after he had settled his family in the Westchester suburbs, Cheever submerged himself into a sea

of cocktails; and he made several trips to psychiatrists to seek relief from booze and also from the homosexual urges to which he was to give full and unabashed play only in his later sobriety. In their probing for deeper causes none of the doctors, Freudians all, paid much attention to what was already obvious to William Maxwell, Cheever's editor at The New Yorker, who began to reject submissions because "some of the fiction, written under the influence of alcohol, simply did not measure up" (178). Maxwell's opinion was not shared by Cheever, of course, who began to distrust the editor and later scapegoated him for a quarrel that led to the writer's breaking his long association with the The New Yorker.

By 1960, Cheever had plunged into the recurrent depressions --what Donaldson calls his "cockroach" or his "cafard"--that were to blight the following fifteen years. Other symptoms appeared: paranoia, phobias, impotence. Along with the drinking itself, the last was a factor in Cheever's deteriorating marriage; another was his compulsive philandering, which included a long affair with the actress Hope Lange and a brief one with the composer Ned Rorem. Willing to concede to others that he was "a very heavy drinker" (196), Cheever confessed more of the truth to himself, in self-castigating entries in his journals and also in certain stories. "It is drink that has led to his ruin," says Donaldson of Neddy Merrill, the protagonist of "The Swimmer," "and he emerges on the page directly out of Cheever's own self-disgust" (211).

This self-disgust came to pervade much of Cheever's fiction. Writing the The Wapshot Scandal (1964), "his darkest book and the one in which he most vigorously excoriates the world he inhabits" (201), drove him nearly to suicide--a desperation that revisited him five years later, after Bullet Park (1969), in which "the criticisms of contemporary culture . . . may be regarded as projections of his private malaise" (248).

Donaldson points out, late in the biography, that "liquor lay near the heart of these problems. . . . drink was more the cause of his malaise than its consequence" (252). In the phrasing here, however, and in the very construction of the biography, he sidesteps the idea that alcoholism lay at the heart of Cheever's problems. Because the narrative uses Cheever as a "center of consciousness" (more or less), it tends to postpone a full recognition of his alcoholism until the point when Cheever himself belatedly faced up to it and got sober. As a result--but to a lesser degree than in many other biographies of literary drunks--the reader is led to participate unwittingly in the writer's alcoholic denial.

Donaldson also distances himself from Maxwell's assessment of the fiction Cheever was producing during his drunkest years: "The trouble, he thought, was liquor. The stories were still beautifully written, but they had no point, or so Maxwell felt"

(223). Maxwell's view, if taken seriously, has major implications for our sense of Cheever's career: that the fiction written between The Wapshot Chronicle (1957) and Falconer (1977) was not only marked, but to some degree vitiated, by his alcoholism. The consensus of Cheever scholars is, in fact, that the work may be divided into a relatively sunny early period and a more somber later one. Lynne Waldeland, for example, sees Bullet Park as the pivotal text, in which Cheever does not abandon "the sense of the promise of life which characters apprehend in the ordered suburban world of his earlier works" but in which "the elements which legislate against happiness, and even survival, are more present and more terrible." What distinguishes Cheever's later fiction, which is generally held in less regard that his earlier work, is "the affirmation of survival rather than transcendence."[3]

This darkening of Cheever's vision, it seems, was directly related to the depression induced by his drinking. Donaldson recognizes the connection, but he might have gone further: to show how Cheever's outlook was distorted by "the Long Sickness" and "the White Logic" (as Jack London called them in John Barleycorn) of his alcoholism. For Donaldson, Cheever's life was "a triumph" over inner divisions "between light and dark, celebration and sorrow, love and hate. . . . Yet with his victory over alcoholism, the mature Cheever at last rejected the dark and chose the light" (x). But Donaldson underestimated how little "choice" Cheever had for much of his career: as long as he was drinking, his battle between light and darkness was already decided in favor of a blackness ten times black.

