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EDITORIAL

While at the American Literature Association Conference last month in San Diego, I was drawn to a session on Jean Stafford by, in part, the fact that it was to be chaired by Stafford biographer Charlotte Goodman (Jean Stafford: The Savage Heart. U of Texas P, 1990) and that one of the papers was titled, "Biography, Pathography, and the Critical Reception of Jean Stafford." In the event, the seven speakers at the session managed to avoid--with a single exception during the question period--the subject of Stafford's alcoholism and its effect on her art. Now, we have recently been sternly instructed by Wendy Kaminer (I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions) and a host of other cultural critics (see, e.g., Nicholas Lemann's "The Vogue of Childhood Misery," Atlantic, March 1992) that it is no longer correct to use such terms as "denial." Nonetheless, at the risk of being incorrect, I think it worth pointing out that there have been three biographies of Jean Stafford since 1988; the first, by David Roberts (Jean Stafford: A Biography, Little, Brown), was the subject of a savage review by Joyce Carol Oates ("Adventures in Abandonment," The New York Times Book Review, 28 August 1988) in which she gave currency to the term "pathography," the reduction of biography largely to gossip and irresponsible character assassination irrelevant to the subject's achievement. Well and good. But the followers of Oates seem to have generalized her particular point and condemned all considerations of pathology, of a troubled life--especially of alcoholism--and its effect on the subject's achievement itself. It is not for nothing that a brilliant (if minor) writer has of late received so much biographical attention (the third treatment, Ann Hulbert's The Interior Castle: The Art and Life of Jean Stafford, Knopf, will be reviewed by Virginia Ross in Dionysos). Stafford was, after all, an alcoholic, a product of a "dysfunctional" family (another incorrect term!), who married alcoholics (Robert Lowell, A. J. Liebling). Surely it is not "pathographical" to examine Stafford's alcoholism in order to determine its effect--if any--on her art. The minimization, indeed the outright denial, that I observed in San Diego cannot be taken seriously. Children, as Anna Freud observed, may require defense mechanisms to survive. Biographers and critics do not.

The essential problem for the biographer of a writer is not that an affliction where present must be examined, but how knowledgeably, sensitively, and wisely it is examined. In this endeavor it is sobering to observe in this day, when so much information is available and the pressure to gloss over destructive behavior (including alcohol abuse) is so slight, that even serious biographers fall so disconcertingly short. For evidence one need look no further than the biographies reviewed by Thomas Gilmore and Frank Morral printed below.

DIONYSUS*

John Maxwell O'Brien

The god of everything that blossomed and breathed, Dionysus could surface in the moisture on a rose, bellow majestically through a raging bull, or imperceptibly shed old skin for new in the guise of a snake. He was the divine patron of the theater with an empty mask as his emblem, the god of a thousand faces who epitomized metamorphosis, and could transform mortals at will. Armed with ecstasy and madness, this paradoxical deity would smile at human determination and laugh at logic. In league with death as well as life, his realm reached beyond the grave to the murky waters of the netherworld.¹

The Greeks of classical antiquity assumed that Dionysus had come to them from a distant land.² He was an enigmatic alien, who used might and magic to establish his cult in Hellas. He was a newcomer, a stranger, an exotic intruder who usurped his place among the twelve Olympians and became an incongruous thirteenth god.

By the age of Alexander the Great Dionysus had displaced the goddess Hestia and sat as a latecomer among the greater gods. He was now regarded primarily as the god of wine, although this was only one of the many roles he continued to play. Dionysus (Bacchus)³ was often portrayed brandishing his distinctive drinking cup (cantharus) amidst a lush profusion of vine leaves and grapes. Crowned with ivy and laurel, he undertook long journeys across the world to distribute his joyous gift to mankind.

The gift he brought was himself, for Dionysus was not just the god of wine; he was the wine itself. The presence of Dionysus could be felt through the liquid fire of the grape, and this celestial potation enabled mortals to partake of his divinity. The drinker became an inspired recipient of Dionysus's benefits and had the god within (entheos) in a literal sense.

The most welcome of all of wine's benefactions was its ability to distort reality and make human existence palatable.

For filled with that good gift, suffering mankind forgets its grief; from it comes sleep; with it oblivion of the troubles of the day. There is no other medicine for misery. And when we

*"Dionysus" is adapted from the prologue to John O'Brien's Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy. A Biography, to be published by Routledge in September. The book will be reviewed in the Fall 1992 issue of Dionysos.

pour libations to the gods, we pour the god of wine himself that through his intercession man may win the favor of heaven.

(Ba. 280-85)

Dionysus proffered himself through wine, and mortals revealed his personality (as well as their own) through drinking and drunkenness. A number of the god's epithets describe his attractive attributes or praise the benefits to be culled from his precious gift.⁴ He is a relaxer of the mind, a healer of sorrow, a dispeller of care, a provider of joy, a merry-maker, and a lover of laughter. Other epithets refer to his less admirable characteristics and simultaneously serve as a reminder of the potential destructiveness of his earthly agent. He is a disturber of the soul, a mind-breaker, a bestower of envy, a dispenser of anger, a chaser of sleep, a noise-maker, and a liar.

The visible effects of wine unmasked the fundamental ambivalence of the god and revealed a kindred quality in mortals. Wine exalted the spirit, but it also had the capacity to unleash primordial impulses. Under its influence a veneer of sophistication might disappear abruptly and civility could be transformed into uncontrollable rage. The wine god disclosed reason's uneasy sway over emotion and served as a chilling reminder of bestiality at the core.

In Greek antiquity the Bacchic cult elicited images of maniacal women and hysteria rather than excellence (arete) and epic deeds. Thus, aspiring heroes had a tendency to neglect this god--except, of course, in his potable mode. This neglect was a dangerous path to take, however, since those who withheld the libation from Dionysus or were remiss in acknowledging his power and importance were likely to become the object of divine retribution.

Dionysus was capable of altering the perceptions of mortals and ultimately maddening them.⁵ Those afflicted would undergo profound changes that manifested themselves in uncharacteristic behavior. The deity's prey were sometimes left bearing a peculiar likeness to the god they had offended, while remaining sublimely unaware that their impiety had stirred the darker side of an omnipresent and invisible enemy.

This process is perhaps most eloquently portrayed in Euripides' Bacchae, in which Pentheus, the king of Thebes, becomes a sacrificial victim of Dionysus.⁶ Pentheus is described as an ambitious young man, who is intent upon establishing his reputation as a ruler of singular distinction. Although he possesses the requisite qualities for the attainment of heroic stature--an impressive lineage, lofty aspirations, perseverance, and courage--some unheroic attributes begin to emerge as the play unfolds.

Pentheus is plagued by insecurities. These breed a compulsion to be successful at all times and a need to be universally honored for his unique excellence. His obsession with the enhancement and defense of his own reputation surfaces in grandiosity, self-righteous anger, and a curious preoccupation with those capable of disclosing his deficiencies. Disproportionately cerebral, he is a victim of his own unintegrated personality.*

Pentheus attempts to suppress the irrational in himself but is fascinated by its expression elsewhere. More adolescent than adult, he is fearful of unloosing the floodgates of his own emotions. Pentheus is old enough to be king, but remains unmarried and womanless, thereby ignoring the cardinal obligation to produce an heir to the throne. Immature and self-centered,* this beardless hero channels his abundant energies into activities that elevate his stature, but also contribute to his megalomaniacal tendencies.

The moments of triumph in the life of this troubled hero are overshadowed by his inability to achieve inner harmony or a sense of well-being. Sporadic outbursts of ungovernable anger belie the aura of stability and control he wishes to project. Pentheus forges ahead in his frenzied efforts to accumulate as many laurels as possible.

Dionysus raises the veil and reveals the king's true nature. The god arrives in Thebes disguised as a man with the intention of establishing his cult there. He perplexes and disturbs Pentheus by refusing to allow the king to impose his will upon him. Older and wiser men implore the king to alter his attitude toward Dionysus, but he disregards their advice and is determined to uproot the Dionysiac 'disease.' Pentheus is unable to accept the fact that he is powerless in the presence of this 'man.' Frustrated in his efforts to achieve control over Dionysus, Pentheus instead finds himself controlled by the god.

Dionysus, whose divine plan is to convert a reluctant suppliant into one of his own devotees and then sacrifice him, utilizes his adversary's intense curiosity to lure him into observing the cult in action. Pentheus is beguiled into wearing the garb of a female disciple of Dionysus. This act of robing provides the prelude to his victimization. The king then undergoes a metamorphosis which leaves him bearing a striking resemblance to the god to whom he has been condescending and impious. Unwittingly, Pentheus has become the antithesis of everything he intended to personify.

Spellbound by a deity who blurs distinctions and finds humor in the rigidity of the heroic outlook, Pentheus discovers that his categorical thinking is in utter disarray. The confused ruler completely surrenders to the Bacchic influence, and commingles notions that he had previously believed to be mutually exclusive: the Hellene and the Asiatic, the hunter and the hunted, male and

female, man and beast, mortal and immortal.¹⁰ Gradually, but ineluctably, Dionysus moves his quarry from the realm of the tangible to the domain of the chimerical. Perception becomes delusion, sanity is usurped by madness, and vitality gives way to extinction.

The very name Pentheus promises suffering (penthos) and suggests pathos.¹¹ but its significance is lost on its bearer. He is said to be experiencing the type of insanity that drugs cannot cure. This king, who has been promised glory reaching to the heavens by Dionysus, is persuaded to spy on the revels of the Dionysiac women from atop a tree. He is discovered, pulled to the ground, and torn to pieces by Agave, his own mother. Fleetinglly, Pentheus becomes aware of what is happening to him, but this revelation occurs too late to be of any use to him.

