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EDITORIAL

Two recently published books of interest to Dionysos readers have risen rapidly in the Best Sellers lists of both The New York Times Book Review and Publishers Weekly. The critical reception of these works is a striking study in contrasts. William Styron's Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness (Random House), a deeply felt and beautifully written account of the author's affliction with depression, has been received with a reverence seldom accorded a description of illness. The moral force of Styron's narrative of his harrowing experience and his precise, clinical description of his suffering have been lavishly praised. The television shows "PrimeTime" and "20/20" treated the author and his book with a deference usually reserved for royalty: a cultural institution returned whole to his admirers after successfully confronting Milton's Hell. The second book, Kitty Dukakis's Now You Know (with Jane Scovell; Simon and Schuster), a continuing and seemingly endless tale of addiction and mental illness, on the other hand has been the object of that species of patronizing derision usually reserved by "mainstream" reviewers for tracts by Fundamentalist preachers and grief therapists. "[J]ust as Madonna is an icon of America's obsession with fitness, Kitty Dukakis has become an icon of America's addiction to addictions," declares Maureen Dowd sternly: "In this era of temperance, the sins and nasty habits of old are now labeled diseases: everything from shopping to a negative attitude to infidelity to overexercising is called a psychological compulsion beyond the control of its victims. The idea of taking moral blame and responsibility for failings has become passé. . . . Mrs. Dukakis's book is infused with this spirit of naked revelation. . . . She speaks in the argot of addiction chic" The New York Times, 6 September). Ellen Goodman judges: "[W]hat troubles me the most in this dutiful, serious, uncompromising effort at truth-telling is what the culture of addiction treatment seems to demand of the troubled people of this era. Your whole identity" (The Boston Globe, 18 September). And Fox Butterfield, futilely combing the book for political insights, states with severity: "It is the sordid details of [her] compulsive binges that make up the heart of Now You Know" (NYTBR, 16 September). The real argument here, one notices, appears not to be over art but over political style. Mr. Styron is the hero as man of letters; Mrs. Dukakis, like her husband, is a loser. And mainstream elites do not like losers. But we are not so sure that Kitty Dukakis is a loser. Admittedly, in sharp contrast to Darkness Visible, Now You Know has little literary merit; the "common reader," however, may be more in harmony with its message than with that of the distinguished novelist, and drive it yet over his to the top of the best seller lists. And that is the kind of winner we can all appreciate.

"The Milk of Wonder": Fitzgerald, Alcoholism, and The Great Gatsby

Marty Roth

I want to begin by registering a sense of reluctance in writing about some effects of Fitzgerald's alcoholism on his art. Fitzgerald was a drunk; the biographical record is all too clear. His father may also have been alcoholic. In his teens, in St. Paul, he liked to imitate the drunk acts of vaudevillians to amuse his friends. A familiar story circulated about his drinking at Princeton: that although he drank moderately he was very poor at holding his liquor and consequently appeared drunker than he was. He would perform his drunk act there too and brag about spending the night in the gutter. By the time of his discharge from the Army, in his early 20s, Fitzgerald was drinking heavily. He was probably married to an alcoholic, although Zelda's alcoholism seems to be a forbidden topic in Andrew Turnbull's biography, from which I have gathered these facts. Fitzgerald's behavior during his 20s and early 30s is punctuated by brawls, suicide threats, and anti-social and self-abusive behavior. The remainder of his life was a story of medical problems, mental disturbance, defiantly irrational behavior, and character disintegration brought on by his drinking.

The reluctance that I write of belongs to the remnants of an attitude which mutters that while these facts may be more or less true they have no legitimate relation to Fitzgerald's writings, not, at least, to the internal truth of that writing as it displays itself to criticism. The attitude is irrational and belongs to the larger system of addictive behavior that attends and protects the alcoholic from outside. Alcoholism is a physical, mental, and spiritual disease, and it surely produces profound effects in the area of self-expression. Of course it makes a difference to Fitzgerald's writing. A restructured reading of Fitzgerald's work will not make those works less "true," only true in the particular way that they are. Fitzgerald was an alcoholic and a storyteller, and alcoholics tell different stories, discernibly different kinds of stories from those told by people who do not suffer from the disease. Alcoholics' stories replicate their personal distortions of the world--and they are particularly appealing.

Fitzgerald's alcoholism also matters within a larger context that may theoretically widen to include a good part of the system of artworks and their producers. I quote from a psychiatrist, Donald W. Goodwin: "Whether, as Hemingway said, most good writers are alcoholic is uncertain, but apparently a large number are. Of the seven Americans who were awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, four, according to their biographers, were alcoholics and a fifth drank heavily. If we compile a list of well-known American writers of the past century, quite

possibly one third to one half could be considered alcoholic."¹

The attitude that Fitzgerald's alcoholism does not properly belong to his writing depends upon a prior condition: the invisibility of alcohol and alcoholic meaning in our reading of his work. The Great Gatsby should make a good case study for this, since it is the novel of his most transcendentalized by criticism. In a standard collection of critical essays on The Great Gatsby, there is only one passing mention of the fact that people are drinking, and it is only mentioned because the critic has chosen to analyze a passage taken from one of Gatsby's wild parties, and it is mentioned only metaphorically: "the intoxication of night and music, champagne and youth."² But there is a great deal of drinking and much drunken behavior in the novel, and it does not appear in our public readings, and this seems to me to be a significant fact. It is equivalent to both the social and medical invisibility of alcoholism, and these constitute distinctive (and uncanny) features of the disease: the drinking is there but nobody sees it, or, if it is there to be seen, it is not connected to anything else.

The Great Gatsby records only a few experiences in detail, but that record is literally wet with alcohol. Drinking gets into the text early, as it does in so many of Fitzgerald's works:

"No thanks," said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, "I'm absolutely in training."

Her host looked at her incredulously.

"You are!" He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. "How you ever get anything done is beyond me."³

In a book that dramatizes little, it is remarkable how carefully those scenes are chosen to make room for and also protect the presence of alcohol: they consist of a dinner party at the Buchanans, and a visit to Myrtle Wilson's apartment, where she immediately begins to make a party at which Nick gets drunk for the second time in his life. This party goes on for ten pages and it ends Chapter II. Chapter III opens with a description of Gatsby's weekend parties, which are riots of excessive drinking. The first party at Gatsby's, which goes on for seventeen pages, follows; then a lunch with Gatsby and Wolfsheim at which highballs are offered and accepted; a second Gatsby party; a lunch at the Buchanans' where they "drank down nervous gayety with the cold ale" (118); a party at the Plaza Hotel--and that carries us through 126 of 182 pages.

Tom Buchanan is a heavy drinker, and this is potentially

important as a cause of his swagger, his racist harangues, and his other aggressive behaviors. The extent of his drinking must be inferred, because Nick never makes it an issue. It is unclear whether Nick registers the part that drink plays in Tom's life--whether it is really invisible to him or whether he is avoiding the topic. When Tom insists that Nick meet his girl, Myrtle, Nick confides in us that he thought that Tom had "tanked up a good deal at luncheon" (24). At Myrtle's party, Tom urges drinks on people and keeps the party going. He also breaks Myrtle's nose with his open hand. In Chicago, he had moved with a hard-drinking crowd, and he has a history that includes infidelity (which usually involves drink) and at least one serious driving accident. Gatsby's patron and foster-father, Dan Cody, is a roaring drunk.

The peculiar pattern in the book is not Fitzgerald's habit of identifying characters as drinkers, but his habit of identifying them as non-drinkers, making that a prominent index to their character. Jordan is introduced as someone who says "No thanks" to drink. At Myrtle's party, a second bottle of whiskey was in constant demand by all present "excepting Catherine [Myrtle's sister], who 'felt just as good on nothing at all'" (36). But when we see Catherine for the second time, Nick says, "[s]he must have broken her rule against drinking that night, for when she arrived she was stupid with liquor" (156).

Daisy is also identified as a non-drinker in a curiously unnecessary context: Jordan tells Nick that she came out of her Chicago days with an absolutely perfect reputation, "Perhaps because she doesn't drink. It's a great advantage not to drink among hard-drinking people" (78). Yet, on the preceding page, Jordan tells of Daisy "drunk as a monkey" half an hour before her bridal dinner. Daisy's first words after Nick and Gatsby arrive for lunch are "Make us a cold drink" (116). After lunch, they decide to go to town, and Daisy calls to them from an upper window, "Shall we take anything to drink?" (120). In town, she books a room at the Plaza and tells Tom to call and order some ice for the mint juleps. She is involved in a hit-and-run car accident shortly after.

Gatsby is twice identified as a non-drinker. On the other hand, he is the host of extravagantly drunken parties and is identified in the public mind as a bootlegger; he sells grain alcohol in side-street drug stores. Another non-drinker--F. Scott Fitzgerald, in the opening of The Crack-Up--belongs in this sequence, since his disclaimer there expresses a fairly constant truth of symptomatology: how closely denial and confession involve one another. Having announced that he had "prematurely cracked," the first fact that Fitzgerald tells us is that it was not connected with alcoholic consumption. But he does so through a gratuitous contrast with another confession of breakdown, a book by William Seabrook, which is unlike his, presumably,

because it is "unsympathetic," has a "movie ending," and is the story of an alcoholic (70-71).⁴

The sequence I quoted earlier consisted of Jordan refusing a cocktail, Tom looking at her incredulously, downing his own drink, and then uttering an apparent non sequitur. It isolated drink for the space of three paragraphs. These are about nothing else but drinking, and this configuration occurs later in the book as well:

paragraph 1: With a reluctant backward glance the well-disciplined child held to her nurse's hand and was pulled out the door, just as Tom came back, preceding four gin rickeys that clicked full of ice.

paragraph 2: Gatsby took up his drink.

paragraph 3: "They certainly look cool," he said, with visible tension.

paragraph 4: We drank in long greedy swallows. (117-18)

These paragraphs are about drinks and drinking: what the drinks are, how they are handled, what they look like, how they are drunk. Drink is isolated in passages like this, but it is still invisible. The critical line on such passages is that they are not about the drinking but about the tension; they render the tension visible--and they are images to see through to some underlying core of pain or unease. And all of the references to Daisy's drinking can be dismissed in a similar way.

Drinks are literally isolated in the book. In the first sequence, the drinks are not seen attached to anyone: the four cocktails are "just in from the pantry" as if on their own. So are the four gin rickeys. And earlier Nick had written that, "[a] tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight" (43).

Drinking in the book is invisible also, or primarily, because Nick does not register its presence, or pretends not to. Nick also is identified as a non-drinker: "I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon" (29). In this passage, he distances himself from drinking and drunkenness, yet he is regularly in situations where there is excessive drinking, often surrounded by people who are drunk, but he seems to have no attitude toward it, seems not to notice it going on around him. But he does notice it, surreptitiously, and I think that there is enough evidence in the book to allow me to characterize him as a person who is fascinated by drink. He watches Gatsby's house closely and notes the preparations for the weekend parties. He notices the oranges and lemons arriving on

Friday from a fruiterer in New York and notices those same oranges and lemons left at the back door on Monday "in a pyramid of pulpless halves." He adds an extra detail, suffused with wonder: "There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb" (39).

It is through the warp of Nick's perception that drink gets into the text in odd, indirect ways that call attention to it: gin rickeys that click full of ice (117); a reference to "cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another" (40); a scrap of dialogue: "'You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy,' I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. 'Can't you talk about crops or something'" (13).