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1. As Roger Forseth has argued, such biographers are often, in effect, co-dependents to their subjects' drinking, implicated in a system of alcoholic denial that ultimately affects the interpretive shape of their narratives and the soundness of their literary judgments. See "Alcohol and the Writer: Some Biographical and Critical Issues (Hemingway)," in Contemporary Drug Problems 13 (1986): 361-86.

2. Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature (Chapel Hill: U of NC P, 1987), 62.

3. "John Cheever's Bullet Park: A Key to His Thought and Art," in Critical Essays on John Cheever. ed. R. G. Collins (Boston: Hall, 1982), 263, 269. See also my essay-review of this collection: "John Cheever and the Ancient Light of New England," New England Quarterly. 56 (June 1983), 267-75.

"I WOULDN'T HAVE KORSAKOFF'S SYNDROME, WOULD I?"

Roger Forseth

Barnaby Conrad. Time Is All We Have: Four Weeks at the Betty Ford Center. New York: Arbor House, 1986.

Chemical dependency treatment centers are not loved by the intelligentsia. Virginia I. Postrel, writing in the libertarian magazine Reason, accuses "social worker types" of "lusting after federal dollars." And Ernest van den Haag, professor of jurisprudence and public policy at Fordham, takes it as a truism that "much chatter to the contrary notwithstanding" alcohol or drug addiction are habits, not diseases, and are dependent "altogether on the addict's volition" (40). Such being the case, according to Professor van den Haag, "[o]ne can try . . . to motivate the affected persons to get rid of their addiction. Psychological support can be useful in this respect . . . . Alcoholics Anonymous can be quite helpful to those who want to get rid of alcoholism. So can 'clinics' (usually at a high price)" (36). The tone as well as the substance of these judgments are representative (observe the inverted commas around "'clinics'"); they convey a fashionable impatience with the whole messy, inefficient, frustrating, painful business of trying to put the drunk back together again.

It is therefore refreshing to discover the novelist Barnaby Conrad's account of his experience at 39000 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage, California--the wonderfully unreal address of the Betty Ford Center for the treatment of substance abuse. Conrad had been a heavy drinker for twenty-five years; had become worried enough about his problem to attend (abortively) several AA meetings; had even written with insight about "Genius and Intemperance" ("When I was a child, I wrote a poem which, in its entirety, went: 'E. A. Poe/Never Drank H_2O'" [32]); and, finally, received a check for $6000 from his son made out to the Betty Ford Center. Time Is All We Have is the author's account of what his son got for his money.

"I had no intention of writing a book about the Center when I went there, but now I'm glad I have, if only to answer the often asked question, 'But what do they do in there?'" (270). Conrad's story of his recovery is infused with insight, though insight that evolves only gradually amid confusions, regressions, grandiosities, and humiliations ("Everyone seemed so damn helpful and warm it was sickening to an already sick person. These poor bastards--not only could they not drink, they had to pretend to be happy about it" (23). His method is to blend personal experience with an objective rendering of the day-to-day (indeed, hour-by-hour) routine of treatment. Fifteen of the book's eighteen chapters are devoted to the first of the four weeks of treatment, and this is proper, I believe, since the drama of recovery cannot indefinitely be sustained and since the patient's initial response

to "tough love" is crucially interesting. The picture the reader receives here of the "recovering alcoholic's special slogan language" (23), of the rituals ("Is it always the same boring prayer? Don't they vary it?" [25]), of the counseling staff, and above all of the other patients are captured with an almost Wordsworthian matter-of-factness. Further, the author effectively answers the detractors of treatment centers. "'AA has worked where all the psychiatrists in the world have failed.' 'So why didn't we just stay home and go to AA and save the money?' 'Betty Ford gives you the equivalent of about two years AA in one month'" (46). And at a critical point he states:

> I was beginning to see why AA and the BFC worked: It was the discovery, over and over, that none of us alcoholics was unique, that we all shared the pain, shame, restless questing and self-loathing that nearly all drinking persons, ipso facto, have. (117)

Barnaby Conrad's narrative of his journey to sobriety is the best, most faithful picture we have so far received of what actually goes on in treatment centers, and the one above all others on this subject that I recommend to the literary scholar who wishes objectively to know what specifically takes place in alcoholic recovery.