As the Bacchae draws to a close, the king's severed head looms as a grotesque symbol of a man divided against himself.¹² It also serves as a grim reminder of the empty but smiling mask of Dionysus.¹³

a certain Dionysus
whoever
he
may
be

(Ba. 220)

* * * * *

NOTES

Abbreviations for ancient authors and their works generally conform to the Oxford Classical Dictionary (1978) ix-xxii.

1 Among the innumerable references to Dionysus in antiquity see Hom. Il. 6.119-43, 14.323-25, Od. 11.324-25; Hes. Scut. 399-400, Theog. 940-42, 947-49; Hymn. Hom. Bacch.; Hdt. 2.48-49, 145-46; Soph. Ant. 955-63; Eur. Ba. passim; Diod. 4.2.1-5.4, 25.4; Ov. Met. 3.259-315, 3.513-4.41, 4.389-431, 5.329, 7.294-96, 8.176-82, 11.67-145, 13. 650-74; Apollod. Bibl. 1.3.2, 6.2, 9.12, 9.16, 2.2.2, 4.3-5.3, 3.14.7, Edit. 1.9, 3.10; Hyg. Fab. and Poet. Astr. passim; Paus. passim; Nonnus, Dion. passim; Macrob. Sat. 1.18.1-24; for modern accounts see Guthrie 1956: 145-82; Rose 1959: 149-57; Otto 1965; Boyancé 1966; Gernet and Boulanger 1970: 97-129; Gernet 1981: 48-70; Farnell 1971: 85-344; Lewis 1971; Kerényi 1976, 1979: 250-74; Vernant 1976, 1980; Jeanmaire 1978; McGinty 1978a; Detienne 1979, 1986, 1989; Henrichs 1979, 1982, 1984, 1987; Kirk 1983: 128-31, 230-32; Burkert 1985: 161-67, 237-42, 290-95; Daraki 1985; Carpenter 1986; L'association dionysiaque 1986; Vernant 1990: 208-46.

2 They were mistaken. Mycenaean Linear B tablets (Pylos Xa 102, Xb 1419, c.1200 B.C.) record a variation of the god's name [Diwonu-sojo] and seem to link the god with wine. For the early presence of Dionysus in Greece see Kerényi 1976: 68-69 and Burkert 1985: 162-63.

3 For the complexities of the relationship between Bacchus and Dionysus see Cole 1980: 226-34; Burkert 1985: 290-95.

4 A convenient recitation of these epithets is contained in "A Hymn to Dionysus (containing his Epithets in Alphabetical Order)", Anonymous, the Greek Anthology III 1968: no.524, 288-91.

5 Hom. (Il. 6,132) refers to "Mainomenos Dionysos:" Kerényi 1976: 131-34 translates this as "mad Dionysus" and explains Homer's usage of the adjective in regard to the maddening effect Dionysus had on his female followers (maenads); see Otto 1965: 133-42; also Berkert 1985: 110 "since the god himself [Dionysus] is the Frenzied One, the madness is at the same time divine experience, fulfillment, and an end in itself; the madness is then admittedly almost inseparably fused with alcoholic intoxication."

6 A reminder that all translations from the Bacchae in the current text are from Arrowsmith 1968 while line citations refer to Way 1930; other helpful editions are: Dodds 1966; Kirk 1970; Roux 1970, 1972; for Pentheus and the Bacchae see Grube 1935; Winnington-Ingram 1948; Festugière 1956, 1957; Kamerbeek 1960; Gallini 1963; de Romilly 1963, 1983; Rosenmeyer 1963: 105-52, 1983; Willink 1966; La Rue 1968; Wohlberg 1968; Burnett 1970; Devereux 1970; Cantarella 1971, 1974; Arthur 1972; Ferguson 1972; Seidensticker 1972, 1978, 1979; Hamilton 1974, 1978, 1985; Bremer 1976; Castellani 1976; Segal, C. 1977, 1978/79, 1982a/b, 1985, 1986; McGinty 1978b; Thomson 1979; Coche de la Ferté 1980; Feder 1980: 56-76; Dihle 1981; Durand and Frontisi-Ducroux 1982; Muecke 1982; Diller 1983; Segal, E. 1983; Carrière 1984; Erbse 1984; Oranje 1984; Foley 1985: 205-58; Aélion 1986; Caruso 1987; Neuberger 1987; Stevens 1988; Zeitlin 1990a: passim, 1990b: passim, especially 135-41.

7 See Arist. Poet. 1448b-1456a; all citations and quotations relating to Aristotle are from Barnes's 1985 Princeton edition; see also Jones 1962; Belfiore 1985; Halliwell 1987.

8 Segal, C. 1982a: 248 "the multiplicity of unintegrated characteristics in his fragmented and conflicted personality."

9 Grube 1935: 40 "a very pure young man. . . . desperately afraid of the power of emotions let loose;" Roux 1970, 1972: I 22-24, 22 and II 608 "un tout jeune homme;" Segal, C. 1982a: 76 "[Pentheus's] immaturity," 134: "like Phaethon, Icarus, Hippolytus--youths who would escape their mortal nature and the demands of adult sexuality by flight to the sky but end by crashing disastrously to earth," 171: "a moody and unpredictable adolescent;" Winnington-Ingram

1948: 160 "Pentheus seeks the glorification of his individual person;" Arrowsmith 1968: 148 "Pentheus' lonely arrogance of the 'exceptional' (perissos) individual, superior and contemptuous, defying the community's nomos in the name of his own self-will;" Foley 1985: 207 "insisting on his differences from others," Meagher 1990: 11 "an adolescent king."

10 See Segal, C. 1982a: 121, 169, 171, 223, 245, 250 *passim*.

11 Segal, C. 1982a: 251-54.

12 Represented on stage by a bloody mask and perhaps also symbolizing in conjunction with the smiling mask of Dionysus, Foley 1985: 251 "the division between divine and human nature that lies at the heart of the play."

13 See Méautis 1923; Rosenmeyer 1963: 106-10; Segal 1982a: *passim*; Foley 1980, 1985: 246-54; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1986: 38-43, 246-70; Vernant 1990: 215-46.

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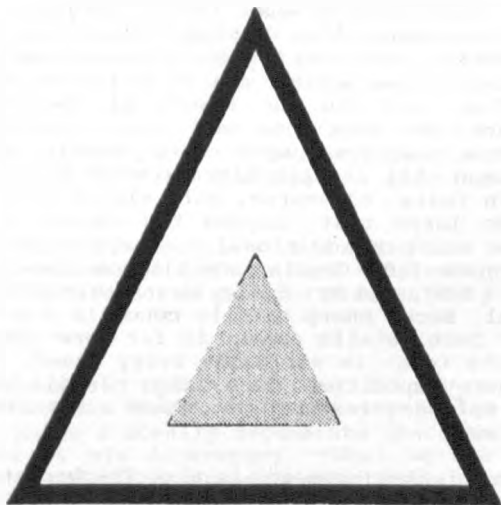
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THACKERAY AND DRINK: VANITY FAIR AND THE NEWCOMES

John Peck

George Cruikshank's series of etchings, "The Bottle" (1847),¹ could be said to sum up the publicly-expressed attitude to drink in the Victorian period. In each illustration, the weakness of the principal character has a devastating effect on his family, breaking up the family home. There is the same emphasis at a different social level in Robert Martineau's "The Last Day in the Old Home" (1861):² in this instance, the family fortune has been gambled away, but amidst the wretched domestic scene the father complacently drinks his last glass of champagne in the ancestral home. An equation is always drawn between drink and the destruction of domestic happiness. This view is, of course, a construction of the Victorian period: it could only emerge in parallel with Victorian sanctification of the home. If we look at Thackeray, however, we encounter a writer whose views pre-date this morally censorious attitude. There are heavy drinkers in his novels, characters who, today, would be labelled alcoholics, but in Vanity Fair (1848)³ in particular Thackeray seems almost blissfully unaware that anyone could conceivably have a bad word to say against drink.

Vanity Fair is, in fact, an astonishing drinks manual of the early nineteenth century. After reading it, we would know to serve claret, madeira or champagne, followed by port, at dinner, and that champagne is obligatory on any special occasion. Even when arrested by the bailiffs, it becomes a gentleman to stand a bottle of champagne in the sponging-house (671). But it is not just the men who drink: the elderly Miss Crawley thoroughly enjoys her seven glasses of champagne, followed by cherry-brandy and curaçao (124). We learn that the only acceptable spirit is brandy, that gin is the drink of the low, and rum the resort of the really hardened drinker. Servants who have done well open a public-house (511), and, although the beer they serve is primarily for the servant class, a gentleman will refresh himself with a glass of ale when appropriate. In India, of course, pale ale is very much in order (728). We also learn that, beyond the social conventions, in private there is a lot of additional consumption of spirits of all kinds: the clergyman Bute Crawley and his son James settle down to a bottle of rum (505), old Mr. Sedley drinks gin (579), and, at the end of the novel, Becky Sharp hastily conceals a brandy bottle in her bed (832). Such details amount to far more than a handful of references in the text: in virtually every scene, the characters drink and Thackeray specifies the drinks. In all, there are well over a hundred episodes in the novel where substantial references are made to drink.