I don't want to expose the characters in Gatsby as alcoholics--that would be an idle and probably meaningless exercise; but I do want to make much of the invisibility of drinking within the book and in our critical reading of it. The book covers a great thirst. The novel is glaciated by avoidances and shifts that resemble the social behavior of an active alcoholic. The book's great final image is one of drinking--of a Long Island as it appeared to the eyes of the old Dutch sailors: as a fresh green breast of the new world.

Tender Is the Night isolates the tactics of denial and displacement in an even more glaring form. An article on that novel begins, "[e]ver since 1934, readers of . . . Tender Is the Night have had difficulty in perceiving a cause adequate to its hero's catastrophe." Since the book is the story of a chronic alcoholic, I wonder why alcoholism is not perceived as a more than adequate cause. The critic has surely noticed its presence--our first glimpse of Diver is of him going from umbrella to umbrella on the beach carrying a bottle and little glasses--but has dismissed it as incidental to something much more profound--which then cannot even be named. Here is one instance of the sort of causation that is felt to be significant. Among several other causes for Dick Diver's breakdown, he also crumbled because his personality was too fragile: when his conscious values came under serious attack, they were incapable of incorporating and dealing with unconscious impulses. The source of these inadequate values was a set of illusions about reality, parentally transmitted: "the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely that there were no wolves outside the cabin door."⁵ This reference to illusions is itself illusory; it makes no sense as a condition of Diver's collapse, and yet this kind of connection has been valorized for decades as the stuff of explanations. It is an absurdly attenuated blaming of the mother. The author who alleges it in his character's defense, and the critic who reproduces and stamps it, are not explaining but protecting and enabling their darling. Dick is,

at this point in the novel, the father of two children, a middle-aged man, a practicing psychoanalyst. He has had ample opportunity to decide whether or not there are wolves outside the cabin door. On the other hand, there is no record of Diver modifying his yearning, his illusions, his false explanations for things, and his self-pity on the basis of his past experience. He acts as if he were helpless, incapable of protecting himself against the onslaught of life. So does Gatsby.

Perhaps even more to the point is a study of Fitzgerald published in 1979, which lists "Alcoholism" in its index but restricts its citations to the chapter devoted to biography. There is no mention of it in the chapter on Tender Is the Night, where items with a high degree of muffled discussability like the "sophisticated cannibalism" of the rich, "a sinister kind of innocence," and "emotional bankruptcy" occupy the paragraph that reminds us that the most controversial question in the novel is that of Diver's disintegration. Such acts of criticism are roughly based on a diagnostic model--that the truth of the novel is the truth of the character as a patient, and it surely must make a difference that the diagnoses are wrong, predictably askew as a result of cultural biases.⁶ The center of our critical dialogue here should be precisely those social structures that impel us to dissolve alcoholism in favor of some impossible metaphysical anxiety and leave us in a place where we can talk endlessly about our "difficulties in perceiving."

The difference that all of this fascination and obsession with drinking makes to our reading of The Great Gatsby and other works begins with the fact that it has not been significant; it is no big deal; and that duplicates the places of drinking in the alcoholic's society and in her or his personal life. According to the testimony from all quarters, alcohol is not the problem; it is merely a symptom of some deeper psychological, metaphysical, or poetic problem. But alcohol is the problem, and that "no big deal" is a very big deal; it is an integral part of the system of alcoholism.

Drinks in Gatsby are often not attached to anyone--not connected to hands that raise them and bodies that move them around, let alone motives. Tom and Daisy have car accidents; the drinking is there but it is not attached. Tom Buchanan is a virulent racist. In Tender Is the Night, Dick Diver degenerates into an hysterical racist. His hysteria is embedded in drunkenness--but not connected to it.

I would like to suggest that Fitzgerald's alcoholism is also present in the book as a condition of his most important themes and motifs. I would include among them the need for sexual renewal, the prominence of infidelity and sexual affairs in his work; the theme of Romantic illusion itself--"But this was Sunday--the lovely, lazy perspective of the next twenty-four

hours unrolled before him--every minute was something to be approached with lulling indirection, every moment held the germ of impossible possibilities. Nothing was impossible--everything was just beginning. He poured himself another drink"⁷--and, the other side of this theme, the deep, bitter disenchantment that also pervades his work.

Curiously enough, the meaning that most critics find at the center of The Great Gatsby is that of craving--romantic longing, romantic yearning. I find the overlap of two forms of craving in the book particularly compelling, especially when alcoholism is identified as a condition that engenders deep spiritual craving which rests on a ground of illusion. I find an image for this process of wistful sublimation in the retitling of Fitzgerald's fourth novel, which was at one time to be called "The Drunkard's Holiday," then "Doctor Diver's Holiday," and finally Tender Is the Night. One object of craving in that book, Rosemary, is identified with a series of physically mood-altering substances, although, characteristically, not alcohol: "In a hundred hours she had come to possess all the world's dark magic; the blinding belladonna, the caffeine converting physical into nervous energy, the mandragora that imposes harmony" (164).

Finally, Fitzgerald's characters can tell us what some of the literary meanings of alcoholism are: "I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon; so everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it, although until after eight o'clock that apartment was full of cheerful sun" (29); and "I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental and profound" (47). Fitzgerald adumbrates his own themes of the glorious stuff of illusion in language very like this. And I do not think that it is too far-fetched to align the author of All the Sad Young Men with a chorine at Gatsby's party who "had drunk a quantity of champagne, and during the course of her song she had decided . . . that everything was very, very sad" (51).

* * * * *

NOTES

¹ Donald W. Goodwin, "The Alcoholism of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Journal of the American Medical Association 212 (April 6, 1970): 86.

² Ernest H. Lockridge, ed., Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Great Gatsby (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 92.

³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Scribner's, 1925) 11.

⁴ See Scott Donaldson, "The Crisis of Fitzgerald's 'Crack-up,'" Twentieth Century Literature, 16 (1980): 178-79.

⁵ George D. Murphy, "The Unconscious Dimension of Tender Is the Night," Studies in the Novel, 5 (1973): 314, 317.

⁶ Thomas J. Stavola, Scott Fitzgerald: Crisis in an American Identity (New York: Barnes, 1979).

⁷ The Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald (New York: Scribner's, 1951) 429.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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Dr. Joan Bischoff, associate professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, has been appointed assistant editor of Dionysos. She has a Ph.D. from Lehigh, and is a specialist in twentieth-century British and American literature. She will coordinate production with the editor and the editorial board.

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"I must have drink": Addiction, Angst, and Victorian Realism

Annette Federico

The alcohol or opium addict is generally treated sentimentally or melodramatically in the mainstream Victorian novel aimed at middle-class readers. Such representations reflect the ideological dichotomy between disease and vice, and warn readers against the personal woes of intemperance and the social scourges of poverty, crime, and exploitation which lead to chronic "inebriety." Beyond the ostensible moral purpose of such fictional depictions of vice, though, is a strange fascination with the psychology and behavior of addicted characters, and the influence of drugs and alcohol on potentially well-adjusted citizens. Socially and spiritually isolated, the addict represents an attitude of defiance which is distinct from the conformist non-addictive majority. Addicted characters are often deeply anxious about serious philosophical questions, such as the possibility of meaningful action in the world, the existence of a just and benevolent Providence, the problem of evil, and the very modern and existentialist problem of (to use Tennyson's advice to a suicidal friend) going "grimly on." The fear of moral emptiness, the conviction of self defeat, and the feeling of extremity are moods and worries which make up the struggle between the bottle and the addicted character--who sometimes seems the most modern personality in the Victorian novel. Further, for Victorian novelists, writing about addiction may have been a way to explore the mysterious and the unrepressed elements of personality (the doubleness and darkness of Stevenson, Wells, Wilde, Stoker, and Conrad in the 1880s), and perhaps also a way to free themselves from the cumulative demands--creative and moral--of the realist tradition.

This is just what Charles Dickens was attempting in The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870), a novel of intrigue about murderous fantasies and the opium underworld. In one telling description, Dickens places the relatively harmless double life of a middle-aged schoolmistress--pillar of scholarship by day, sprightly gossip by night--in terms which have greater resonance when placed in the context of the novel's villain, opium-addicted choirmaster John Jasper, whose psychological division is of central importance:

As, in some cases of drunkenness, and in others of animal magnetism, there are two states of consciousness which never clash, but each of which pursues its separate course as though it were continuous instead of broken (thus, if I hide my watch when I am drunk, I must be drunk again before I can remember where), so Miss Tinkleton had two distinct and separate phases of being.¹

Dickens here uses drunkenness as a metaphor to describe a

character's double existence, the private self and the public self, suggesting that intoxication--like "animal magnetism"--is an appropriate vehicle to study the depths of personality. To link drinking and mesmerism is to recognize that both practices toy with a subject's self control and both may call forth subconscious "phases of being" which, in the case of Miss Twinkleton, may be only an innocent relaxation of inhibitions but, for someone like Jasper, may give license to murderous desires.

The association of doubleness with drinking, especially when it occurs in a novel which conscientiously explores the drug-addicted criminal mind, is particularly interesting given Victorian society's concern over the Drink Question. Part of the strength of the movement for temperance reform was its appeal to middle-class fears of the social and moral chaos which could follow the uncontrolled use of intoxicants. Even up to mid-century, alcoholism was a strange and medically unclassifiable disease (if a disease at all), and in the public mind the use of alcohol was closely linked to madness. "The habit of drunkenness is a disease of the mind," in the words of a prominent physician,² and certainly in Victorian fiction alcohol attacks the mind as much as the body, and the soul as much as the mind. By the 1830s, "temperance and anti-opium ideology were closely linked through the concept of 'inebriety,'"³ an idea which worried physicians, industrialists, clergymen, and politicians because of its resistance to firm classification. If intemperance was the result of perverse and wicked propensities, it was also a sickness, perhaps hereditary,⁴ which the unfortunate addict could do little to overcome. Drink and opium consoled the oppressed and the isolated, but they also led to moral and physical debility. The hospitable glass of something hot could take on the properties of a dangerous potion. Jovial English Falstaff, model of harmless if excessive conviviality, was understood to have a darker, depraved, or diseased brother in the English public house.

This dichotomy between illness and immorality, and also between the social scourge and the personal tragedy, is reflected in the fiction of mid-century. As U. C. Knoepfelmacher has observed, the generation of mid-Victorians "suddenly had to shift from tradition--a mode of life based on the repetition of sameness--" to a "modern age of doubt and instability."⁵ In George Eliot's "Janet's Repentance" (1857), a story as much about faith as about drinking, the Evangelical preacher, Mr. Tryan, hopes that Janet will be able to overcome her addiction to alcohol and walk "firmly on the level ground of habit."⁶ Sameness is safety, and deviation threatening; the alcoholic is a blatant--at times a flagrant--example of self-indulgent deviancy, as well as of "doubt and instability." Indeed, his doubt and the self-destructive nature of his addiction is characteristic of the modern absurd hero: "You continue making the gestures commanded

by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit. Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering."⁷ Applying Camus's formulation for suicide to the alcoholic adds a layer of complexity to the melodramatic treatment of alcoholism in even the most overtly moralistic Victorian novels.