This book is not, of course, the only one on the subject. Betty Ford herself has described her own treatment experience. Richard Meryman has written effectively about the special problems of the female addict. For the literary student, however, the most familiar account will be John Berryman's unfinished novel Recovery. There are two crucial differences between Berryman and Conrad that should be emphasized. Berryman's try for recovery, unlike Conrad's, was unsuccessful. And the former depicts the tragedy of addiction; the latter, the comedy as well as the tragedy of it. These distinctions are vital, for after all the tears and sadness caused by addictive behavior come the relief and laughter of sobriety. This observation may strike the outside observer as bordering on the grotesque; yet it is true, and it is this truth that Time Is All We Have captures and Recovery does not. Indeed, one could do worse than use Mr. Conrad's book as an introduction to Berryman's novel, for the defeat depicted in the latter is best measured against the victory documented in the former.

A final point should be made regarding published accounts of chemical dependency treatment. Since the stories are rendered by articulate, often literary, usually upper-class victims, it has been argued that we do not receive a true picture of the ordinary person's addiction. This view, I think, misses the point. First of all, alcoholics are, in my experience, almost without exception articulate, the exception being those with brain damage (Conrad's preoccupation with Korsakoff's Syndrome concentrated his mind

rather than diminished it!). Chemical dependency is, of all afflictions, the most purely class, race, gender, or age free. Individual differences are rendered trivial before the magnitude of the disease. The reader here is cautioned to reflect on the Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." For the addicted person it is the spirit that is poor; all else pales to insignificance. It is this truth that Barnaby Conrad has rendered with fidelity and grace.

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ALCOHOLICS AS AMERICAN CELEBRITIES

Constance M. Perry

Donald W. Goodwin, M.D. Alcohol and the Writer. Kansas City: Andrews & McMeel, 1988.

Donald W. Goodwin, head of the University of Kansas Medical Center psychiatry department, author of Is Alcoholism Hereditary? and other psychiatric studies, has a new book approaching the field of literature, Alcohol and the Writer. Goodwin's study provides helpful counsel for the scholar on alcoholism and literature as well as interesting reading for the lay person. For the scholar, it allows us a credible response to those uneducated or skeptical members of our audience so prone to ask, "Just how can you call Hemingway an alcoholic or Steinbeck or etc.?" The books also helps to answer why it is important to know and understand the alcoholism of a writer, as the disease complicates and usually devastates a writing life in manifold ways. Goodwin provides fascinating "natural histor[ies]" of the alcoholic lives of such famous and mainly American writers as Poe, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Simenon, Faulkner, O'Neill, Lowry. Further, Goodwin offers his theory that the frequent intersection of drinking and writing in the lives of a great number of American writers in the first half of the twentieth century constitutes a kind of "epidemic."

Goodwin has compiled into a coherent whole various biographical data on the alcoholism of his chosen writers, information typically scattered throughout biographies or available randomly in letters, associates' memoirs, interviews, and the author's literature. Goodwin's profiles are impressive and unnerving, as we read of lives dominated by twin compulsions to drink and to write. Goodwin notes the speculation of inherited tendencies towards alcoholism, literary ability, and a third condition common to many of these writers--manic-depressive disease. He also marks the celebrity status of these alcoholic writers in American culture where spectacular drinking and drunkenness were "expected" of writers in the twenties.

This assessment of alcoholic writers in the first half of the century leads to one criticism of Goodwin's book. Again, where are the women writers? Although seemingly more men than women were publicly alcoholic during this time period, a number of famously alcoholic women writers come to mind such as Dorothy Parker or Edna St. Vincent Millay. Finally in this era, the flamboyant drinking of American women was tolerated, and Goodwin might have examined the consequences on such lives and careers.