What is surprising, however, is that Thackeray's presentation of all this drinking seems entirely free of any air of moral condemnation. Drink is a good way of illustrating the frivolity of

the society in the novel, but drink is never used as a stick with which to beat people. There is a slight jarring note at the beginning, where we are told that Becky's father, when drunk, "used to beat his wife and daughter" and that he died from delirium tremens (16), and subsequently we are told that Sir Pitt Crawley "used to get drunk every night" and "beat his pretty Rose sometimes" (97), but generally people do not suffer as a result of the drinking of others. What is most characteristic in the novel is the light-hearted and amused tone in which Thackeray describes Jos Sedley's excessive drinking at Vauxhall, claiming "That bowl of rack punch was the cause of all this history" (66). This is an author at ease with drink and its consequences, something that is again evident when he refers to Jos singing "in that maudlin high key peculiar to gentlemen in an inebriated state" (66). The world of Vanity Fair is one in which everyone drinks, even the evangelical Christian young Pitt Crawley, although he defends himself on the grounds that it is "incumbent on his station" to entertain, "and every time he got a headache from too long an after-dinner sitting, he felt that he was a martyr to duty" (569). Thackeray's tone, as always, is amused and forgiving.

Indeed, there is only one incident in the book where drinking is presented in an unfavorable light. This is at the ball in Brussels on the eve of Waterloo, where we see George Osborne "laughing loudly and wild with spirits" (358): we are led to feel there is something ungentlemanly about his conduct. But this is the exception. Far more typical is the account of Jos Sedley's progress from Southampton to London on his return to England; en route he stops at various inns for sherry, ale, a bottle of claret, and brandy-and-water: "in fact, when he drove into town, he was as full of wine, beer, meat, pickles, cherry-brandy, and tobacco, as the steward's cabin of a steam-packet" (752). Thackeray's tone says it all: there is not a trace of the standard Victorian moral condemnation of a drinker.

Jos is not, however, the heaviest drinker in the novel. This is the rum-drinking Sir Pitt Crawley, who ends his life,

after more than seventy years of cunning and struggling, and drinking, and scheming, and sin, and selfishness--a whimpering old idiot put in and out of bed and cleaned and fed like a baby. (515)

This is a man destroyed by alcohol, but drink, as we can see, is just one, almost minor factor in Thackeray's list of Sir Pitt's shortcomings. He is a morally degenerate character, and drink is just one aspect of his degeneracy. What we see in the novel, therefore, is something that pre-dates Victorian moral condemnation of alcohol: drink in Vanity Fair has not been transformed into a social or individual problem. On the contrary, a fondness for

drink is a general human weakness, amusing in the case of Jos or elderly ladies who like a glass of wine, but such weakness can slip into degeneracy, as in the case of Sir Pitt. It is a traditional, Christian view of drink as just one reflection of universal human weakness that we can trace back to, say, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Thackeray could not, however, sustain such a relaxed attitude in the next decade, the 1850s. It is significant that the Oxford English Dictionary's first recorded use of the word "alcoholism" is dated 1852: "excessive drinking is becoming defined as a medical and social problem. There is a change in moral attitudes towards drink, as seen in the rise of the temperance movement." And if contemporary reports are to be believed, there was a new sobriety: Kingsley, for example, in 1859, comments on the disappearance of "drunkenness and gambling from the barracks" and "a growing moral earnestness."⁴ The Thackeray novel that offers the most interesting response to such changes in behavior and values is The Newcomes, published in 1855; Thackeray's stance in this novel is defensive. It is as if he recognizes himself as a reactionary making the case for drink. At the same time, however, he yields to the new spirit of the age: there are a great many references to drink in the first half of The Newcomes, but in the second half the references are few and far between.

The defensive note is apparent from the outset: in the first chapter, "A Drinking Chorus," the characters gather for "supper and a song at the 'Cave of Harmony'" (7), an evening's entertainment that Colonel Newcome describes as "innocent pleasure" (11). The evening is marred by Captain Costigan singing a ribald song. The Colonel's exaggerated condemnation of the "shame and degradation and dishonour, drunkenness and whisky may bring a man" (13), makes plain the dangers of excess (unlike Costigan, the other singers in the club stick to brandy-and-water), but the chapter as a whole makes a positive point about drink: drinking together is the civilized expression of hospitality and friendship. We see this again at the Colonel's dinner-party, where he challenges "everybody to drink, in his honest old-fashioned way" (175). It is also evident when, arriving at an inn, the Colonel invites the landlord to join them in a drink (195). Drink is an essential part of the civilized social fabric. And a civilized society can also cope with an excess of drink; when Clive Newcome drinks too much and insults Barnes Newcome, the Colonel takes him to apologize the following morning (180); a well-regulated society has mechanisms for coping with someone who oversteps the mark. Drink, therefore, is seen in a positive light in The Newcomes. But this is always defensive. In Vanity Fair, characters simply drink. In The Newcomes, however, when characters drink Thackeray makes a point through their drinking: responding to Victorian moral condemnation, he makes the moral and social case for drink.

Thackeray knows that the world is changing, that society has

"put its veto upon practices and amusements with which our fathers were familiar" (137). When the Colonel throws out his drinking challenge, Sir Brian Newcome, a banker, refuses to rise to the challenge. Barnes Newcome is also sober in his habits. It is a society where drink has become unfashionable. Thackeray, however, as we might expect, is not totally convinced by this new sobriety. The fashionable chapel of Charles Honeyman is built over Sherrick's wine-vaults, and there is a close business connection between the two (149). Thackeray makes sure that we do not overlook the church's association with and dependency upon the drink trade.

Thackeray's defence of drink is, however, not without problems. We can see this if we consider the two heaviest-drinkers in the novel, Jack Belsize and Fred Bayham. Jack Belsize, for the time being a penniless aristocrat, creates an awkward scene when, drunk on champagne, he encounters the woman he loves, Clara Pulleyn (370-73). Fred Bayham, a nephew of a bishop, is also a gentleman, but from his very first appearance in the novel is clearly drunk (161). And he continues drinking: in the second half of the novel, where references to drink virtually disappear, he is the one character who is always seen with a drink. But it does not seem to affect him: "Mr. Bayham absorbed great quantities of drink; but without any visible effect on that veteran toper" (176). It is as if both Belsize and Bayham can cope with drink because they are gentlemen. When Jack is drunk, the text simply refers to him as having "drunk an immense quantity of champagne" (370), but when Costigan has "procured a glass of whisky-and-water" we see him "settling his face into a horrid grin, and leering" (13). It is as if drink is a problem for the Irish or the poor, but never a problem for a gentleman.

From such details, however, we can deduce that Thackeray, a "veteran toper" himself, is really quite exercised about the implications of the new, disapproving view of drink. Essentially, he is resisting those attitudes that have transformed drink into a problem in society. By falling back on the defence of "the gentleman," he is resisting mid-Victorian moves towards an individualized and psychologized view of character. He does not want to take on board the idea of an individualized character coming to a personal accommodation with society. And so, he reverts to ideas of types, of shared characteristics, of universal human failings. It is an attempt to sustain an old pattern of thinking at a time when people were beginning to think differently. The idea of drink as a serious problem could only begin to develop at a point when people began to think in certain terms about social responsibilities and social deviance. The fascination of Thackeray is that, by resisting such impulses, he helps us see how society reconstituted and restructured itself in the 1850s. We might have to wait until the twentieth century for a sympathetic view of the individual heavy-drinker, but the first step in that direction is taken around 1850 when society begins to see excessive drinking as not just as an extension of a universal human weakness, but as

deviant, abnormal and socially harmful. There is an obvious weakness in The Newcomes' claim that a gentleman is above such problems.

* * * * *

NOTES

1 Two of the eight pictures are reproduced in Pat Rogers, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature (London: Oxford U P, 1987) 344.

2 See Christopher Wood, Victorian Panorama (London: Faber, 1976) 47.

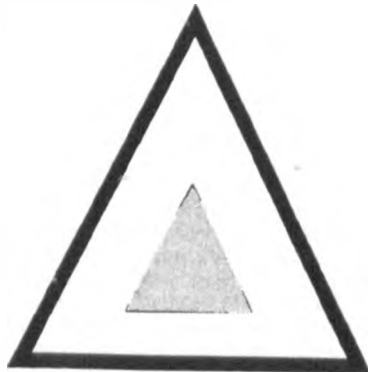
3 All references are to Vanity Fair, vol. 11 of The Oxford Thackeray. 17 vols. (London: Oxford U P, 1908).

4 The first reference to the word in the OED is by Magnus Huss. The second reference, the first real use of the word in English, is by W. Marcet in 1860, who refers to 'The valuable publication on chronic alcoholism by Magnus Huss of Stockholm.' In 1869, the (London) Daily News refers to the death of a person from alcoholism.

5 See Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872 (London: Faber, 1971).

6 See Donald Hawes's Introduction to The History of Henry Esmond (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1991) xvii.

7 All references are to The Newcomes. vol. 14 of The Oxford Thackeray.



Review Article

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Thomas B. Gilmore

Hilary Spurling. Paul Scott: The Life of the Author of The Raj Quartet. New York: Norton, 1991. 438 pp. \$24.95.

I want to make clear at the start that I am not attempting to write a general or comprehensive review here; for this the reader may turn to The New Yorker (May 13, 1991) or doubtless other journals. Instead, I shall attempt to keep the special reader of Dionysos in mind, the reader already well informed about alcoholism who is particularly interested in how this affects a writer's life and in what it does to his work. Judged by these questions, Hilary Spurling's biography achieves mixed success in addressing the first one and largely fails to address the second. While readers of The New Yorker type may be inclined to complain that I have too drastically narrowed the focus and am unfairly neglecting many aspects of the biography, I assume that most readers of this journal will share with me a paramount interest in the questions indicated above and will be disappointed at the fitfulness with which Spurling explores them.