Open debate over drinking in the 1830s and after was almost certainly one manifestation of the many anxieties felt by middle-class Victorians.⁸ Representations of drinking in fiction changed accordingly. Mairi McCormick details some of these changing representations, from the comic drunkard of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century picaresque novels, to a sobering exploration of a serious disease.⁹ Certainly Victorian realists assisted in placing the illness-immorality dichotomy within the larger context of all the social ills rampant in Victorian England--poverty, prostitution, urban squalor, overcrowding, crime. Dickens was one of the first to criticize the "monstrous doctrine" which blamed poverty and misery on drunkenness, instead of the other way around.¹⁰ Since addiction could be viewed as the consequences of living in a harsh and inhuman society, some representations of drunks and opium users in realistic fiction were sentimentalized as vehicles for rectifying social wrongs. Thus in Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848), John Barton's opium habit calls out the dehumanizing effects of industrialism and class division, while the fallen alcoholic Esther serves as an example of society's unforgiving attitude toward "the leper-sin" of prostitution.¹¹ Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall gives a graphic picture of male debauchery and adultery in an attack on Victorian marriage laws and perverse codes of masculinity. And Eliot's "Janet's Repentance" is a critique of domestic violence, provincial hypocrisy, and irreligion, as well as a story of an alcoholic who is saved by faith. Similarly, Dickens often uses alcoholic characters to emphasize the hazards of excess. One of his techniques incorporates the doctrine of moderation by contrasting at some distance humorous and serious scenes of drinking. In Barnaby Rudge (1841), for instance, we are given a warm picture of the relationship between Gabriel Varden and his mug Toby, but we are also given the violent and bestial drunkenness of Hugh. Likewise, young David Copperfield's humorous "first dissipation" is shadowed by old Mr. Wickfield's self-destructive drinking. Placing addictive, uncontrolled behavior against a norm of self-restraint or balance highlights an emphatic moral purpose: to point out the tragedy of personal weakness or vice, whether caused by society, selfishness, or disease, in a way that would satisfy the expectations of sober middle-class readers, those representatives of society who punish and fear excess.

Dickens of course does portray heavy drinkers with a heavy hand in some of his novels. Bill Sikes in Oliver Twist (1838) is stereotypically morose and brooding, and Mrs. Stephen Blackpool in Hard Times (1854) is morally and physically contaminated, a "disabled, drunken creature . . . so foul to look at . . . but so much fouler than that in her moral infamy" (89). Such characters are clearly meant to provoke disgust, and their appearance in the novels has more to do with pointing out vile and nasty habits (or with plot mechanics) than it does with combating psychological terror. Nevertheless, for Dickens's contemporaries, even these characters would have a moral impact.

George Levine has defined the inherent self-consciousness in English realism as the writer's literary mission performed "in the name of some moral enterprise of truth-telling and extending the limits of human sympathy" by describing "reality itself."¹² Reality is the vital objective referent to subjective experience; realism is "a structure of interpenetrating minds."¹³ Yet the addict's way of getting through life is an aberration, a psychological excursion beyond the bounds of normal perception, and a rejection of social "interpenetration," a rebellion against "reality itself." The alcoholic drinks either to escape reality --to blot out, to forget--or to reconstruct it. In their self-declared commitments to realism and "the truth," Dickens, Gaskell, Brontë, and Eliot all treat alcohol and opium use straightforwardly. Particularly in Mary Barton, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, and "Janet's Repentance," addiction is a conscious theme, as well as a moral vehicle, and a compelling one. In each, the addict's is a deeply personal struggle, for it is the struggle to reclaim the self; but it is also a vexing public problem--society's struggle to reclaim the individual. In each of these novels, society ostensibly wins: John Barton and Esther die miserably, Arthur Huntingdon also dies (and presumably goes straight to hell), Dempster expires in a fit of fever and delirium tremens. Only Janet resists the brandy bottle and is welcomed into the community. The moral seems to be that the rebel/addict must either give up his habit and join sober society, or be permanently exiled in death. Yet the novelist's artful moralizing does not censor the alcoholic's questioning attitude, his estrangement, or his misdirected rebellion. These are painful characters, severely disturbed by the world around them, by injustice, misery, and untruth, just as much as they are by the unknowable and the unseen--the nothingness they fear. The angst felt by the alcoholic character is genuine, not stereotypic. It has to do with his own extreme consciousness--his confrontation with thought, not habit--and with his coming face to face with a world which seems increasingly irrational and godless.

For example, in Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton, the two addicted characters, John Barton and the alcoholic prostitute Esther, are deeply troubled, complex individuals. The chief

reason Barton turns to opium is that he cannot bear the poverty he sees all around him, and he cannot accept the idea that a loving God would sanction such suffering. "Can you say there's nought wrong in this?" (104). His anger and confusion over the distance between religion and reality drive him to opium and to violence. "At last I gave it up in despair, trying to make folks' actions square wi' th' Bible; and I thought I'd no longer labour at following th' Bible myself . . . But from that time I've dropped down, down,--down" (441). His battle is with his conscience, his inner yearnings, and his smoldering rage. It is an internalized struggle, and for Elizabeth Gaskell the psyche of the unconscious, evoked or imagined most vividly in dreams, is terrifyingly private: "that land into which no sympathy nor love can penetrate with another, either to share its bliss or its agony,--that land whose scenes are unspeakable terrors, are hidden mysteries, are priceless treasures to one alone . . ." (327). Human beings are finally, essentially isolated in untouchable subjectivity, and seemingly helpless to effect meaningful changes in the world. John Barton seems instinctively to understand this, and he uses opium out of desperation in order to bridge the painful gap between the real and the imaginary, between Self and Other.

The first mention of opium in Mary Barton alludes to its capacity to call out repressed elements of personality, the extremes of self and of understanding. Poor families buy opium instead of food to "still the hungry little ones, and make them forget their uneasiness in heavy troubled sleep. It was mother's mercy. The evil and the good of our nature came out strongly then" (96). John Barton is a man whose nature is already precariously balanced between the evil and the good--between "errands of mercy and errands of sin" (102). His later use of opium disturbs the balance of his nature; indeed, the drug reinterprets nature, dissolving all referents to Barton's real self or the real world. He needs more opium "to bring him into a natural state, or what had been a natural state formerly" (168). Gaskell has some difficulty describing what, in fact, is "natural" because Barton now retreats from outside reality, which he rejects as incomprehensibly unjust, even when he is not on opium. His is an alternative reality, the experience of oblivion. In one sense, the need to construct a private reality is subversive (even subversive to realism) since it represents an effort to assert the realities of the unconscious. For Gaskell, the unconscious is clearly a perilous place to dwell in for very long, since one can become adrift in subjectivity, where "realities have the feeble sickliness of dreams [and] dreams are fierce realities of agony" (219). When he is taking opium, John Barton's most vivid relationship is with his inner life, not the outside world, since that world has been suddenly divested of meaning. This simple, half-educated laborer has, in Camus's words, begun to think, and "Beginning to think is beginning to be undermined" (4). Accordingly, Barton begins to metamorphose from

man to murderer to monster, until even his daughter feels "a sort of horror for him . . . which seemed to separate him into two persons,--one, the father who had dandled her on his knee, and loved her all her life long; the other, the assassin, the cause of all her trouble and woe" (413). If Gaskell quite literally describes Barton here as two people, she also emphasizes that he is no single--or even material--person at all, but "a phantom likeness of John Barton; himself, yet not himself" (414). In ceasing to engage in social intercourse, Barton has virtually ceased to exist in the real world. He is alien, a stranger.

Esther, too, is transformed, through booze and sex, from "as pretty a creature as ever the sun shone on" (43) to a "wretched, loathsome creature" with a "diseased mind" (170, 291). Like Baron she is a "monomaniac"¹⁴ who has begun to think; his obsession is injustice and conspiracy, and hers is temptation. Esther fears her niece, Mary Barton, will follow her own path of vanity that leads to lost virtue and ruin, and she feels helpless to change the course of events, skeptical of the power of prayer: "God keep her from harm! And yet I won't pray for her; sinner that I am! Can prayers be heard? No! they'll only do harm" (170).

Also like Barton, Esther is a fragmented personality, a woman who sees herself as many women: a mother and a madwoman, an "unholy lady Geraldine," a whore posing as a respectable wife, a "polluted outcast" and a "Butterfly." Esther's existence is divided essentially between past and present selves. She wishes to obliterate both through alcohol:

"I must have drink. Such as live like me could not bear life if they did not drink. It's the only thing to keep us from suicide. If we did not drink we could not stand the memory of what we have been, and the thought of what we are, for a day. If I go without food, and without shelter, I must have my dram. Oh! you don't know the awful nights I have had in prison for want of it!" said she, shuddering, and glaring round with terrified eyes, as if dreading to see some spiritual creature, with dim form, near her. (213)

Suicide is a possibility for Esther, just as murder was for Barton--without God, there is no law, no morality. Gaskell certainly sympathizes with Esther; still, this pathetic character insists that she "could not lead a virtuous life if I would" and that she is "past hope," not because she is a prostitute, but because she is a drunk. The "disease of the mind" is even more sinful and irrevocable than the pollution of the body.¹⁵ Esther cannot give up alcohol because, paradoxically, it is her only remaining link to reality as she understands it. When she must abstain from drink in prison, Esther loses all contact with the

real world. Like Barton, she needs the substance in order to get back to a "natural state." Deprived of her dram, her last resource for connecting inner and outer experience, Esther is lost in a subjective nightmare:

"It is so frightful to see them. . . . There they go round and round my bed the whole night through. My Mother, carrying little Annie . . . and Mary -- and all looking at me with their sad, stony eyes; oh Jem! it is so terrible! They don't turn back either, but pass behind the head of the bed, and I feel their eyes on me everywhere. If I creep under the clothes I still see them; and what tis worse," hissing out the words with fright, "they see me. Don't speak to me of leading a better life--I must have drink. I cannot pass tonight without a dram; I dare not." (213)

The "stony eyes" of her dead mother, daughter and sister--aspects of Esther's divisible identity--are petrified versions of the "unnaturally bright eyes" of the alcoholic (169). Her hallucination, which occurs when she is sober, reveals the extremity of her consciousness, as well as of her situation.

The addicts in Mary Barton have glimpsed something horrible beyond the veil, but their visions also occur when they are deprived of the drug, when they must face reality and question the meaning of life. The drinkers in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, particularly the aptly named Lord Lowborough and Arthur Huntingdon, are also questioners: Lowborough's morbidity is the haunting conviction of his moral and emotional alienation, and Huntingdon's drinking is partly a response to his wife's religious ardor, a reply to a belief which cannot sustain him. When Lowborough is at rock bottom, his friend Huntingdon asks, "What, are you going to shoot yourself?" (208). Suicide is always a possibility once a character has started to think.