Further Goodwin chose to enrich our sense of literary biography in this volume, and he has done that. Still, one misses the dimension of literary analysis of alcoholism in fiction begun

so favorably, for example, by Thomas Gilmore in his 1987 work, Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth Century Literature. When Goodwin does engage in literary analysis, he produces genuine insights. One example is his speculation that Poe's descriptions of opium hallucinations in such famous pieces as "the Fall of the House of Usher" are probably not the result of an opium addiction many attributed to the writer. Instead, Poe probably drank the hallucinogenic absinthe, also popular in this era. Another fascinating bit of analysis concerns Lowry's recreation of delirium tremens in his various works. More analysis on this level would have surely enhanced the book.

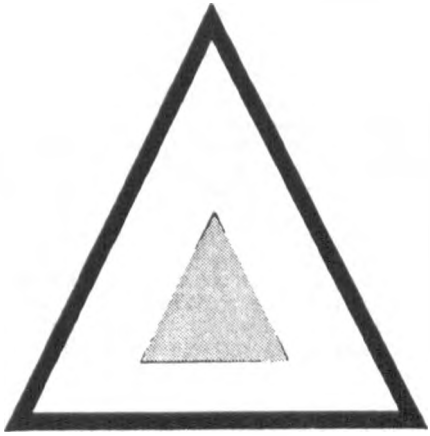
Where Goodwin is consistently useful, however, is with his summoning of psychiatrists' and physicians' studies of the diagnosis of alcoholism. Goodwin uses such material in a particularly creative way in his chapter on Steinbeck. Since Steinbeck commented so little on his drinking, unlike Lowry or Fitzgerald, for example, Goodwin takes the National Institute of Mental Health's recent twenty-question survey and applies it to the material on Steinbeck's drinking in Jackson J. Benson's definitive biography. And the questionnaire does illuminate Steinbeck's drinking life. Perhaps even better, Goodwin shows common sense when analyzing the alcoholism of his group of writers. To use another example from the Steinbeck chapter, Goodwin related how the Nobel Prize-winning author and his wife pledged to control their drinking during the visit to Stockholm for the award. Goodwin's succinct interpretation: "This is a vow no truly controlled drinker would ever take or need to take."

Goodwin also shows savvy in uncovering the pattern of denial that surrounds most of these writers. For example, we hear how Faulkner's psychiatrist poetically, if uselessly, diagnosed his patient as "not an alcoholic, but an 'alcoholic refugee, self-pursued.'" Or we can consider how Hemingway's Cuban physician tolerated the writer's continued alcohol abuse during the many years he suffered from hepatitis.

Finally, Goodwin makes an original contribution to studies of alcoholism and American literature by posing his theory that alcoholism became epidemic among our writers during the first half of the century, an idea suggested less fully by sociologist Robin Room and literary critic Alfred Kazin as well. While Goodwin admits his theory is largely based on impressions and anecdotes, still it names a phenomenon that many scholars of American literature have realized intuitively but not known how to analyze. Goodwin speculates first on why the properties of alcohol would make it the drug of choice for so many writers. The causes of the epidemic, he proposes, stem partially from the flexible hours of the writer, a cause also attributed to the high incidence of alcoholism among academics, presented in an October 9, 1985 feature in The Chronicle of Higher Education: "The Alcoholic Professor: Campus Is Ideal Environment for a Hidden Problem."

Another simple yet powerful cause of the epidemic is that American writers were expected to drink. And the mass media was in place to create celebrities of drinking writers and their antics or poses as typified by Fitzgerald or later Capote. Additionally, the writer needs inspiration, and writers, like alcoholics, are by nature loners, according to Goodwin. Goodwin offers speculation too on why America was the origin and setting for so many drinking writers.

Goodwin's book clearly establishes the phenomenon in American culture of the celebrity status of our drinking writers. And if his speculation about an epidemic of alcoholism among American writers remains inconclusive, the portraits of individual alcoholic writers offer shrewd and memorable analysis, indispensable for anyone who studies or teaches these particular authors.



BRIEF REVIEWS

Andrew L. Knauf. Alcohol as Symbolic Buttress in Hemingway's Long Fiction. Diss. U of Detroit, 1979. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1980. 8001354.