On a positive note, I should state that Spurling possesses two great virtues that are, surprisingly, not possessed by every biographer of alcoholic writers: she knows what alcoholism is, and she makes few deliberate attempts to evade or minimize it in the life of her subject. Rather, the trouble arises when Spurling, anxious to examine the many facets of Scott's life and art, fails to give his alcoholism the importance and space that I think it deserves. Other shortcomings of Spurling in treating her subject's alcoholism seem to spring not from ignorance or denial but from inadvertence, slips of a kind that any biographer could make who occasionally loses sight of the importance of alcoholism in the hurry of other concerns or lapses into unexamined, conventional thinking about it. Spurling does commit a rather large number of these slips, and some of the more important will be mentioned here.

A more serious weakness of the biography as a study of alcoholism is Spurling's unimaginative adherence to chronological order. Most chapters being long and multiple in focus, I often began to wonder whether some of them would mention Scott's alcoholism at all. Usually they did, but sometimes in a cursory way; and since even the more detailed comments tend to be scattered and piecemeal, one never has the sense of Scott's alcoholism as continuous and growing. Indeed, sometimes it is neglected for so many pages that Spurling herself seems a little surprised, even annoyed, to have to confront it once again. Had she set aside one substantial chapter to discuss only Scott's alcoholism, its development and its effects on him, his family, and his writing,

the result would have been much more satisfactory and in addition, I think, would have forced Spurling to take it more seriously and to avoid the cliché thinking she sometimes falls into.

If Spurling's handling of Scott's alcoholism is less than satisfactory through most of her biography, near the end she quite fully surveys its damage. To read of this is as poignant and nearly unbearable as Samuel Johnson found the ending of King Lear to be. In fact, the situation has both resemblances to and differences from the ending of Lear. Scott's two daughters, each an admirable Cordelia, forgive their father and live on. So does his wife, who reunites with him. The tragedy is that, dying of a combination of colonic cancer and alcohol-induced cirrhosis of the liver, Scott enjoys only briefly the felicity that alcoholism and relentless work habits had for many years deprived him of.

But although the closing pages contain a sustained look at the damage wrought by Scott's alcoholism, they also reveal one of Spurling's most signal failures. Long before reaching these pages, I had been wondering how or to what extent Scott's drinking affected his writing. Since at one point in his career Scott had an active social life and frequently got drunk in pubs or at friends' homes, I assumed, from lack of contrary information and because of his prodigious literary productivity, that he was able to separate his drinking from his writing. An authorial comment about Scott's "working pattern, laid down in the early 1960s," of "drinking in his study sometimes all day" (245-46) is not only brief and a little ambiguous (did Scott sometimes drink all day in his study but work there on different days?) but seems to be canceled by Spurling's account of the remarkable metamorphosis in Scott when he was cured, in 1964, of a chronic illness called amoebiasis. The effect of the cure of this disease, she writes, "is immediate, sensational and lasting"--and so it was, she implies, with Paul. He personally "felt transformed, rejuvenated, twenty years younger" (310). His writing is not less changed. Beginning with The Jewel in the Crown, a style that had been "weak, bland, pallid, derivative and defensively clenched becomes robust, lucid and open with a strongly individual flavour," Scott's "indefinable debilitating self-indulgent invalid sensibility" now gone (311). Overwhelmed by this stampede of adjectives, we may be tempted to conclude that the cure of Paul's amoebiasis swept away all his other problems, including alcoholism. Not until page 383, of 413 pages of text, do we learn irrevocably that Scott drank constantly while working on The Raj Quartet (not a title but the name of four interrelated novels about India: The Jewel in the Crown, The Day of the Scorpion, The Towers of Silence, and A Division of the Spoils, 1966-75). His routine consisted of polishing off a glass of "whisky or vodka" before starting to work each morning and most of a bottle by midday. In one of her relatively few bits of fudging or evasion, Spurling says that Scott "had used alcohol functionally, almost medicinally, as an essential fuel." Maybe so, in the well-known sense that some alcoholics

need it as an eye-opener, to get going in the morning. But she fails to note how extraordinary it is that *The Raj Quartet* is apparently the only extended masterpiece to have been written by an author in something like a state of continuous intoxication. And her lavish praise of the work even more completely fails to ask any questions about how Scott's steady besottedness affected its literary quality. Although many modern writers have been heavy or alcoholic drinkers, they and many commentators on the subject have reached virtually unanimous agreement that drinking and good writing don't mix. Is *The Raj Quartet*, then, the practically unique exception? Perhaps Spurling would agree with Kennedy Fraser's review in *The New Yorker*. Though finding "some prolixity in the style" of the last part of *A Division of the Spoils*, "as if the author were writing with a hangover, against the odds," Fraser otherwise thinks that the gin Scott drank while writing *The Raj Quartet* "had burned right off his prose in an etherized moment that was, for him as a writer, a kind of grace." If so, and since Scott was steadily drunk or hung over throughout the writing of the four novels, one must wonder why the "grace" began wearing off in the last one--or whether, indeed, Kennedy's talk of this quality makes any sense.

The choice is clear but not easy. One can believe, with Spurling, Fraser, and perhaps a number of Scott admirers, that *The Raj Quartet* is a masterpiece in spite of or maybe even because of its being written under the influence of alcohol. Or one can believe a virtually unanimous contrary chorus on the ills of mixing writing and drink, a chorus recently represented by Kingsley Amis, a writer who knows something about drinking, in an all too brief but nevertheless disturbing remark in his *Memoirs* (1991): "Paul Scott's Indian novels have been much praised, and with some reason, but here and there you can see the prose going to pieces as the stuff came pouring into him, then pulling itself together with a jerk as he started again when sober" (164)--that is, when Scott was in the relative but hardly complete sobriety following that first drink of the day. This spasmodic unevenness of style is remote from the distilled purity Fraser found. But given the formidable length of *The Raj Quartet*, and the warning flag raised by Amis, I am inclined to add the work to my list of permanently unread masterpieces.

Spurling's book suffers from occasional confusion about alcoholism, a confusion sometimes grounded in conventional ideas on the subject and sometimes understandable considering, as Fraser points out, the subtle disguises alcoholism often wears. Since the two illnesses have quite a few similar symptoms, I read much of the biography thinking that Scott's amoebiasis, a mysterious malady which he contracted while in India during World War II and to which his biographer devotes substantial attention, was a fiction invented by Scott to conceal his alcoholism from himself, much as F. Scott Fitzgerald's periodic fears of tuberculosis concealed from him the more mundane consequences of an addiction to cigars. The

amoebiasis, unlike Fitzgerald's consumption, was real, and was eventually cured but I still think Spurling attributes to this some symptoms just as credibly assigned to Scott's alcoholism.

A second confusion involves cause and effect: early in his army career Scott was caught in homosexual practices and threatened with exposure; as a result, Spurling would apparently have us believe, he launched a ten-day spree which is the first visible evidence of his incipient alcoholism. But George Vaillant's Natural History of Alcoholism (1983) has decisively demonstrated, contrary to received popular and scientific opinion, that alcoholism is not caused by prior neurosis, psychosis, or deviance; rather, it may aggravate these. More likely, as Kennedy Fraser points out, long before the homosexuality crisis Scott had learned how to dull pain with alcohol. And he had learned to, on Spurling's own evidence (30), by drinking at home as early as age six whatever the family was drinking, whiskey, port, gin, wine, though his drinks were diluted. That drinking was serious and important in the family is also indicated when Paul's father, as part of a celebration, buys him his first public beer at age 16. While this kind of familial attitude cannot be seen as a sufficient cause of alcoholism, it can certainly provide fertile soil for it.

Throughout the first half of the biography Spurling rarely mentions Scott's drinking; she attaches no particular significance to his occasional sprees, though evidence later in the biography allows us to infer that they were more than occasional. Indeed, even a relatively few sprees are more enlightening than Spurling seems to realize. A good friend of mine, for many years now a sober alcoholic, came to recognize in reviewing his life that one of its most ominous episodes was a bender he went on just before being inducted into the army. Instead of seeing it then, as he did later, as a milestone in the progression of his alcoholism, he could remember thinking of it at the time, "This is exhilarating; I wish I could live my whole life this way." For all we can tell until p. 215, or until Scott is 38, this is pretty much the deluded way in which Spurling views her subject's drinking, as youthful sallies of high spirits.

Therefore this page, the first extended look at his drinking, comes as a surprise; it may take us a few moments to realize that Scott's alcoholism did not suddenly and mysteriously happen but had a history that Spurling is only now revealing pieces of. She seems at first uneasy about it and willing to disguise it a little if she can: as medicinal (Paul drinks to escape depressions), as convivial and congenial (one of his friends, a publisher, is "a good gin man"), even as inspirational, a source of "fantastic spiralling flights of invention." But after a little more backing and filling ("Paul was never a public or disorderly drunk," as if to imply that there is a desirable kind; "he disliked pubs," though Spurling elsewhere shows that he did not; "some of his closest friends to the end of his life scarcely suspected that he drank at all"), the

ugly reality begins to emerge. Spurling acknowledges that her subject--though still only occasionally, however often that may mean--"would come home at odd hours without . . . apparently even knowing where he had been" or would pass "out fully clothed on the floor."

At least for some readers, the shock will increase when they learn how his wife, Penny, treated him on these occasions: "waiting up for him, propping him on pillows if he passed out, covering him with blankets, loosening his clothes, leaving a lamp lit in case he woke, lying sleepless beside him sometimes for hours to monitor his breathing"--above all never uttering a word of criticism about his drinking or for that matter anything else. While from one viewpoint she is a model of old-fashioned wifely devotion, protectiveness, and sacrifice, in another sense she is just what, according to Al-Anon, the spouse of an alcoholic should not be, one who enables him to continue drinking. If she helped to preserve the artist, she almost certainly helped to destroy the man.