But Lowborough does not elect to shoot himself. He wants to reform. This character's struggle to avoid "the bottomless pit" of irrecoverable alcoholism is almost literally that of a dead man struggling to return to life. He is "like a skeleton at a feast," "the spectre," "the ghost in Macbeth" (206). Although he carries a private bottle of laudanum, he still requires alcohol to completely blot out what he sees as the anguish of living, the nothingness before him, "the blackness of darkness" (207). He needs to drink in order to create something out of the emptiness of reality. The desire to dwell in drug-induced subjectivity is, as in Mary Barton, extremely dangerous and in this novel potentially damning, for it is in effect the need to separate oneself from morality, from conscience. Lowborough's desperate behavior dramatizes his existential terror. He renounces alcohol by throwing glasses and bottles, and by making ecstatic speeches

("This is hell broth! I renounce it forever!" "On you be the curse, then! Farewell, ye tempters!" [204-05]). He avoids his friends for a week, but one evening returns "silent and grim as a ghost." (205). Finally, taunted and tempted by the company in a scene positively fierce in its depiction of perverted camaraderie, Lowborough "sucked away" the bottle of brandy that had been thrust on him and falls under the table in an "apoplectic fit" which leads to severe brain fever, (207) maybe alcohol poisoning.¹⁶ The further effects of this character's desperate situation entail a schizophrenic pattern of sobriety and madness, here related by Arthur Huntingdon. It is a very realistic study of the alcoholic temperament (perhaps a description of Branwell Brontë):

"For a while he managed very well; indeed, he was a model of moderation and prudence--something too much so for the taste of our wild community;--but, somehow, Lowborough had not the gift of moderation: if he stumbled a little to one side, he must go down before he could right himself: if he overshot his mark one night, the effects of it rendered him so miserable the next day that he must repeat the offence to mend it; and so on from day to day, till his clamorous conscience brought him to a stand. And then, in his sober moments, he so bothered his friends with his remorse, and his terrors and woes, that they were obliged, in self-defence, to get him to drown his sorrows in wine, or any more potent beverage that came to hand: and when his first scruples of conscience were overcome, he would need no more persuading, he would often grow desperate, and be as great a blackguard as any of them could desire--but only to lament his own unutterable wickedness and degradation the more when the fit was over." (208)

Like John Barton, Lowborough's battle with addiction is a struggle with "the Destroyer, Conscience" (Gaskell 422). At the end of the novel, he is an abused, miserable and wasted man, but sober, morally strong, and with a conscience intact.

Huntingdon, on the other hand, asks his most anguished questions on his deathbed. He is the real focus of the novel, and his coolly selfish and hardhearted pursuit of pleasure is more disturbing than even Lowborough's ravings. Although Brontë's language is artificially lofty, the actual descriptions of Huntingdon's drinking are a realist achievement, a close study of a developing alcoholic which surpasses Gaskell's mystical and sentimental interpretations of the addict's inner world. Huntingdon--a man formerly self-controlled, "not naturally . . . peevish or irritable" (272)--becomes fretful, nervous, depressed the more he drinks, and wine becomes more than "an accessory to social enjoyment: it was an important source of enjoyment in

itself" (272). He begins to alter physically as well as emotionally and mentally: "drinking makes his eyes dull, and his face red and bloated . . . [I]t tends to render him imbecile in body and mind" (330).¹⁷ Furthermore, the transformational powers of alcohol are capricious. Helen records in her diary her husband's changeableness: "When he is under the exciting influence of these excesses, he sometimes fires up and attempts to play the brute . . . when he is under the depressing influence of the after consequences, he bemoans his sufferings and his errors, and charges them both upon me . . ." (330). Significantly, Huntingdon blames his pious wife (she is constantly quoting from the Bible) for his miseries. His moodiness represents his moral restlessness, as well as the fluidity of human psychology and the dangerous depths of personality, what Mary Barton sees as "a dark gulf in [her father's] character, into the depths of which she trembled to look" (420).

Like the other drinkers in the novel, Huntingdon changes from Jekyll into Hyde (a quality Thomas Gilmore cites in Equivocal Spirits as characteristic of the alcoholic).¹⁸ Whereas Gaskell described the descent into total subjectivity, the sinking into a single state of consciousness, Brontë emphasizes her character's radical and monstrous duality. Attention is repeatedly given to the fact that Huntingdon has fundamentally, spiritually changed, that he is able to "call evil good, and good evil." Huntingdon even has a double existence (like Wilde's "Jack in the country and Ernest in town")--he goes to London for months of dissipation, and returns to his wife, Helen, in the country completely altered. In his home he is either bored and restless, or cruelly vindictive. Drinking is a domestic weapon, a way for Huntingdon to outrage his wife's moral standards, to rebel against her pious influence, and to reassert his masculinity and his authority over their son. He takes delight in encouraging "all the embryo vices" in the child--"in a word, to 'make a man of him'" (356)--and teaches little Arthur to drink and swear with the boys. But the reason for Huntingdon's drinking is not simple vindictiveness; his addiction is an aspect of his general lassitude, of a weariness of life and a terror of death which emerges suddenly and startlingly when he receives a fatal injury. His wife's creed only confounds and torments him. When she implores him to pray and conjures up consolatory images of heaven and hell, he replies contemptuously, "Oh, it's all a fable" (446). The desperation with which he clings to Helen at the end is hardly, as she says, "childish." Indeed, his questions are very mature ones, and very much to the point.

"What's the use of a probationary existence, if a man may spend it as he pleases, just contrary to God's decrees, and then go to heaven with the best--if the vilest sinner may win the reward of the holiest saint, merely by saying 'I

repent'?'"

"'But if you sincerely repent--"

"'I can't repent; I only fear." . . .

"'Think of the goodness of God, and you cannot but be grieved to have offended Him."

"'What is God? -- I cannot see Him or hear Him -- God is only an idea.'" (450-51)

Huntingdon's anguish (his name is itself suggestive of a searcher, and indeed, he receives his injury when he falls from his horse while hunting) cannot be soothed by his wife's conventional answers to the eternal questions. Far from being just a vicious habit, his alcoholism has been his means of coping with a universe empty of meaning, an extension of his own moral despair.

George Eliot's treatment of alcoholism shares both the mysticism and the social concerns of Gaskell and Brontë. "Janet's Repentance" is a vignette (a "scene of clerical life"), a tightly controlled account of a woman who overcomes addiction. Explaining Eliot's experimentation with fiction in the years 1857-1861, Knoepfelmacher cites an essay from the Westminster Review (1857) in which Eliot attacks "'the remote, the vague, and the unknown' as unfit subjects for art" (4). But there are aspects of "Janet's Repentance" which must confront "the remote, the vague, and the unknown"--the inner world of the alcoholic Janet Dempster, the delirium of her husband (and his diabolic mind), and the strange experience of warring selves embodied in the struggle against drink.

Milby, the provincial setting for Eliot's story, is a drinking community, and its inhabitants are accustomed "to keep up their spirits" with a "very abundant supply of stimulants" (254). The story opens inside a public house, where men, drink, and talk dominate. But the trials of the heroine, Janet, occur in a private house, in her private, almost spectral, inner world. Her alcoholism is far different from her husband's swaggering drinking style, his brutal machismo, his violence. Drink makes the lawyer Dempster more alert, quicker about the law, and more argumentative in public. In his domestic life, drink makes him abusive and tyrannical. But, interestingly, for most of Dempster's drinking career alcohol does not effect dissociation from self: "His hours of drunkenness were not cut off from his other hours by any blank wall of oblivion" (353). Like Mary Barton's Esther, it is abstinence which brings on nightmares and demons, not liquor. What Dempster "sees" in his delirium tremens is a version of his wife that is monstrous and powerful,

suggesting that during their marriage he beat her and locked her out of the house not because he hated her, but because he feared her as the cold black woman with hissing serpents for hair and a black bosom of serpents. "She wants to drag me away into the cold black water!" (382). Dempster's delirium, however convincing ("Powder on the bed clothes . . . running about . . . black lice . . . they are coming in swarms . . . Janet!" [381]), is also as terrifying as any Gothic horror story, and as remote and unknown as any world cut off from the real one. The deathbed scene is good horror indeed: "as she was bending to kiss him, the thick veil of death fell between them, and her lips touched a corpse" (388).¹⁹ Even at death, Dempster's "emaciated animalism" belies the grossness of his heart and his habit. He has been "a threatening monster" throughout the story, with his "puffy cheeks and a protruding yet lipless mouth," (247) already transformed into the wifebeater and cheat, a man likened to a diseased organ made "callous in worldliness, fevered by sensuality, enslaved by chance impulses" (299). His alcoholism is a type recognizable to mid-Victorian readers; it is an aspect of his general wickedness, especially his ferocious and greedy appetites. Like Huntingdon, Lowborough, and Barton, though, Dempster seems to have troubled thoughts about the afterlife. In his delirium, the man who campaigned to keep the Church of England free from the taint of dissenters calls not on God to save him, but on the devil--"I'll make them say the Lord's Prayer backwards . . . I'll pepper them so that the devil shall eat them raw . . ." (382). His alienation seems impossibly, permanently remote--Janet feels "his sins had made a hard crust round his soul" (382).

By comparison, Janet's drinking is a spiritual illness which will be cured by religious faith. Her overwhelming feeling of emptiness and boredom, combined with her fear of her husband ("When a woman can't think of her husband coming home without trembling, it's enough to make her drink something to blunt her feelings," says a neighbor [274]) cause Janet to abuse alcohol to escape a reality that seems "a dreary vacant flat," "the dreary persistence of definite measurable reality" (348-49). Her character is certainly plausible, and, leaving aside the Evangelical renewal and the martyrdom of Mr. Tryan, very modern in its depiction of a woman spiritually, mentally, and emotionally drifting towards the pull of obliterating drug addiction. Like Lowborough, another recovered alcoholic, Janet drinks in order to come to terms with nothingness, the apparent meaninglessness of the real world. She is morally restless, her soul "kept like a vexed sea . . ." (335). The bottle is a symbol of the unbearable pain of choice, a spar for her soul to cling to, but also a weight to drag it down. In the "moment of intensest depression"--the day after Dempster throws her out of the house into the coldness of night--Janet is indeed a lost soul confronting an empty world: daylight shows her "all the commonplace reality that surrounded her, [which] seemed to lay bare the future too, and bring out into oppressive distinctness

all the details of a weary life to be lived from day to day with no hope to strengthen her against that evil habit, which she loathed in retrospect and yet was powerless to resist" (349). Her feeling of hopelessness and emptiness shadows her life, and it is the painful persistence of the feeling which drives her to drink. It is "the shadow of self-despair" (350).

Janet, like other fictional addicts, had asked questions and had not found satisfying answers. Her desperate conclusion is that "God was cruel" (356). "She was tired, she was sick of that barren exhortation--Do right, and keep a clear conscience, and God will reward you, and your troubles will be easier to bear" (351). Her experience belies her catechism. But, significantly, this character does overcome her addiction to alcohol by way of faith. Her despair, the meaningless monotony of her existence, which seems "a sun-dried barren tract" (351) is replaced by belief in God's mercy, resignation to His will, and the courage to go on. At the end of the novel, Janet's craving for understanding--personal as well as spiritual--has disappeared, and she "[thirsts] for no pleasure . . . She saw the years to come stretch before her like an autumn afternoon, filled with resigned memory; Life to her could never more have any eagerness. . . ." (411). She does not need to drink, because she does not need to know. But like Lowborough--and even like John Barton, penitent yet troubled by a poorly organized world--Janet's triumph seems muted by past fears, as well as by the interminable moral task before her, which does not involve drinking, but being.