Paul Johnson. "Hemingway: Portrait of the Artist As an Intellectual." Commentary 87.2 (Feb 1989): 49-59.

These two valuable critiques illustrate flawed methodology: Knauf examines alcohol in Hemingway's long fiction largely to the exclusion of the creative elements in the writer's life; Johnson judges (severely) Hemingway's alcoholic behavior, leaving the reader with little reason to take the artist seriously. Hemingway is a special case, the celebrity writer par excellence. Four recent major biographies (by Jeffrey Meyers, Peter Griffin, Michael Reynolds, Kenneth Lynn), and another forthcoming (by James Mellow), indicate an endless fascination with the greatest literary myth of our time. That myth is more substantial than the work or the life separately. To measure Hemingway's stature is to integrate the two, and central to that enterprise is the precise examination of the author's alcoholism. Knauf judges (rightly) that the "critical disregard" of alcohol in Hemingway's work "is rather startling, especially when one considers the biographical bias of much recent Hemingway criticism" (1). He then proceeds to analyze drinking in the novels, quantitatively and qualitatively, with an excellent discussion of the ritual use of social drinking. One notices, for example, the subtlety of this ritual in The Sun Also Rises, contrasting with the grossness of it in Across the River and into the Trees. Knauf's is still the most useful extended study we have of alcohol in Hemingway's fiction. Johnson's piece (since included in his Intellectuals [Harper, 1989]) is almost entirely a biographical study of character rather than of mind. "None of Hemingway's statements about himself, and very few he made about other people, can ever be accepted as fact without corroboration" (54). But that is the nature of myth. Admirers of Hemingway are no more concerned about whether he was truthful than whether King Kong was good. It is the force that must be reckoned with, and it is the drinking behind that force that has yet seriously to be explicated. Hemingway was not a nice person. How his flaws of character were refined into art has not been successfully explained by either Knauf or Johnson.

-- Roger Forseth

Nancy C. Andreasen. "Creativity and Mental Illness: Prevalence Rates in Writers and Their First-Degree Relatives." American Journal of Psychiatry 144 (1987): 1288-92.

Andreasen asks: "Do creative individuals have a higher rate of mental illness? . . . If there is a relationship between creativity and mental illness, is it a specific type of mental illness, such as schizophrenia, affective disorder, or alcoholism?" (1288). After a systematic, controlled study using members of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop as the experimental group, she concludes: "there is a close association between mental illness and creativity, as assessed in a sample of creative writers." Her experiment further suggests that "affective disorder may produce some cultural advantages for society as a whole, in spite of the individual pain and suffering that it also causes. Affective disorder may be both a 'hereditary taint' and a hereditary gift" (1282). It is surprising how little rigorous, scientific work, on the order of Andreasen's, has been done in this area. We either get anecdotal surveys like "Booze and the Writer" (Writer's Digest [Oct 1978]: 25-33) or turgid treatises such as D. Jablow Hershman's and Julian Lieb's The Key to Genius (Prometheus, 1988). Other than Marcus Grant's "Drinking and Creativity: A Review of the Alcoholism Literature" (British Journal on Alcohol and Alcoholism 16.2 [1981]: 88-93), I have been able to find little else of substance on the subject under review. A recent dissertation by Paul Thomas Riel on valium and creativity (The Effect of Diazepam on Creativity as Measured by the Wallach-Kogan Battery of Ideational Fluency. Northwestern U., 1981. UMI. ADG81-24991) suggests, modestly, that valium does not increase creativity. Much more solid research, however, on the order of Andreasen's (and Riel's) must be done before we get beyond Nietzsche: "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star" (Thus Spake Zarathustra).

--Roger Forseth

NOTES AND COMMENT

Two periodicals of possible interest to readers of Dionysos:

The Social History of Alcohol Review. the journal of the Alcohol and Temperance History Group of the American Historical Association. Communications to David Gutzke, Department of History, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, 65804.