Gradually the reader becomes aware of Scott's dramatic changes of personality when drunk; though Spurling calls no particular attention to them and may indeed select only a few among many to include in her biography, the student of alcoholism will recognize them as part of the Jekyll-to-Hyde transformation characteristic of the alcoholic. In a rage of self-disgust during a drunken blackout, Scott slashes the throat of a portrait of himself (227-28); on another occasion he smashes a telephone(241). Though evidently Paul never hurt his wife physically, it is no wonder that Penny prepared for her departure to a shelter for battered women years before she actually left him. More and more there is only silence between them, or he trains on her a prolonged sneer of steely, implacable hatred, projected self-hatred (though she could scarcely have appreciated that distinction). Yet at least on into the early 1960s, Scott sometimes maintains his Jekyll facade at parties: "his intrinsically elegant wit, buoyancy and panache . . . the magnetic quality of his attention, his brilliance" (251).

In 1963 Scott published a novel, The Bender, based on an incident from one of his own drunks. Spurling suggests that he steered clear of other attempts at the "small-scale, domestic and urban novel" because the field was already crowded with "more successful contemporaries like John Brane, Kingsley Amis, Angus Wilson and C. P. Snow" (247). Thus she hints that Scott was instinctively holding his powers in reserve for his authorial destiny, the epic Raj Quartet. But a simpler and less flattering reason, though unmentioned, is readily apparent. Dealing honestly with his own alcoholism may have been too painful for Scott, as it sometimes was for F. Scott Fitzgerald. In fact, one of Scott's best friends, Chris Almedingen, thought "there was a fundamental dishonesty in The Bender's portrait" of the alcoholic as a "lovable drunken rogue." "Paul tried to see himself--to look in the mirror," Almedingen said, "but he didn't have the courage"

(260). Typically of the alcoholic who cannot tolerate detection of his dishonesty about his drinking, Paul could not forgive her (261). He even tried to write a sequel to The Bender. The Careerist, in which the alcoholic Guy Spruce acquires a "sexy, scruffy, long-haired, half-Indian girlfriend" who loves gin (262). It is perhaps the fantasy of most male alcoholics to have a woman who will match his drinking with gusto and without disapproval; but Paul's honesty, sometimes asserting itself as did Fitzgerald's, may have prevented the completion of this novel.

One of the more piquant mysteries surrounding Scott's drinking involves what happens to it during his visit to the primitive village of Narayan Dass, his sergeant in India during World War II, when Scott makes a return visit to that country in 1964. He entertains high hopes that the visit will generate real friendship between him and Dass, replacing the stiff, formal, if affectionate military relationship of the war years. What happens instead is rather more like a nightmare of squalor and mutual incomprehension. As the first white man they have seen, Scott is simply stared at by the villagers; he contracts dysentery and is mortified at having to shit in an open field without toilet paper, though later he uses an unsanitary and scarcely more desirable enclosed latrine. Except for slow and unreliable mail to and from the outside world, he feels totally cut off and develops "paranoid delusions," a "fear of dying and being buried or burned" in the remote village (288).

Although suffering physically, Scott seems to experience even greater psychological torments, which bear some resemblance to alcoholic hallucinations. Did Scott's drinking produce these? Spurling teases us with hints of this possibility but never confirms it, seeming content with vivid descriptions of a nightmare adventure without probing to ultimate causes. The visit to Dass is a curious hole in the doughnut. Before making it, Paul looks forward, in predictably alcoholic fashion, to drinking Dass's homemade palm toddy (whiskey) (281). While in Madras, and in spite of Indian prohibition, Paul buys a bottle of gin in a British department store, planning to eke it out with the "illegal and highly intoxicating home-made palm toddy" (283). About Paul's drinking while he is with Dass we hear nothing. When Spurling next mentions the subject, Scott has left the village by train; he is nearing Hyderabad and draining "the last drops of Dass's crude jungle toddy" (291). What does this mean? It might mean that Scott launched a bender at Dass's, a bender that seems to continue when, arriving in Hyderabad, he heads straight for the Ritz Palace bar, drinks beer, and drinks still more beer while showering in his room. Is he tapering off from the hard stuff? Again, Spurling is of no help. In a general-interest magazine, my complaints might seem picky; but since Spurling has by now established that her subject is an alcoholic, and since he has just undergone a series of terrifying, quasi-hallucinatory experiences in a remote Indian village, her failure to explore a possible chain of cause and effect is difficult to comprehend.

A more pervasive problem than this mystery is the sporadic or episodic attention that Spurling gives to Scott's drinking. She goes from 1964 to 1968 virtually without mentioning it, then again from 1968 to 1971, such long intervals perhaps suggesting that Scott has overcome his drinking problem or that it troubles him only once every several years. While he was teaching at a writers' summer school in 1965, Spurling notes in passing that Scott often consumed a "terrifying amount of neat spirits . . . to nerve himself for a" lecture (317). But this observation, combined with the fact that it is about three years before Spurling refers again to Paul's drinking, may seem to imply that a problem exists only on rare and stressful public occasions.

If one is thus lulled, he is likely to be rudely surprised by the relatively few passages in which Spurling really focuses on the drinking. One of these describes the writer as being so drunk and noisy at a friend's house that the friend coldcocks him; when Scott revives, they both set out for Oxford (324). Though Spurling doesn't say so, it was probably to do more drinking. What she says instead is exceedingly strange, at least to this American reader: with no elaboration, she calls the journey to Oxford a "famous occasion."

The same passage confirms the opinion of the reviewer for The New Yorker, Kennedy Fraser, that Spurling failed to understand that alcohol destroyed the Scotts' marriage. In my view, Penny was so loyal and loving that she would have tolerated forever her husband's long working hours and even to a large extent the coldness and silence he amply meted out to her if he had not added to these what can only be called abuse. Sometimes this is obvious: Paul developed the habit, when drunk, of terrifying his wife by driving straight at a tree, then swerving to avoid it at the last moment. Sometimes it isn't obvious to Spurling, as when she describes his dancing with other women while drunk (he seemed to gain both public charm and physical coordination in this condition) as a kind of innocent hobby (325). Penny, however, could scarcely have failed to remember that Paul's courtship consisted largely of dancing with her.

Even near the end of the biography, Spurling persists in missing the major cause of marital failure when she attributes it, quoting T. S. Eliot, to Scott's "intolerable wrestle/ With words and meanings" (401). But it was Eliot's "wrestle" with the hostility and insanity of his first wife, not with words, that ended his marriage; and Scott's destructive drinking ended his.

As three more years, 1968-71, pass in the biography, the reader may again be deceived by an account such as the one of a happy family vacation in 1971, Paul's first in ten years: "This radiant week in spring seemed like a fresh start . . ." (348). It wasn't. Only two pages later we are being told that "loss of control became once again a danger for Paul, who was drinking

heavily, generally a bottle of spirits a day or more throughout this period" (350). That last phrase is puzzling: which period? Spurling probably means, not that Scott drank only periodically or occasionally, but that he was consuming a bottle per day more or less continually since the last "period" of his drinking that she has described. This confusion or uncertainty shows how badly the scattered, piecemeal looks at Scott's alcoholism serve a coherent, intelligible grasp of it.

I do not wish to end the review too negatively. In my limited reading experience, Spurling's is better than most biographies of alcoholic writers. She knows what alcoholism is, knows that her subject is alcoholic, and makes few deliberate attempts that I could see to soften, evade, or hide his condition. Her lack of sustained focus on it, which sometimes seems to diminish its gravity, could have been corrected by better organization: a chapter devoted exclusively to it, tracing its entire history and effects. If Spurling can be charged with ignorance, it is not of alcoholism itself but of its importance as a primary source of manifold consequences, all of them harmful or destructive. Spurling sees it as a problem, but only one of several with roughly equal weight: Scott's amoebiasis, his repressed homosexuality, his repressed emotional life, his unremitting ambition and work habits driven by a terror of failure. Thus Spurling's biography, in spite of its many virtues, does not meet the call of the editor of this journal, Roger Forseth, for biographies of alcoholic writers that do complete justice to the importance of their illness and trace all of its ramifications.

I doubt that I can ever bring myself to read *The Raj Quartet*, not only for reasons already mentioned--because of its length and Kingsley Amis's observation on how Scott's drunkenness marred its style--but for a more important reason. It is not always recognized that alcoholics, though enslaved by an addiction, can and do make significant choices; and though Scott was by no means unique among modern writers in making the most significant choice of his life, he was perhaps singularly deliberate and unswerving in deciding to sacrifice his life to the god of art, using alcohol to light the pyre and keep it aflame. Being unwilling to endow art with divinity, I am appalled by such martyrdom; and if I read *The Raj Quartet*, I fear I would be constantly troubled by the stench of burning flesh.

Review Article

D. H. LAWRENCE'S ALCOHOLIC FAMILY

Frank Morral

Jeffrey Meyers. D. H. Lawrence: A Biography. New York: Knopf, 1990. 485 pp. \$24.95.

John Worthen. D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years: 1885-1912. Cambridge: Cambridge, 1991. 626 pp. \$35.00.

Reading D. H. Lawrence, or writing about him, means entering intimately into the relational rules of his world. As Diana Trilling wrote fifty years ago, "to make even a superficial acquaintance with a Lawrence book is to be immediately in an extraordinarily close connection with its author--to be, indeed, in all the intimacy of a familial relationship with him".¹ Entering into any troubled family system, whether alcoholic, violent, or incestuous (and Lawrence's was all three), is treacherous. To enter without understanding the intellectual and emotional defenses people deploy in order to survive in such a world is to risk becoming part of the family's pathology, to be as enmeshed in its web of rationalizations, blame, scapegoating, and enabling as the family members themselves and their friends are likely to be.