The alcoholics in Gaskell, Brontë, and Eliot are conscious portraits of addiction. These novels are overtly didactic (and so understandably liable to charges of sentimentality and melodrama), and indeed, at least occasionally, Eliot's pointed rhetoric and Brontë's wild scenes of debauchery have a touch of temperance fever. They may strike us as stagy and exaggerated representations of drunkenness, but they are by no means narrowly stereotypic, even by modern standards. In Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature, Thomas Gilmore writes that literature's advantage over science is its "ability to recognize and preserve the complex humanity of the alcoholic" and "its awareness that often the root cause or effect of the illness of alcoholism is spiritual" (8-9). I would insist that the same criteria be applied to representations of drinking in these Victorian novels, and would stress especially the idea that alcoholism is a spiritual illness, a crisis in understanding, even an existential dilemma, since in its self-destructiveness, drug addiction is not far from suicide. For the Victorian novelist, addictive drinking is a human problem, and deserves whatever public efforts are made to understand it; but it is above all a personal struggle, not easily reduced to theories, or to demographic abstractions. In grouping these novels by Gaskell, Brontë, and Eliot, too, there is the strong

implication that alcohol addiction cuts across class and gender lines, and geographic area: heavy drinking is a problem for the Manchester laborer, the prostitute, the Yorkshire gentleman, and the provincial lawyer and his abused wife. In this way the novels function as social documentary, for the alcoholics here are completely different in situation and largely dissimilar in temperament and motivation. And yet a novel is not a case study. Whatever documentation we get is highly qualified by the very privileges of fiction over fact. The alcoholic's world is simply extraordinary and inaccessible. But the probings of his heart are comprehensive and familiar.

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NOTES

¹ Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 53.

² See Peter McCandless, "'Curses of Civilization': Insanity and Drunkenness in Victorian Britain," British Journal of Addiction 79 (1984): 49-58. Also, the very mysteriousness of alcoholism may qualify it as one of the "symbolic diseases" of High Victorianism. Elaine Showalter, in "Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the Fin de Siècle," (Sex, Politics, and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel, ed. Ruth Bernard Yeazall [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985] 88-115) uses Susan Sontag's argument (Illness as Metaphor [New York: Farrar, 1978]) that cancer and tuberculosis are the representative illnesses of the twentieth century to suggest that syphilis had this status at the turn of the century.

³ Victoria Berridge, "Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England," Victorian Studies. 21.4 (1978): 457.

⁴ Amy Pruitt, in "Approaches to Alcoholism in Mid-Victorian England" (Clio Medica 9.2 [1974]: 93-101), maintains that nineteenth-century theorists believed "the physical or mental degeneration resulting from chronic alcohol consumption and the insatiable craving for alcohol" could both be inherited. There is some polite discussion about the issue in Chapter 4 of Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985): "But don't you think, Mr. Millward, that when a child may be naturally prone to intemperance--by the fault of the parents or ancestors, for instance--some precautions are advisable?" (64).

⁵ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism (Berkeley: U of California P, 1968) 2.

⁶ George Eliot, "Janet's Repentance," in Scenes of Clerical Life (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 398.

⁷ Albert Camus, "An Absurd Reasoning," The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1959) 5.

⁸ As both Brian Harrison (Drink and the Victorians [Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1971]) and Lilian Shiman (Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England [New York: St. Martin's, 1988]) discuss in their separate studies of the Temperance Movement, unlike some other anxieties, drinking and drug use were problems that could be openly addressed among respectable persons. Harrison suggests that members of the Temperance Movement focused attention on drinking "not only to reinforce [their] own respectability, but also perhaps because other vices could not be discussed. . . . Drunkenness, which was widely supposed to lie at the root of all other sins was a convenient outlet for moral indignation" (356).

⁹ Mairi McCormick, "First Representations of the Gamma Alcoholic in the English Novel," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol. 30 (1969): 957-980.

¹⁰ Cf. the satire of this passage from Charles Dickens's Hard Times (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989): "Then came the Teetotal Society, who complained that these same people would get drunk, and showed in tabular statements that they did get drunk, and proved at tea parties that no inducement, human or Divine (except a medal), would induce them to forgo their custom of getting drunk . . . [and] when they didn't get drunk, they took opium" (30). See also McCormick, pp. 965-75 ("The Alcoholic in Dickens"). She argues--rightly, for the most part--that Dickens's novels show that he is "not interested in alcoholism itself" (970).

¹¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Barton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 207.

¹² George Levine, The Realistic Imagination (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 8.

¹³ J. Hillis Miller, The Form of Victorian Fiction (Cleveland: Arete P, 1979) 5.

¹⁴ Gaskell is consistent with medical opinions in linking insanity and "dipsomania," since by the 1830s monomania was explicitly understood to be a mental disease associated with alcoholism. See McCandless, pp. 53-55.

¹⁵ Lillian Shiman explains that "Women drunkards were believed by nineteenth-century temperance reformers to be very difficult to deal with: it was an accepted dictum that only in rare cases could female inebriates be cured" (105). George Eliot's heroine in "Janet's Repentance," then, makes a remarkable recovery.

¹⁶ Delirium tremens was coined in 1813, but more than a decade before, the mental manifestations of alcoholism were called "brain fever." See W. F. Bynum, "Chronic Alcoholism in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," Bulletin of the History of Medicine 42 (1968): 160-185.

¹⁷ Brian Harrison has pointed out the links between sexuality and drinking for Victorians: "The campaign against fornication wielded the 'scabs, blotches, and eruptions' of venereal disease as enthusiastically as the campaign against drunkenness wielded the obesity, red face, and brandy-blossoms of the drunkard" ("Underneath the Victorians," Victorian Studies [March 1967]: 239-62).

¹⁸ (Chapel Hill: U of N Carolina P, 1987) 190. Gilmore cites Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism, 1939, 3d ed. (New York: Harper, 1970): "The alcoholic is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (21).

¹⁹ Devout Mr. Tryan's deathbed scene is an obvious parallel to Dempster's. Not only do Janet and Tryan share "a sacred kiss of promise," but in contrast to Dempster, Tryan is in the real world: "The strange hallucinations of the disease which had seemed to take a more decided hold on him just at the fatal crisis . . . had now given way, and left him calmly conscious of reality" (410). Alcoholic characters, on the other hand, often die raving or bewildered. Notably, Esther in Mary Barton asks wildly, "Has it been a dream, then?" (465).



A Healing Rain in James Welch's Winter in the Blood

Denise Low

Winter in the Blood by Blackfeet and Gros Ventre writer James Welch is a contemporary novel (1974) that contains many levels of significance.¹ It follows that critics vary in their interpretations. Some view the historical and cultural perspectives as primary (Allen, Davis, Jahner, Thackery),² while some note the twentieth-century theme of generalized alienation (Barnett, Kunz, Ruoff, Sands).³ Others emphasize the tragicomic effects and pithy style in this tightly written book (Gish, Larson, Velie, Wild).⁴ The book indeed evokes many responses, and the novelist sustains a multiplicity of literal and symbolic meanings. Yet another theme is that of alcoholism, which is evident in nearly every scene. As a central conflict, misuse of alcohol occurs not just superficially, but also as a symptom of how the main character remains emotionally distant from his tribe, his family, and his own feelings. Appropriate use of alcohol near the end of the novel foreshadows the successful resolution of the book. The author also illustrates a condition that only recently has been understood by psychologists. Welch associates the narrator's detachment with a condition now identified as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Welch sets the full-blooded Blackfeet hero's life during contemporary times, and he implies the modern erosion of Indian spiritual values, kinship structure, history, and culture. Davis writes, "As he returns home from his latest binge, he confesses total alienation from the land, human community, his family, and himself" (33). The alienation of the unnamed hero is also that of a tribe still feeling effects of modernization and of Indian wars just one hundred years in the past; the novel accrues communal as well as individual significance. The narrator is not atypical compared to his family and community, and his namelessness perhaps makes him an Everyman. Further, the plight of a twentieth century Blackfeet is not unlike that of the non-Indian characters around him. The "airplane man" and other European-American characters also drink, fight, and wander aimlessly in a "cock-eyed world" (Welch 68).

Like some other notable Native American novels, Winter in the Blood offers a qualified hope for recovery. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn⁵ and Leslie Silko's Ceremony⁶ also show the importance of traditional culture to their main characters. Welch's hero gradually pieces together his personal and tribal histories, and this process leads to the possibility of a healing. The ending leaves the hero more aware of his Blackfeet identity and more at ease within himself. In discussing the book, Welch denies that the hero's life will improve in dramatic ways,⁷ but nonetheless the hero does end the book with more knowledge about his tribal and personal histories; he has gained

significant perspective on his life.

At the beginning of the novel the narrator is a desperate, isolated drunk. Peter Wild compares him to Abel of House Made of Dawn, who "comes home drunk from World War II" (Wild 25). This is parallel to the opening scene of Winter in the Blood, where the narrator wakes up after a three-day drunk and stumbles painfully home to his family ranch. He barely communicates with his mother and grandmother, and his common-law wife has left him.

Part I of the novel establishes the family cycle of drinking. Teresa, his mother, elopes and returns home with her groom three days later. Both are hung over. The new family celebrates by drinking together, "That night we got drunk around the kitchen table" (13). A family history of alcoholism is revealed further in the recounting of the death of First Raise, the father of the narrator. He had little satisfaction in his marriage but loved his two sons. Occasional drinking bouts became habitual after the son Mose died: "He stayed away more than ever then, a week or two at a time. Sometimes we would go after him; other times he would show up in the yard, looking ruined and fearful" (21). First Raise finally froze to death in a borrow pit while returning home from the bars.

As grim as the details of the narrator's family life are, the bar scenes are even grimmer--totally disordered and often violent. At Wally's, the bartender casually steals from him, buying himself a drink with the narrator's money. To get information about his Cree girlfriend, the hero helps her brother beat and rob a drunk. Visual images make no sense, as this first introduction to a barmaid indicates:

Standing a few feet away from me, a barmaid leaned on her tray. She poked the ice cubes in her Coke with her finger and glared at herself in the mirror. Although I couldn't see a cigarette near her, she was blowing smoke rings. (47)

Typical of these bar scenes is the lack of cause-effect relationships of the physical universe. Even the narrator notices that a cigarette should have been apparent. This absurd reality could be seen as surreal, but the entire novel is filtered through the first-person narrator. Are his perceptions trustworthy? As he drinks, he is less able to make logical connections, and his observations become more distorted. At the end of the first section, the hero wakes up in a hotel room with partial amnesia. He recalls a dream, but no events of the night before. Later that morning he finally remembers being in bed with the barmaid. However, the memory is fragmentary and uncertain; he can only conclude that "it must have happened." The fictional setting may be surreal, but more clearly the

perceptions of the narrator are distorted by his detachment. As Kunz observes, "the nameless protagonist's search for an authentic and meaningful sense of being in the world is structured around various distances" (90).

The next two sections of the book alternate between ranch and bar settings, and drinking is a common link between them. This static cycle, however, is broken by several plot developments. The hero has dreams and then memories that lead to his resolution of grief. And he becomes acquainted with his true grandfather, Yellow Calf, who reveals his tribal lineage. The ranch and town drinking scenes become the overlay of an emotional renaissance of the narrator, and the alcoholic behavior pattern emerges as a component of a larger issue: the "winter in the blood" is, among other things, symbolic of the emotional detachment, or coldness, of the narrator. The progress of the novel is structured by the hero's emotional evolution.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator is unable to have feelings for his mother or common-law wife, Agnes: "I was as distant from myself as a hawk from the moon. And that was why I had no particular feelings toward my mother and grandmother. Or the girl who had come to live with me" (21). Later, recalling the beauty of Agnes, he realizes "The memory was more real than the experience" (22). He is incapable of immediate engagement in emotional exchanges. And his comments about his dead father, First Raise, and dead brother, Mose, are muted, focused on isolated details like Mose's coins in a jar. The narrator is uncertain about even his memories of his father (18).