Prost!. 11 South Second Avenue, St. Charles, Illinois, 60174.

The former is included in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism data base of alcohol-related literature (BRS Information Technologies). The latter is a new periodical (a quarterly, changing to a bi-monthly) designed to appeal to the normal drinker (its editorial advisor is Dr. Morris E. Chafetz).

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A few of the books, articles, and special periodical issues that will be reviewed in future issues of Dionysos are:

Tom Dardis, The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer; Herbert Fingarette, Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease; Barnaby Conrad, III, Absinthe: History of a Bottle; David F. Musto, The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control; Dan Wakefield, Returning: A Spiritual Journey; Sander L. Gilman, Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS; Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Anna Freud: A Biography; Craig Nakken, The Addictive Personality.

Julie M. Irwin, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Little Drinking Problem" (The American Scholar. Fall 1987: 415-27); Michael S. Reynolds, "Hemingway's Home: Depression and Suicide" (American Literature. 1985: 600-10); George R. Carlson, "Aristotle and Alcoholism: Understanding the Nicomachean Ethics" (Teaching Philosophy. 1986: 97-102); Daniel L. Hurst and Mary Jane Hurst, "Bromide Psychosis: A Literary Case [Evelyn Waugh]" (Clinical Neuropharmacology. 1984: 259-64); Heather Kirk Thomas, "Emily Dickinson's 'Renunciation' and Anorexia Nervosa" (American Literature. 1988: 205-25).

Literature and Altered States of Consciousness. Mosaic, Summer and Fall Issues, 1986; Alcohol in Literature: Studies in Five Cultures. Contemporary Drug Problems. Summer 1986.

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B. Monda, Director of the Summer Session and Professor of English, Seattle University; and Ernest Kurtz, Director of Research and Education, Austin Ripley Memorial Research and Education Center, Guest House, Lake Orion, Michigan.

NOTEWORTHY

"I remembered how genuinely disappointed I was about 20 years ago during my own big boozing days when I learned that one of my all-time great literary heroes, Dostoevsky was not an alcoholic or heavy drinker! I actually felt betrayed, as if this great writer had somehow cheated by not following the alcoholic path I was on myself and believed was essential to the creative process" (novelist Dan Wakefield, in The World. Mar/Apr 1989).

"Mr. Cowley notably championed the work and advanced the careers of the post-World War I writers who sundered tradition and fostered a new era in American Literature. He seldom included himself as a leading player in the famed company of authors who used Paris at one time or another as a base of operations and whose creativity came to fruition in the 1920's. But he was at the hub of activity; and could at least be counted as an important figure even among such writers as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, Thornton Wilder and Edmund Wilson. He knew them all and loved them and fought with them, the last despite the fact that late in life he said he was never a big-time drinker and literary brawler. 'I flunked my post-graduate degree in alcohol,' he said" (Obituary of Malcolm Cowley, The New York Times, 29 March 1989).

"Fugard talks freely of his battle with the bottle, and his fear that he couldn't write without alcohol. 'Writing plays involves many months of craft and a few days of inspiration. Those days are painful. Stopping drinking changed my work rhythms enormously. I never wrote with a bottle of Jack Daniel's on my desk, but when I finished for the day, I liked my whisky, I liked my wine. I haven't had a drink now in 5 1/2 years. Those first years were certainly anxiety-ridden. I get on with it now, I enjoy life a lot more now. And I know that the work I have done sober affects and inspired people more than what I had written before. I have a pile of letters in my dressing room about this play the likes of which I never had before. That made me realize what I now know--I can write without alcohol in my system. No writing needs it. They are two totally unconnected activities'" (South African playwright Athol Fugard, in The Milwaukee Journal. 21 August 1988).

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A legend has it that Dionysos and Aphrodite joined in producing Priapus. I don't believe it.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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John W. Crowley is Professor and Chairman of English at Syracuse University. He is the author of The Black Heart's Truth: The Early Career of W. D. Howells (1985) and of The Mask of Fiction: Essays on W. D. Howells (1989).

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