Such enmeshment is visible in the very different biographies on Lawrence written by John Worthen and Jeffrey Meyers.

Worthen's, by light years the better book, is the first of the three-volume Cambridge Biography of Lawrence. In a little more than five hundred meticulous and warmly written pages, he covers Lawrence's first twenty seven years, from his early life in Eastwood, a small mining town eight miles from Nottingham, to his running off with Frieda Weekley to Europe in the spring of 1912 and his subsequent completion of his first great book, Sons and Lovers.²

Meyers, writing a complete life, covers the same period in about a hundred gossipy, generally uncritical pages. For Lawrence's early life, he draws heavily on Lawrence's autobiographical essays from the 1920s, written when Lawrence was creating a new set of myths about the family he had grown up in. Worthen is aware of Lawrence's rewriting his past during this period, and of the care needed in evaluating that material. Throughout, he is careful with evidence, Meyers less so. To give one example, Meyers writes of a conversation which supposedly took place in 1910 between Lawrence and his childhood friend, Jessie Chambers, after their relationship had become sexual:

But sexual relations divided the lovers instead of bringing them together. In the fall of 1910 Lydia [Lawrence's mother], unaware of their intimacy, forced the issue by insisting that Lawrence was compromising Jessie. He then told her: "I've looked into my heart and I cannot find I love you as a husband should love his wife. . . ." (48-49)

But this critical moment in Lawrence's life and in his relationship with Jessie did not take place "in the fall," but on the day after Easter Sunday, and not in 1910 but in 1906, and not after they had become sexual, but four years before when they had not so much as kissed. Meyer's book races along with headlong exuberance, not worrying overly about facts, the reliability of sources, or the self-consistency of the author's many summarizing generalizations.

As biography, the Meyers and Worthen books inhabit different worlds of accomplishment. Worthen's is a significant achievement: the most complete, most coherent, most thoughtful, and best written examination of Lawrence's early life yet written. It is full of new material, new evidence, new insights. The book is, it seems to me, wonderfully sensitive to Lawrence's experience in every dimension except one: but that one is critical. Like Meyers, and ninety-nine percent of the Lawrence academic industry, Worthen is unable to see the alcoholism at the center of Lawrence's early life, let alone how that experience impacts on his life and work.

American and English cultures provide a diverse assortment of means for not seeing "the elephant in the living room"--the alcoholism right in the middle of the scene. Once alcoholic behavior is minimized, denied, or otherwise shuffled out of awareness, what is left demands some clear and identifiable cause to explain the bizarre ways the non-drinkers in the scenario are behaving, particularly toward the drinker. To the biographer or critic who does not see alcoholism where it exists, or does not believe problems arising from alcoholic acting out should have long-lasting consequences, the reaction of the wife and children to someone the family sees as having a drinking problem is likely to seem disproportionate and mean. To such an observer, it will seem something is wrong with them, not with the drinker. In a spirit of fairness, often accompanied by personal and cultural beliefs about alcohol's life-enhancing qualities, a case will be put forth showing why neither drinking nor the drinker is responsible for the family's unhappiness. This can be done by 1) combing the evidence for proofs that drinking was not, as the family believes, the real problem at all, and 2) finding someone or something else to blame.

Alcoholic family systems tend to be systems of blame. Someone must be right, someone wrong. The more confusing the situation, the greater the need to find explanations and causes for what is creating so much pain. The search for such ultimate causes occurs

frequently in Lawrence criticism. Basing itself, as it must, on Lawrence's art and world, it could hardly avoid entering into the idealizing and scapegoating patterns that participants in alcoholic families use to protect themselves.

Usually, as in Lawrence's family, evidence can be drawn to support either side of a good/bad, innocent/guilty polarity. When Lawrence was young, his family and the community saw his mother as the good parent, the saint, the martyr, the responsible one. His father was the irresponsible one, the drinker, the angry, threatening figure who could be easily scapegoated. After his mother died and the family broke up, a reversal took place. Just as Lydia Lawrence seems to have romanticized her father as she grew farther away from his domination and abuse, so did Lawrence and his siblings come to soften their picture of the father they had lived with growing up. As adult children of alcoholics often do, they shifted the blame from their father to their mother. She was not just responsible, she was over-responsible and controlling. If her husband caused problems, she provoked it in him with her nagging. She is to blame for what went wrong in the family and the marriage. Her husband is her victim. And critics and biographers would add, so is her son.

Writers on Lawrence become active participants in the family's theater of blame. But in order to fully blame Lawrence's mother for the pathology of the family, it is first necessary to excuse, deny, rationalize, or minimize the father's drinking. This Meyers and Worthen do in typical ways.

For his part, Meyers acknowledges that "the fiercest point of contention" between Lawrence's parents was drink. As he sees it, however, the problem was not in Arthur Lawrence's drinking but in his wife's attitude towards it: "Lydia, a teetotaler, had persuaded Arthur to take the pledge when they married. When he broke his promise, she ruined their life with moral frenzy against John Barleycorn" (17). The evidence Meyer gives for this is a single quote from Lawrence's sister Ada, writing over twenty years later, who described how her mother "would wait up for him, at night, her rage seething, until on his arrival it boiled over into a torrent of biting truths which turned him from his slightly fuddled and pleasantly apologetic mood into a brutal and coarse beast" (17). Drink makes him "pleasantly apologetic," his wife's anger a violent beast. In this line of argument, the problem is not in Arthur or his drinking but in his wife's irrational response to it.

Was drink a problem at all, except in his teetotaling wife's imagination? Meyers suggests no, quoting George Neville, "Lawrence's closest childhood friend," who "insisted that Arthur 'was no drunken reprobate'" (17-18). Drinkers, however, may not be the best judges of who does or does not have a drinking problem. Carl Baron, the editor of Neville's memoir, says that by "general agreement among members of his family" he was "a regular drinker,

visiting his local pub every night." He also seems to have had "a tendency to violence."³ Testimony from such a source, about a man with similar inclinations, is unconvincing.

Meyers continues his remarks about Arthur's drinking by arguing that what he did was perfectly natural, given he was not welcome in his home: "Since Arthur was virtually driven from his own house, he naturally fled to the pubs and drank with his friends." He is really the victim who ends up doing the natural, social thing, when forced to flee to the pub. Did he get drunk? "He occasionally got drunk, but never drank on Sundays or missed work, and was certainly not a habitual drunkard" (18). This is a good example of Meyers' summarizing statements. While acknowledging some excessive drinking ("he occasionally got drunk"), the passage normalizes and minimizes the problem. That Arthur never drank on Sundays is an unattributed reference to a remark about her father by another of Lawrence's sisters, Emily King, in a 1955 BBC interview.

You see, miners . . . used to go to the [pub?], and there was one quite close to where we lived. And they used to go for an evening's enjoyment, you see. And it was really only Friday or Saturday evening that [Father] really took more than he ought to. Through the week he didn't. He was never drunk on Sunday, never."⁴

This comment, with its obvious effort to downplay Arthur's drinking, is scarcely proof that he was only "occasionally drunk" (just once or twice a week?). Moreover, the special emphasis on never being drunk on Sunday would seem to disqualify the claim that he never drank more than he ought during the week.

Meyers lays the issue to rest, to his own satisfaction, by declaring that though Arthur "was sometimes drunk and occasionally violent, he was faithful to his wife, worked hard and held a steady job" (17). So far as he can see, that should be enough for anyone. No sense here of what drunkenness or violence does to relationships, no sense of what Lawrence's mother dealt with day by day in the ten years of her marriage before the novelist was born or in the thirty-five years she lived with Arthur Lawrence and his drinking before her death.

John Worthen believes it not "right to lay particular stress on [Arthur's] drinking." The reasons he gives are a short catalog of the cultural ways drinking is denied as a problem: 1) everybody does it, so it must be all right ("Nearly all colliers drank, and Arthur Lawrence apparently drank no more than the rest"); 2) mining is hot dusty work, and it was "routine" to stop at the pub and replenish lost liquids (an argument almost from necessity, if it wasn't also known that some miners did not drink alcohol); and 3)

"The crucial point was whether they missed work because of their drinking" (21). Since Arthur usually did not, it must follow that he could have no drinking problem. No one knowledgeable about alcoholism would find these arguments compelling. Most alcoholics see themselves doing what everyone else does; many find justification for needing to drink in the nature of their jobs; and not missing work is one of the commonest justifications for denying a problem that is otherwise flagrant.

In Worthen's view, Arthur is defined by his deep connection with the community in which he lives: rather than emphasize his drinking, "it would be better to stress that Arthur Lawrence belonged to the place where he was born and lived, and found his amusement there; and that he resented attempts to make him different from the men he worked alongside, went to the pubs with and drank with" (21). His connection with the community is contrasted with Lydia Lawrence's supposed feelings of superiority to her husband's community and way of life. Again, her response is seen as irrational, based on a mythologizing of her own family of origin as superior to her husband's. In teaching her children about her family, she presumably teaches them to look down on their father. She is seen as a moral absolutist who

became sterner as she got older, and forgot her original reaction to her husband's charm and good humour, the extrovert recklessness, the warmth and tall-story telling of 1874. A few years later, she saw such things as frivolity and lies. Lydia Lawrence--again, like her father--seems to have spent much of her life ignoring her partner, and a lot of the rest of it blaming him, while never admitting that she had married him because he had been able to rescue her from her home, and because she had been charmed by him. (18)

She is seen as having "turned the children away from the father" (19). Their hatred has nothing to do with what he did. Once again, as with Meyers, he is the victim, she is the perpetrator.