The structure of the novel follows a progression from this original state of detachment, or even disassociation, to a final release of emotions in the climactic scenes. When the narrator experiences the final memory of his brother's death, at the end of Part III, he cries, "for no one in the world to hear, not even Bird, for no one but my soul, as though the words would rid it of the final burden of guilt, and I found myself a child again" (146). He again weeps outwardly when he recognizes that Yellow Calf is actually his grandfather: "And the wave behind my eyes broke" (158). This understanding comes only after his grandfather reveals tribal and family histories. A final outburst of emotion--rage--occurs when he and the old horse Bird try to save a cow. The physical exertion releases his anger at his new stepfather, Lame Bull, and his entire community. The narrator addresses his mother, "Teresa, you made a terrible mistake. Your husband, your friends, your son, all worthless, none of them worth a shit" (169). During this last scene, rain finally falls for the first time in the book.

Rain is a release from the oppressive summer drought; also, it contrasts with the ice of three terrible winters: when his tribe and grandparents experienced a winter of famine and defeat;

when his brother died; and when his father froze to death. Rain represents the narrator's freed emotional range after a long winter in his blood and his bloodline. The three consecutive scenes where the narrator displays emotion show him regaining harmony within himself, with his family and tribe, and with nature (represented by the cow and horse). Restoration of harmony with nature may be the most important, as a careless killing of a hawk appears to have begun the tragic cycle for the narrator and his brother.

Welch traces the emotional rebirth of a traumatized hero. The author's insight into human behavior is corroborated by the most recent understanding of PTSD. During the narrator's odyssey, he exhibits many of the diagnostic criteria for this condition, including "dissociative (flashback) episodes," "feeling of detachment or estrangement from others," "restricted range of affect, e.g. unable to have loving feelings" and "sense of foreshortened future."⁸ The narrator describes his own condition in similar words, "I felt no hatred, no love, no guilt, no conscience, nothing but a distance that had grown through the years" (2). Welch's understanding of this illness predates the psychiatric profession's codification. Only the most recent revised edition (1988) contains this entry for PTSD. The narrator's character, with his engaging humor and intelligence, makes individual this harrowing process of psychological survival--and the repression of trauma is first a survival mechanism. Restoration of twenty-year-old memories and emotions allows the narrator finally to grieve and reenter the world of the living. His drinking pattern appears, also, to be changing at the end of the novel. After the grandmother's death he only tastes the "Vin Rose" that Lame Bull offers him and his mother. The bottle is nearly full the next day when he takes it as a gift for Yellow Calf. He shares a drink with his grandfather, and then, out of proper respect for the elder, gives him the rest of the bottle of wine (159). This is the last scene in the story where alcohol appears. The hero faces final discoveries about his family and himself with a new sobriety.

In agreement with Welch, recent research also correlates PTSD with alcohol-related problems. Adult children of alcoholics are raised in stressful environments that can induce "chronic shock": "Growing up in an alcoholic family can be a series of trauma/shock/repressions."⁹ The deaths of Mose and First Raise were both obvious stressors. Further, because the family is compromised by alcohol, the narrator is isolated in his grief, as well as everything else. This is typical of such families: "no one talks about the incident. The child is left to interpret what the trauma means" (Kritsberg 56). In his opening reverie in Winter in the Blood, the narrator says of his mother, "I never expected much from Teresa and I never got it. But neither did anybody else. Maybe that's why First Raise stayed away so much" (21). As a twelve year old, he appeared to have had no help from

either of his parents in grieving for his brother. His father, in fact, grew even more distant, drank more, and eventually died himself, so the narrator's grief was compounded. Trauma and alcoholic family behavior patterns both contributed to the abnormal detachment of the narrator.

William Haugen Light correlates psychological disorders, including disassociative disorders, with the primary illness of alcoholism.¹⁰ Not only is the narrator part of a family with alcohol problems, but probably he is alcoholic himself, with binge drinking and blackouts. In particular, Light's discussion of depersonalization disorder is salient to Winter in the Blood: "the patient perceives himself and his environment as though from a distance. This is often accompanied by derealism, the sense that one's surroundings have become altered and unreal. Distortion of time and space are common" (22). The narrator, who is as distant from himself "as a hawk from the moon," in this novel also experiences unreal, or "dereal," surroundings in the bars (with the airplane man, the barmaid, and others) and during the confusing conversations with his mother (15-22).

By no means should Welch's fine novel be reduced to a psychiatric case study. His wisdom about human psychology is but one aspect of a tight, witty, and poetic text. The imagery alone is remarkable. And focus on the individual emotional struggle of the narrator is not meant to minimize the importance of the spiritual, historical and cultural context. The novel can be at once a "crying for pity" ritual (Allen 81, Thackery 61); an initiatory journey on the "trail of life" (Jahner 222); a tale of twentieth-century alienation (Sands 97); and "masterpiece of comic fiction" (Velle 92); and an alcoholic's cycle of recovery. The mystery of storytelling is that all of these aspects exist simultaneously, suspended in the extended metaphor of fictive language.

A further comment on the success of this novel, then, is the recent perspective now available from new psychiatric studies. The progression of flashbacks and dreams is not "the chaos of disconnected memories, desperate actions and useless conversations" (Sands 97). Rather there is a purposeful order in the process of emotional healing. The memories of Mose's accident begin in Part II, after the narrator visits Yellow Calf for the first time. This reconnection with traditions through an elder precipitates the healing process. These memories are interspersed in sequential order, mostly, through the end of Part III. Spread over several weeks, their intensity is ameliorated. A new outlook becomes apparent in the narrative point of view as the hero hits bottom. He notices his own shoes, at the end of Part II, "For the first time I noticed how old they looked, run-down and run-over" (124). This new self-awareness carries over into the ending sections of the book.

By the concluding chapters the narrator has become a new person, now connected to his grandparents and their values, and tolerant but removed from the false values of his mother and stepfather. He takes an elaborate bath that echoes the traditional sweat lodge ceremony, a ritual of spiritual renewal. He finally plans to see a doctor about his knee injury, and he contemplates a more binding commitment to Agnes, "Next time I'd maybe offer to marry her on the spot" (175). He is conscious of Lame Bull's travesty of a Christian sermon as they bury his grandmother. He does not let it stop him from performing a parting gesture to his grandmother, a gesture that connects him to her and her traditions: "I threw the pouch into the grave" (176).

The hero of Winter in the Blood has not made vast external changes in his life through the course of the novel; the crucial changes have occurred within. He has finished grieving for his brother and father, he has reactivated emotional responses, and he has gained respect for his traditional grandparents. During the comic funeral scene, he sees the limitations of his remaining family, especially Lame Bull, and he contemplates, through Agnes, the continuation of the generations nonetheless. Lame Bull's litany of positive and negative qualities is a restoration, in altered form, of the traditional balance, and the narrator seems willing to participate in the compromise of this cockeyed universe. He is a far cry from the pathetic figure of the opening scene who woke up in virtually the same ditch his father died in. The distance he experiences is no longer the failure of human and cosmic relationships. Instead, it has become the distance of perspective: "Some people, I thought, will never know how pleasant it is to be distant in a clean rain, the driving rain of a summer storm" (172). A killing blizzard has given way to a life-giving rain. Welch shows restoration of memories to be the path of recovery for the narrator, and also for the tribe as a whole.

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¹ James Welch, Winter in the Blood (New York: Harper, 1974). Further references to the novel are from this edition.

² Paula Gunn Allen, The Sacred Hoop (Boston: Beacon P, 1986); Jack L. Davis, "Restoration of Indian Identity in Winter in the Blood." James Welch, ed. Ron McFarland (Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence P, 1986) 61-78; Elaine Jahner, "A Critical Approach to American Indian Literature," Studies in American Indian Literature, ed. Paula Gunn Allen (New York: MLA, 1983) 222-23; William W. Thackery, "'Crying for Pity' in Winter in the Blood," MELUS 7 (1980): 61-78.

³ Louise K. Barnett, "Alienation and Ritual in Winter in the Blood," American Indian Quarterly, 4 (May 1978): 123-30; Don Kunz, "Lost in the Distance of Winter: James Welch's Winter in the Blood," Critique 20 (Fall 1978): 93-99; Lavonne Ruoff, "Alienation and the Female Principle in Winter in the Blood," American Indian Quarterly, 4 (May 1978): 107-22; Kathleen M. Sands, "Alienation and Broken Narrative in Winter in the Blood," American Indian Quarterly, 4 (May 1978): 97-105.

⁴ Robert Gish, "Mystery and Mock Intrigue in James Welch's Winter in the Blood," in McFarland, 45-57; Charles R. Larson, American Indian Fiction (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1978); Alan Velie, "Winter in the Blood as Comic Novel," American Indian Quarterly, 4 (May 1978): 141-47; Peter Wild, James Welch (Boise, Idaho: Boise State University Western Writers Series, 1983).

⁵ Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Harper, 1968).

⁶ Leslie Silko, Ceremony (New York: Viking, 1977).

⁷ Nicholas O'Connell, ed., At the Field's End: Interviews with Northwest Writers (Seattle: Madrona Publications, 1987): 69.

⁸ American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd ed (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980) 250.

⁹ Wayne Kritsberg, The Adult Children of Alcoholics Syndrome (Pompano Beach, Florida: Health Communications, 1986) 52.

¹⁰ William Haugen Light, Psychodynamics of Alcoholism (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1986) 42-46.

Film

PROHIBITION IN THE MOVIES: A FILM REVIEW
OF THE ROARING TWENTIES (1939, Warner Brothers)

Nicholas O. Warner

Although it does not deal with intoxication as such, the classic 1930's tough-guy movie, The Roaring Twenties, has as its central theme a topic obviously related to the main concerns of this journal--prohibition. Based on a story by Mark Hellinger, and directed by Raoul Walsh, The Roaring Twenties epitomizes some of the best features of its genre. Performances are convincing, the characterizations vivid, and the plot lively, even if a bit thick with coincidences. Above all, the dialogue crackles with the kind of hard-boiled repartee for which the film's two male leads, James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart, were justly famous. This review will concentrate, however, on those aspects of the film that have most to do with prohibition.

The Roaring Twenties is, essentially, a morality tale, but one in which the chief lesson is not about personal behavior but about the disastrous effects of well-intentioned but ill-conceived efforts to control drinking and legislate morality. In conveying this lesson, the movie traces the rise and fall of Eddie Bartlett (James Cagney), a scrappy, good-hearted, all-American boy who returns home from World War I to find himself jobless, poor, and with little likelihood of improved prospects. The innocent Eddie inadvertently gets involved in bootlegging and becomes a rich and powerful racketeer, only to meet with an ignominious end--all the result of the socio-legal nightmare known as prohibition.

To emphasize prohibition's various evils, the film intersperses Eddie's story with a narrative voice-over of the newsreel type so superbly parodied the following year in Orson Welles' Citizen Kane (1940). The urgent, brisk tones of John Deering as the narrator supplement the movie's dramatic and narrative elements by providing a strong, unambiguously anti-prohibition message. Near the beginning of the film, for instance, the narrator invites us to look back at the prohibition period (which ended six years before our film appeared) as a time of "amazing madness." Later, when the unsuspecting Eddie is drawn into bootlegging, the voice-over accompanies a striking montage: a multitudinous array of liquor bottles glides across the screen, followed by shots of sinister gangster types in speakeasies and pantomimes of furtive bootlegging activity. As we watch these scenes (including one of Eddie delivering illegal booze), the narrator intones solemnly about prohibition's creation of a new "criminal army" (to which, ironically, the World War I veteran Eddie now belongs), an army "born of a marriage between an unpopular law and an unwilling public." It

is true, of course, that many citizens did not favor prohibition, and the illegal manufacture and distribution of alcohol was a "famous and real result of prohibition."¹ That said, the film clearly goes overboard in emphasizing the unpopularity of the dry cause and in seeking to lay nearly every evil in American society at prohibition's door. But with its newsreel style of footage accompanying the voice-over, not to mention the voice-over's authoritative tone and use of dates and impressive-sounding generalizations, The Roaring Twenties gives its one-sided, reductive interpretation of prohibition the appearance of a strictly factual, "official" analysis.