Neither Worthen nor Meyers seems aware of the dynamics of an alcoholic family--of the confusion, terror, despair, shame, and disgust that intoxication eventually breeds in family members who must deal with it. They convey no sense of what violence does to trust. What they see clearly is the fault of the mother: her sense of class difference, her desire that her children be educated, her taking her sons as emotional substitutes for her husband. This is what in Lawrence criticism is seen as the originating crime--the crime of the "oedipal mother" who will not let her son go, either to join with the fully alive, fully functioning father, or to love another woman. But there is no sense of how living with alcoholic behavior and threatened violence creates the conditions for such a dynamic, and how ignoring their effects limits the relational

complexities both of Lawrence's family and his art.

In *Emma*, Jane Austen has her heroine observe that "nobody who has not been in the interior of a family can say what the difficulties of any individual of that family may be." Taking the problem created by alcoholic behavior as central to Lawrence's family's experience, and seeing where that leads, is the best entrée we have into the interior of Lawrence's family.

We know that by the time Lawrence was born in 1885, the problems between his parents were chronic and, so far as Lydia was concerned, defined in terms of her husband's drinking and its bearing on what she saw as other areas of irresponsibility, especially his spending money on himself. D. H. Lawrence was a member of the Band of Hope, a temperance organization for youth, through most of his childhood. All contemporary evidence indicates that he believed his father had a drinking problem that brought shame on his family and that his father's behavior was to blame for his family's discord. Having grown up in such a family, he described himself as an expert on behavior related to drink. On December 23, 1910, writing to his fiancée Louie Burrows, he suggested that he could, "through long experience . . . tell to a shade how far gone in drink is any man I know at all." A few days later, apparently responding to her concern about his drinking, he admitted that when he had "the horrors--the ashy sort--I drink a little--to mend the fire of my faith and hope, you see: I can't stand cold ashes of horrors. But, Good Lord, I don't drink. Think of the paternal example" (218).

Such direct comments could be multiplied, but it is really only necessary to look at his writing to see how central being in a family engaged in a relational dance around drinking was to his imagination. His early autobiographical writings, especially the self-declared "autobiographical novel" *Sons and Lovers*, the short story "Odour of Chrysanthemums," which he described in a letter as "a story full of my childhood's atmosphere," the plays "A Collier's Friday Night" and "The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd," as well as his first novel, *The White Peacock*, all include at their centers fathers and/or husbands, directly or indirectly based on Lawrence's own father. These figures (and their wives and children) exhibit intense preoccupation with alcohol. All of the men are described as different when drinking than when not. Drinking creates personality changes in them. Some are shown in blackouts, some are reported to have had d.t.s., all are portrayed as angry and blaming towards their wives. They bring home with them from their pubs an aura of threatened violence. Their wives, in turn, are depressed, despairing, cut-off, critical of their husbands and their husbands' drinking, worried about money, angry, and frustrated. They are respectable, responsible, and want something better for themselves and their children. For their part, the children are often depicted as silent, traumatized observers of the family drama. Perhaps nowhere in literature is the child's terror and fear in an

alcoholic family better portrayed than in Sons and Lovers.

The children played in the street, on the brim of the wide, dark valley, until eight o'clock. Then they went to bed. Their mother sat sewing below. Having such a great space in front of the house gave the children a feeling of night, of vastness, and of terror. This terror came in from the shrieking of the tree and the anguish of the home discord. Often Paul would wake up, after he had been asleep a long time, aware of thuds downstairs. Instantly he was wide awake. Then he heard the booming shouts of his father, come home nearly drunk, then the sharp replies of his mother, then the bang, bang of his father's fist on the table, and the nasty snarling shout as the man's voice got higher. And then the whole was drowned in a piercing medley of shrieks and cries from the great, wind-swept ash-tree. The children lay silent in suspense, waiting for a lull in the wind to hear what their father was doing. He might hit their mother again. There was a feeling of horror, a kind of bristling in the darkness, and a sense of blood. They lay with their hearts in the grip of an intense anguish. The wind came through the tree fiercer and fiercer. All the chords of the great harp hummed, whistled, and shrieked. And then came the horror of the sudden silence, silence everywhere, outside and downstairs. What was it? Was it a silence of blood? What had he done? (98-99)

In a private conversation, John Worthen suggested to me that perhaps Lawrence took his knowledge of alcoholism and violence from knowing the family of his father's younger brother Walter, who, on March 18, 1900, threw a carving steel at his 15 year old son, killing him. Lawrence does use this incident in one of the early versions of Sons and Lovers and borrows his uncle's name for the father in his book. But there is no indication that Lawrence was close to any member of his uncle Walter's family, let alone really intimate with its inner workings. Neither this uncle nor his wife nor any of their numerous children is mentioned by him by name in any written record I am aware of, either while he is growing up or afterwards. Even if he knew them well, he is unlikely to have achieved the deep, almost obsessive awareness of life lived in the chaos of alcoholic relationships by simply observing from the outside. The knowledge his fiction displays is intimate, unmediated, and experiential. Nowhere do his portrayals of family dynamics in response to drinking take on the propagandistic qualities one might suspect derived from Band of Hope literature, nor do they betray signs of being taught him in some baseless, lying way by his mother. He lived what he wrote about, if not in the particular details of every story, in the spirit of the experience that he invokes over and over again within his early plays, poetry, short stories, and novels.

A fine writer about family process and relationships, Lawrence has the split-awareness often developed in children from alcoholic families of hating the overt, destructive behavior of a parent and yet responding to his unexpressed feelings. Such children are caught in the middle, both loving and hating the parent and feeling guilty either way. The father in Lawrence's life and in his works, to whom critics and biographers usually respond so positively, would exhibit bewilderingly inconsistent behavior to anyone living with him. On the one hand, he is angry, hostile, unpredictable and explosive, the kind of person who has "whole periods, months, almost years, of friction and nasty temper," as Walter Morel does in Sons and Lovers (102). This person the family is traumatized by and continues to fear and resent, even when he is not threatening them. Then there is the person, like Walter Morel again, who "had a warm way of telling a story" (104), loves to sing and make things with his hands, seems to want at times to be tender and included. This one critics and biographers, picking up unexpressed pain (as family members will also do), bond to and protect from his wife.

In the interactional dynamics of the blame system, if the father is seen in a positive light, the mother will be seen in a negative one. She will appear to be possessive, controlling, rigid, repressive, the oedipal mother who devours her children and destroys her husband. In Lydia Lawrence's case, she will be found to have no reason for what she does but an idiotic, ungrounded sense of social superiority. But there is considerable evidence that Lydia Lawrence was more than that one-sided picture suggests. Some of it is recoverable in the sensitive portrayal of wives and mothers who derive from her in Lawrence's fiction and plays. Some of it can be found in Lawrence's descriptions of her in his letters and poetry. Even Jessie Chambers, who had excellent reasons for disliking her, describes Lydia Lawrence as "vivid in speech, gay and amusing; and in spite of a keen edge to her tongue . . . warmhearted." This side of her is almost entirely absent from the Worthen and Meyers biographies.

Lawrence adored his mother. He was also, as sons in alcoholic families often are, destructively enmeshed with her. From the time of her death, at least, he was aware that their relationship had been wrong: "We have loved each other, almost with a husband and wife love, as well as a filial and maternal. . . . We have been like one, so sensitive to each other that we never needed words. It has been rather terrible, and has made me, in some respects, abnormal." "Nobody," he goes on to write in the same letter, written a week before his mother's death, "can have the soul of me. My mother has had it, and nobody can have it again. Nobody can come into my very self again, and breathe me like an atmosphere." A month later he is describing his father as having gotten "drunk or tipsy" several times during the week and being "disgusting, irritating, and selfish as a maggot" (220).

In these descriptions of his mother and his father speaks the

adult child of an alcoholic family.

This child is everywhere in Lawrence. One aspect of it is in the way he stays loyal to his parents' story throughout his life as a writer. In a sense he never stops telling the story that his mother told to him: of a young woman desperately desiring a life more free and open than the one she knows, who falls in love with a man who seems more natural, more alive than she thinks she is. She is a lady, he is a coal miner, a gamekeeper, a Gypsy, an Italian, a passionately intellectual, lower class novelist with ideas of a sexual revolution and new ways of being between men and women dancing in his head. Lydia Lawrence was the first inhabitant of this story. She was the first one to tell it. He took her story and told it to the world, trying as he did so to find some way to give it a new ending, a way for such a man and such a woman to find fulfillment in one another. For her it was a disaster. The child (and the author) ask, "Why?"

The biographers answer: "It wasn't because he drank!"

* * * * *

NOTES

- 1 Diana Trilling, "Editor's Introduction, The Portable D. H. Lawrence (New York: Viking, 1947) 12-13.
- 2 D. H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers. 1913 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).
- 3 G. H. Neville, A Memoir of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1981) 7.
- 4 Edward Nehls, ed, D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography: Volume One, 1885-1919 (Madison: Wisconsin, 1957) 10.
- 5 Jane Austen, Emma, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3rd edition (London: Oxford, 1933) 146.
- 6 James T. Boulton, ed., The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: 1901-13, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1979) 211.
- 7 Letters, 471.
- 8 Jessie Chambers, D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record, 1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1980) 36.
- 9 Letters, 3 December 1910, 190-91.

BOTH SIDES OF THE TRACKS

Mark Rodell

Linda Niemann. Boomer. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990. 252 pp. \$19.95.