The film's subsequent voice-overs continue the illusion of objective reportage described above. As the narrator again interrupts the story of Bartlett's inevitable corruption, we are told that women, college students, even "high-school girls and boys who never drank before" now turn to the forbidden fruit of alcohol. Lest we miss the point, the film regales us with scenes of lasciviously cavorting teen-agers, tossing off drinks and necking madly (hip flasks in hand) before they drunkenly drive their cars off the road. But, as a number of responsible studies have argued, neither college students nor women drank significantly more during Prohibition than before--if anything, these groups, like most other Americans, probably drank less.²

Dubious as some of the film's assertions and implications about alcohol use may be, the narrator is accurate in pointing out that the financial crash of 1929 hit the illegal liquor business early and hard. A case in point is Eddie Bartlett who, following the loss of his power, money, and of his virtuous dream girl, is reduced to driving a cab. The film makes it clear that Eddie's problems not only typify those of many bootleggers, but that they mirror those of the country at large, plagued by the Depression and by prohibition's legacy of organized crime. Eventually, a hopeful note is heard when Franklin Delano Roosevelt becomes president. As the voice-over now triumphantly (and again accurately) informs us, FDR won partly because of his support for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. The passage of repeal itself, the narrator goes on to explain, stems from an American public "tired of years of violence, corruption, and loss of personal liberty."

One of the film's most interesting sequences is sandwiched in between the announcements of Roosevelt's election and prohibition's repeal. Describing the background events that led to repeal, the narrator mentions the April, 1933 modification of the Volstead Act to legalize 3.2 beer: "In New York City, thousands of jubilant citizens march in a great beer parade, and shortly, 3.2 beer becomes legal." As the narrator speaks, we behold rotund, happy Americans of both sexes blowing beer suds, singing in unison, and cheerfully quaffing appetizing-looking mugs of frothy brew. What makes this sequence so intriguing is

its implied contrast between the happy beer-drinkers and the mostly unpleasant or comic (e.g., the stereotypical staggering drunk) depictions of drinking found earlier in the movie. In depicting drinking prior to the 3.2 law, the film almost exclusively identifies alcohol with hard liquor, especially gin.³ But as soon as the film's chronology turns to the softening of prohibition, drinking is depicted more cheerfully, and alcohol itself appears, in the scene described above, in the form of the supposedly more benign, wholesome and less potent beverage of beer. Thus the film's visual organization (i.e., shots of different kinds of beverages) echoes its repeated theme of prohibition ironically resulting in more extensive and more harmful drinking than would exist in the absence of prohibitive legislation.

It is also curious to note that the film's contrast between gin and beer closely parallels that made in William Hogarth's famous eighteenth-century engravings, "Beer Street" and "Gin Lane" (1750-51). In "Beer Street," for example, hearty English people busily ply their honest trades, a number of them imbibing huge mugs of what Hogarth himself called the "invigorating liquor" of beer;⁴ "Gin Lane," in contrast, depicts poverty-stricken, emaciated gin drinkers, disorderly characters of all kinds, and abused children. So too in The Roaring Twenties, scenes of drunken mayhem, immorality, and unhealthy products (e.g., the bathtub gin dispensed by Eddie) are linked to gin; scenes of happiness and productivity, on the other hand (e.g., a group of newly employed young women filling beer bottles) are linked to beer. Thus, after nearly two hundred years, the discourse of beverage distinction evident in Hogarth's designs appears again in a popular Hollywood thriller. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

The general tone of the voice-overs about repeal is upbeat, but the movie still ends on a somber note. A widespread criminal element remains even after repeal, and the individual fate of Eddie Bartlett is filled with sad irony. Once a milk-drinking, teetotaling bootlegger who peddled the stuff but didn't like its taste, Eddie has become, through financial and romantic disappointment, a sodden drunkard, played with obvious relish by a picturesquely disheveled Cagney. Despite some last-minute heroics in the course of justice, in which he shoots it out with the gang of his erstwhile partner, the ruthless George (Humphrey Bogart), Eddie is punished for his earlier transgressions in the film's final sequence, which manages to be exciting, violent, genuinely moving and unabashedly sentimental all at the same time. Fleeing from George's swanky rooms, Eddie is shot by his ex-partner's thugs. Then, in what is surely one of the longest stagger-to-death scenes in film history, Eddie makes his way to the broad steps of a grand, imposing church. Against this dramatic backdrop, Eddie dies, cradled by Panama Smith (Gladys George), the earthy, warm-hearted demimondaine who truly loves

him. But before his fatal shooting, Eddie comes to realize the deeper significance of the post-prohibition era. As he tells the uncomprehending, callous George, there is a "new set-up" in the land. Now, people try to build things up instead of "tearing them apart" as Eddie and George used to do.

Entertaining as it is, The Roaring Twenties will disappoint those looking for a serious study of drinking behavior or alcohol abuse. But the movie would probably have considerable value for anyone interested in prohibition or in the depiction of alcohol control in popular culture. I would also recommend it for courses on alcohol in film (the movie is readily available on videotape) if only because, with its socio-historical orientation, The Roaring Twenties represents a different approach from the more familiar emphasis on the intimate, individualized problems of addiction found in such films as The Lost Weekend, Days of Wine and Roses, and Clean and Sober. Indeed, The Roaring Twenties could lend itself well not only to the study of specific issues like prohibition in the movies, but to the more general question of how the movies themselves transform history into cinematic myth.

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¹ Harry Gene Levine, "The Alcohol Problem in America: From Temperance to Prohibition," British Journal of Addiction 79 (1984), p. 114. Norman Clark, however, asserts that the "crime wave" associated with prohibition was exaggerated: rather than a "wave," there seems to have been a slow increase in criminal activity during the twenties and early thirties; see Clark, Deliver Us from Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition (New York: Norton, 1976) 148-49. On the general issue of the complexities of public attitudes toward prohibition, see Levine, 112-16; Clark, 140-72; Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, Drinking in America: A History (New York: The Free Press, 1982) 138-68; and John C. Burnham, "New Perspectives on the Prohibition 'Experiment' of the 1920's," Journal of Social History 2 (1968) 51-68.

² Donald Barr Chidsey, On and Off the Wagon: A Sober Analysis of the Temperance Movement from the Pilgrims Through Prohibition (New York: Cowles Book Co., Inc., 1969) 80-81; Clark 152; Lender and Martin 144-45. A somewhat different view is represented in Levine's statement that there was "some increased consumption among the middle and upper class youth and women" (114).

³ According to Levine, "under the conditions of prohibition beer and wine were difficult to make and ship--thus distilled liquor, easy to produce and transport, became a more common

beverage" (114). Lender and Martin, on the other had, claim that "the higher proportion of spirits consumed [during prohibition] did not necessarily mean that vast new legions of people were now drinking distilled beverages--only that fewer Americans . . . could afford to buy preprohibition amounts of liquor and that among those who continued to drink, proportionally more preferred spirits" (146).

⁴ Quoted in Sean Shesgreen, ed., Engravings by Hogarth (New York: Dover, 1973) 75.

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Conference

University of Sheffield

Literature and Addiction:

An Interdisciplinary Conference, 4-7 April 1991

Literature and Addiction will present new thought about a subject in which interest has accelerated, for example, in the foundation of the journal of literature and intoxication, Dionysos. At the centre of the conference will be literature and compulsions of the writer, as drinker, drug-taker, lover and eater. There will also be papers on the medical, psychoanalytic and sociological aspects of addiction, and on its political, religious and gender-related ramifications.

At Literature and Addiction the speakers will include Betsy Ettore (Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour, London), Roger Forseth (editor, Dionysos), Thomas Gilmore (author, Equivocal Spirits), Donald Goodwin (University of Kansas Medical Center), John Haffenden (author, The Life of John Berryman), Sheila Henderson (Institute of the Study of Drug Dependence, London), F.A. Jenner (Professor of Psychiatry, University of Sheffield) and Frances Spalding (author, Stevie Smith: A Critical Biography). The conference is organised by Tim Armstrong, Matthew Campbell, Ian MacKillop and Sue Vice.

Literature and Addiction is a full residential conference at Halifax Hall of Sheffield University, costing £175/\$285; concessionary and non-residential rates will be available. The registration fee of £50/\$80 is payable by 1 February 1991. If you wish to attend, contribute or require further information please contact The Secretary, Literature and Addiction, at the address below.

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Brief Reviews

Phyllis Hobe. Lovebound: Recovering from an Alcoholic Family. New York: Penguin, 1990.

For the Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs) in the United States, whose number she estimates at 28 million, Phyllis Hobe has plenty of good news: help is available from a variety of treatment perspectives, at a range of costs, and just about anywhere in the country. Although she welcomes the explosion of interest in the plight of the ACOA, Hobe finds that the many current books on the subject fall into either of two limited types. In the technical literature, the laundry list of symptoms attributed to the ACOA is so long as to be virtually meaningless or to apply to every member of the human community. The other type involves personal stories of recovery. Although the individual stories can be inspiring, Hobe finds the prevalent message that recovery is a lifelong process potentially dispiriting to the ACOA who wants to recover and get on with life.

Lovebound itself relates the story of Hobe's own recovery, the experiences of other ACOAs she has interviewed, and the perspectives of addiction specialists and therapists from several treatment programs. From these contexts she draws a composite portrait of the ACOA as prone to suffer from perfectionism, a compulsive need to please, an exaggerated sense of responsibility, and guilt.

This vague but persistent guilt, Hobe argues, is unwittingly reinforced by the treatment programs modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous. While she acknowledges that AA was the first organization to provide any sort of help to the families of alcoholics, she insists that what may work for the alcoholic is not appropriate for his adult children. Hobe takes issue with the "penitent" attitude that pervades the Twelve Steps and the tendency to replace a destructive dependency with an interminable benevolent one. ACOAs need to be encouraged to achieve fruitful, independent lives beyond counseling. "Very few treatment programs," she observes, "regard recovery as something that has an end as well as a beginning."

The essence of recovery, according to Hobe, involves learning to love the child within the self, who was never adequately loved or guided by the alcoholic parent during his actual childhood. Self-esteem begins when the child within can be confidently affirmed by the adult, the mature, dependable part of the self. This process of love "from the inside out" can gradually correct the thwarted development of ACOAs, who, as frightened children, began masquerading as adults to bring some kind of order to their chaotic homes. Lovebound chronicles the journeys of Hobe and others toward a sort of inner reparenting.

Hobe sees her book as an accompaniment to rather than a replacement for treatment, which she encourages ACOAs to seek in the unique form best suited to them. Her own bias, openly acknowledged, is toward private therapy, preferably in concert with a self-help group.

What distinguishes Lovebound within ACOA literature are Hobe's provocative challenges to support groups determined by the addiction model. She finds alarming the failure of most of these programs to treat separately and differently the issues faced by men and women. She also points to an unconscious conspiracy prevalent in self-help groups to discourage expressions of anger by characterizing the parent who deprived ACOAs of childhood as people with a disease who could not help being the way they were. When the ACOA is advised to "detach," she argues, he is inadvertently encouraged to perpetuate his lifelong pattern of isolation and loneliness by squelching his feelings. And without an objective, trained observer, members of self-help groups can become mired in their own and each other's distortions and defenses. Worst of all, Hobe maintains, group members can come to mistake the process of recovery for living.

Lovebound is light on theory or clinical evidence. Hobe advises ACOAs not to travel alone the painful road back to childhood: "Go with your adult." The process of reconciliation between the inner adult and the inner child is so central to Lovebound that I would like to have known the theoretical background Hobe works from. Although she discusses Eric Berne's transactional analysis and Claude Steiner's application of game theory to alcoholics, I inferred in the absence of explanation that Hobe's conception of the inner adult and child differs from the parent, child, and adult ego states postulated by TA.

But this limitation does not diminish what Hobe does well: she presents a personal account of breaking unhealthy patterns of intimacy that is convincing in its honesty and depth of feeling. And she perceptively and courageously challenges truisms of ACOA recovery programs that are based on a treatment establishment where any criticism is often heard as disloyalty to "the Program."

The double meaning of the title summarizes Phyllis Hobe's message: a child's relationship with alcoholic parents results in a confused and imprisoning love. Fortunately, the ACOA on the journey toward recovery is bound for healing self-acceptance. Then he knows for the first time what real love feels like.

--Virginia Ross

Michael S. Reynolds. "Hemingway's Home: Depression and Suicide." American Literature 57 (1985): 600-10.

Hemingway biographer Michael S. Reynolds (The Young Hemingway [1986]; Hemingway: The Paris Years [1989]) examines here the Hemingway correspondence at the University of Texas to determine the light it throws on Hemingway's father's "nervous condition" and his suicide (6 December 1928) by gunshot ("The weapon he used was a .32 caliber pistol that his father, Anson T. Hemingway, had carried while commanding troops in the Civil War" [Chicago Tribune obituary, quoted in Jeffrey Meyers, Hemingway (1985): 210]). "Eventually three of the Hemingway children took their own lives: Ernest in 1961, Ursula in 1966, Leicester in 1982" (609). Chronic, clinical depression with associated physical infirmities were hereditary: "When Ernest Hemingway put the muzzle of his double-barreled shotgun to his forehead the morning of a much later July, he suffered from all his father's ills: erratic high blood pressure, insomnia, hypertension, mild diabetes, paranoia, and severe depression" (609-10). What is missing here is any mention of Ernest's alcoholism. I have elsewhere discussed the tendency of biographers to deny the reality of this affliction ("Alcohol and the Writer: Some Biographical and Critical Issues (Hemingway)" [Contemporary Drug Problems 13 (1986): 361-86]). Though scarcely the sole cause of Hemingway's suicide, alcoholism was surely a major factor contributing to his deterioration, as Meyers and Kenneth Lynn (Hemingway [1987]) have thoroughly documented. The relation of heavy drinking and alcoholism to depression may not be one of necessary, or simple, cause and effect; but that relation, where present, must be accounted for. One trusts that Reynolds, by the time he completes his meticulous biographical studies of Hemingway, will have done so.

--Roger Forseth



NOTES AND COMMENT

Freelance author Mike Savage writes:

Dionysos gets around. In July the Spring 1990 issue found its way to a novel writing class taught by novelist Valerie Miner for the University of Minnesota's Split Rock Arts Program, which is offered on the Duluth campus each summer. Valerie Miner is the author of five novels, a collection of short stories, and co-author of two additional novels. Her fiction has been published and translated in nine countries. Dionysos and the concept of a literature and intoxication triquarterly came as a pleasant surprise to her. "It's a great idea, long overdue," she said, adding that she found the range of essays and articles wide and interesting. The class discussed the ability of Dionysos to reveal the numerous connections between addiction and classic literature. The revelations of co-dependency and obsession in Madame Bovary by Mashberg particularly delighted the students. "Overall, Dionysos offers me support and new thoughts as a writer, by analyzing the issues of alcoholism and co-dependency in quality literature," one participant said. Other comments indicated Dionysos broadened some horizons by provoking interest in John Berryman's work and prompted at least one rereading of Long Day's Journey Into Night. It seemed to this reporter, who was a class member, that Dionysos provided a significant insight or meaningful observation of some type to the entire roster of students whose literary expertise ranged from the highly literate and widely read to--speaking of himself--the moderately literary impaired.

Mike's experience demonstrates again the pedagogical dimension of Dionysos. We offer special rates for multicopy class/conference adoptions. . . . Dan Wakefield's The Story of Your Life: Writing a Spiritual Autobiography has just been published by Beacon Press (\$12.95/25.00). His publisher writes,

For the past two years, Dan Wakefield, the best-selling novelist, screenwriter, and author of the widely-acclaimed memoir Returning: A Spiritual Journey, has been leading workshops in "spiritual autobiography" across the country. A spiritual autobiography is a chronicle of one's deepest feelings, ideas, and hopes, rather than one's educational, career, or romantic history; this writing experience is one that more and more people are discovering as a way to make sense of the world and their places in it. In The Story of Your Life: Writing a Spiritual Autobiography, a new book from Beacon Press, Wakefield explains this unique writing process and reveals how it can lead to self-understanding, healing, and

growth.

Separately, Dan writes, "I want to alert you to a powerful new novel on our subject coming out in September. It is called Sams in a Dry Season, by Ivan Gold, published by Houghton Mifflin. Pass the word that this is a good one, with great insights, comic as well as harrowing." It is reviewed by Christopher Lehmann-Haupt in the 24 September New York Times, and will be reviewed in a future issue of Dionysos. . . . Hale Lamont-Havers writes, "Congratulations on a superb periodical! I have enjoyed each issue so much, and am rushing my check for my second year's subscription." It's a little early for Valentine's Day--but not too early.

Conferences

The John Berryman Conference (announced in our winter issue) will be held in the Coffman Union, University of Minnesota, 25-27 October (information: Richard Kelly, 5 Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455; 612/624-5860). One of the seven panels is on the topic, Berryman, alcoholism, and the sources of creativity. Panelists: Lewis Hyde, George Wedge, Roger Forseth. Philip Levine will deliver the keynote address. . . . The announcement for the literature and addiction conference at the University of Sheffield appears elsewhere in this issue. "The conference, while interdisciplinary, is concerned with the nature of addiction and its connections with fictionalizing and writing. Excessive appetites covered will range from alcohol, drugs, and food, to love, sex, and gambling. Please send short abstracts, or requests for further information, to The Secretary, Literature and Addiction, Dept. of English Literature, the University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2Tn. GB." Among those reading papers are George Wedge, Don Goodwin, Nick Warner, and Roger Forseth.

Research Notes

In his review of A History of Alcoholism by Jean-Charles Sournia (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), Richard Davenport-Hines observes: "Despite [Sournia's] glances at the role of alcohol in the creativity of authors such as Faulkner and Malcolm Lowry, there is far too little treatment of literary representations of alcohol, or of the linguistic and cultural implications of the temperance vocabulary." And: "[Sournia] hints at some of the contradictory impulses that produce alcoholism in some people--those who are dissatisfied with life, or ill adjusted to its realities, drink themselves to death in their quest for a good life--but he is too self-confident and cerebral a Frenchman to recognize inebriation as an understandable retreat from brutalizing realities which individuals feel powerless to overcome. This is not a book showing much experience of unbearable pain or empathy with self-doubt" ("Over a Few Drinks."

TLS June 29-July 5 1990: 701-2). . . . Dwight B. Heath (Anthropology, Box 1921, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island 02912-1921) is the new editor of the Newsletter of The Alcohol and Drug Study Group, a committee of the Society for Medical Anthropology. Subscription information (\$10.00): Dr. William True, Research Service 151A-JB, V. A. Medical Center, St. Louis, Missouri 63125. . . . ISPA (Institute for Psychological Study of the Arts) publishes, annually, a useful reference work, IPSA Abstracts and Bibliography in Literature and Psychology (\$5.00). Write 4008 Turlington Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.

NOTEWORTHY

"[Jay] McInerney seems bothered by the fact that 'for every writer who drank himself into a premature grave most of us can cite another who quit drinking and lost his creative spark.' There cannot be any facile cause and effect relationship between alcoholic drinking and loss of writing talent, and I, for one, never attempted to demonstrate it. Many writers lose their creative spark for other reasons, or even are one-book writers to begin with. And some manage to quit drinking only to find that their talent has already deserted them. What seems incontrovertible is that (a) prolonged boozing will eventually destroy literary talent and (b) until recently there has been an attempt to avoid discussion of alcoholism in the biographies of the writers discussed in The Thirsty Muse. Now that it is acceptable to mention their drinking, it is still attributed to various stresses and strains in their lives" (from Tom Dardis's letter [TLS August 31-September 6 1990: 921] in response to the review of his The Thirsty Muse [Jay McInerney, "All Corned-Up," TLS July 27-August 2 1990: 792]).

"I wonder: If I can articulate how I got to be a drinker, might I understand why I wanted to be a writer? At 17, 16, 15 I haunted New York Jazz clubs--Jimmy Ryan's on West 52nd and especially Eddie Condon's, down in the Village. Cranked by music and an atmosphere of the illicit (the places where my school pals and I liked to drink were said to have been speakeasies), I drank rye and ginger by the yard. I was charmed by the ruined faces of Condon's house band: the awful pallor and florid noses (grog blossoms, we called them) on Cutty Cutshall and Pee Wee Russell and Wild Bill Davison and Eddie Condon himself, virtuoso and entrepreneur of ill-spent nights. Believe an adolescent envying a bad complexion and you might credit the high times we enjoyed later at college, making an institution of dissipation. Our campus well was a garbage can filled with fruit juice, a 50-pound block of ice, and gallons of vodka; we drank from it, dipped our heads in it, were known to puke in it. This was fun. Heavy drinking in the 1950s was what we did; not to drink heavily was provocative, off the reservation" (Geoffrey Wolff, "Writers . . . and Booze," Lear's 1990: 127-28).

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS TO DIONYSOS

Annette Federico is an assistant professor of Literature at Stockton State College, and has published essays on Emily Brontë and Dickens. Her book on masculinity in novels by Hardy and George Gissing will be published next year by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Marty Roth is a professor of American literature, popular culture, and film studies at the University of Minnesota. He has published books and articles in nineteenth-century American fiction, mainly Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville and in twentieth-century Hollywood film. He has just completed a book on mystery and detective fiction.

Denise Low teaches at Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas. She has just completed an article on the Mayan epic the POPOL VUH after an NEH Summer Institute Fellowship at the Newberry Library. She has published poetry and reviews of poetry, including Starwater (Cottonwood, 1988), Spring Geese (University of Kansas Museum of Natural History Press, 1988), and a review-article of Dennis Tedlock's Days from A Dream Almanac (forthcoming in American Indian Culture and Research Journal).

Nicholas Warner, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Claremont McKenna College, is currently working on a book on intoxication in American literature.

Virginia Ross was an assistant professor of English at Mercer University, and is currently doing free-lance (mostly medical) writing while working on a book about Nathaniel Hawthorne from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Michael Savage has published articles and photographs in numerous magazines and newspapers nationwide, and his poems and short stories have appeared in publications in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Alabama, and Alaska. "The Beach," a chapter from his novel Growing Up Wild in Wisconsin, has just won a cash prize from The Northfield Magazine.