"The fancy academic job never materialized," Linda Niemann writes in Boomer, a memoir of a woman who hires on as a brakeman for the Southern Pacific Railroad after earning a Ph.D. in English. As a former Southern Pacific brakeman I left the rails to study English, reversing Ms. Niemann's course. And whether the fancy literary life materializes for me or not, Boomer affirms that to sanitize life is to deny life.

The book records the tough economic times of the 1980's that forced Niemann to work out of countless terminals throughout the West. She recounts these places, the beautiful natural wilds, and the impacted and industrialized cities, with a thoughtful and introspective narration that ties the action to the setting. But Niemann's growth, her recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, provided the main line of interest. She finds Alcoholics Anonymous; instructed to write her personal history, a fourth step, she writes:

I didn't like the sound of this. I had a ten year writer's block. It was my opinion, philosophically, that it was impossible to be honest in an autobiography. I had written a Ph.D. dissertation on this very subject.

With the completion of Boomer, Niemann proves herself wrong. Her attention to her thoughts and feelings about railroading and railroaders, her lovers, and herself demonstrates the power of literature to give a sense of the whole through well-chosen incidents.

On the second page of the book, while interviewing for the brakeman job, the trainmaster asks if she drinks. "I'm a social drinker," she says, but on her way home she stops to buy two canned club cocktails for the road. She lacks awareness concerning her addictions, letting society dictate her code:

Being a drug user, I thought of drinking as basically legal. My whole scale of judgment was based on what happened to you if you got caught. Drinking and driving was pretty bad, but not as bad as if you got caught with dope in the ashtray or lids of pot in the trunk. I had no intention of ever drinking on the job. To my mind, the railroad was an opportunity to dry out a little.

Railroading, as Niemann discovers, is a complex occupation, where a worker's mistake can lead to death. Teamwork is essential; greenhorns are mistrusted for their ignorance, and there isn't much time on the job for teaching; you learn by doing. During my first year as brakeman the old heads trusted me only to build the fire in the caboose. Told to follow at a distance I felt the isolation and frustration Niemann describes. The irregular hours, little or no public contact, lead to an isolated life style. It's a closed world, and to break down the isolation railroaders gather together in bars close to work, to which I can attest. She writes:

Out on the lead, people never talked to you--you were working and there wasn't time. In the switchman's bar, you got the inside dope--if you could stay conscious enough to hear it.

On top of having to overcome traditional hazing and the rookie label, Niemann contends with other elements that marginalized her. She is educated, a bi-sexual, and a woman in a work place dominated by men who have little or no college education. Drinking, however, brings everyone to a common denominator.

One of the boomers had a car, and we all piled in and headed for a gumbo house. Logan, one of the El Paso brakemen, passed around a pint of bourbon, and the fiery warmth hit me right in the knees and built a campfire in my empty insides. I began to feel that we were all old friends and the Houston was an exotic and mysterious location.

I noticed that I was drinking a lot in Houston, but I thought of it as joining the mainstream and blending in.

She drinks to interact with the world, even when she steps out of the railroad environment. She goes to gay bars because she feels safer there, but still the drinking makes whoever is sitting to the right or left a "confidential friend."

I credit Niemann for not fixing blame on her situation. During the time that this story takes place morale on the Southern Pacific was extremely low. Working conditions, economic shifts, and management tactics drive many railroaders to point their fingers at the Company as the cause of their progressive addictions. Once in recovery Niemann sees her pattern of use and admits that even when not exposed to the railroad life her addictions had continued. Railroad life, however, did complicate her withdrawal and recovery. Often off duty points are in small towns far from home where the restaurants and bars are one and the same. Lounges are never far away.

The fright of relapse figures into her decisions, her relocations, the jobs she chooses to work. Niemann's recovery comes hard, drawn out over the last half of the book. Realistically we know addictions let go slowly. She does not shy away from telling the emotional distress that she experienced, yet in telling her story she does not depart from the insightful language that she uses to render a complicated world clearly.

These insights did not come calmly or easily. They came like a hurricane. I felt like a tree shaken to sticks by the storm. But I couldn't avoid them, and I couldn't hide my feelings from the world. Jesse had been watching me go through all this, leaving every night for meetings and coming home and bursting into tears in front of the refrigerator. He knew something was going on.

She questions the process of recovery, comparing "letting go" to standing in a dark railroad yard and feeling a boxcar "sliding up on you--the same skin prickle and body stepping out of the way." Too often railroad images stand as romantic connotations, from the little engine that could, to Johnny Cash singing about the lonesome whistle's blow. Niemann breaks this pattern by first showing the drudgery and dangers of the industry and secondly by using metaphors that connect the harshness of the job to painful personal experiences. Breaking from the predictability of romantic railroad metaphors empowers her language, it becomes fresh. So when she describes being at home on the back platform of a caboose in the dark, the smells of the sage strong, we feel her coming to terms with the concepts of powerlessness, of turning her life over to a higher power in an immediate sense, without the baggage of haunting clichés.

Boomer covers nearly ten years of a woman's life, touching on economics, labor relations, addiction and obsessive love. As a former brakeman I found Niemann's descriptions of railroading precise. The specialized language of the rails enriches the technical passages. A variety of humorous passages, some that cut, others that cast and characterize people and places, spice the tedium that any brakeman fights. She captures a mysterious work place without idealizing her experiences, giving the clear rendering of an insider with the tempered edge of the sharp-eyed outsider.

Yet she works to arch the gap between her life and those around her. In Tucumcari she buys a gun as much for the acceptance it will bring as for its protection. Niemann shows herself as a vulnerable yet tough woman who does not fit any mold. To find an open heart dispelling the myths of sexuality, railroading, addiction, and recovery in one book as well written as *Boomer* is rare.

ALCOHOL IN FILM

Nicholas O. Warner

Norman K. Denzin. Hollywood Shot by Shot: Alcoholism in American Cinema. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991. 262 pp. \$39.95.

This wittily entitled book by a sociologist marks a significant step forward in the analysis of alcoholism in film. Drawing on film criticism and literary theory (e.g., of Leslie Fiedler, Richard Chase, and Roland Barthes) as well as on the perspectives of his own discipline, Denzin deals with films "as distorted mirrors or fractured reflections of the American concern for its 'alcoholism' problem" (xiii). Denzin's focus is on what he calls the alcoholism film, i.e., "that movie in which the inebrity [sic], alcoholism, and excessive drinking of one or more of the major characters is presented as a problem which the character, his or her friends, family, and employers, and other members of society self-consciously struggle to resolve" (3). Denzin categorizes the alcoholism film both chronologically and generically, and within each of these categories are various subgroups and exceptions, clearly and concisely described. Let me attend to the two larger patterns of categorization here, beginning with the chronological.

Noting that alcoholism in earlier film history (i.e., prior to and including the Prohibition era) has already been studied, Denzin concentrates on periods he calls preclassic (1932-1945), classic (1945-1962), interregnum (1962-1980), and present (1980-the present). According to Denzin, the preclassic film may depict drunkenness and various attempts at treating it, but it does not use the term alcoholism or present the disease concept of alcoholism (6). In the classic period, however, "the condition is named, alcoholism is presented as a disease, and Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) becomes an option for treatment" (7). The interregnum witnessed a diminishment in the coherence of the alcoholism film that coincided with a decrease in the "popularity of social realist films," including those dealing with alcoholism, although the alcoholism theme was maintained and experimented with in different ways, as in the increased television treatment of this theme (7, 239). In the present period, "alcoholism became a clear-cut family disease, which also involves drug abuse (e.g., cocaine addiction)" (7).

In generic terms, Denzin identifies three basic alcoholism film types: "(1) the classic tale of suffering, redemption, and reunion, (2) the tragic story of death, loss and separation, with two variations, the 'drunk didn't try and died drunk', and the 'drunk tried and failed', and (3) the comedies, which have two variants--romantic, and serious romantic--which can either say 'drink is bad' or be 'in praise of drink'" (250).

The book's ten chapters are arranged in four sections. Part I, "Interpretive Structures," consists of two chapters. The first sets forth Denzin's basic approach and the themes to be addressed. Chapter 2 deals with "the happy alcoholic" in Harvey (1950) and Arthur (1981), two films from different periods that Denzin uses to indicate the pervasiveness of the comic drunk motif. With Part II, Denzin moves into the basic chronological development of his argument. This part centers on the years 1932-1962, thus encompassing both the preclassic and classic periods. The section devotes one chapter to the alcoholic hero (with special attention to the Star is Born cycle and to The Lost Weekend), one chapter to the alcoholic heroine, and one chapter to the alcoholic family. Part III consists of a single chapter on the interregnum, while Part IV, "The 1980s: Alcoholism the Family Disease," revisits the themes of the alcoholic family, hero and heroine in three chapters, respectively, with a fourth chapter (the tenth in the book as a whole) concluding the volume. This final chapter, "Hollywood and the American Alcoholic," reflects on the implications of the earlier chapters in a particularly incisive, thoughtful manner.

Hollywood Shot by Shot is a meticulously researched, lively book. It suffers, however, from occasionally clogged prose, resulting perhaps from the size of Denzin's sample for discussion (thirty-six films) and from a certain back-and-forth movement between Denzin's own analyses and his summaries of film criticism. The book could also have used more thorough editing, for little discrepancies and stylistic flaws appear with annoying frequency. For example, a chart early in the book indicates 1935-1945 as the preclassic period (6), but the index identifies the period as 1932-1945; similarly, the chart and the page immediately following it (6-7) define the dates of the interregnum as 1960-1980, but elsewhere (e.g., 239, 290), the dates are 1962-1980. The seeming hastiness of preparation that these examples suggest may also account for things like the statement that Lola, in Come Back, Little Sheba, "lays around the house" (104), or the dangling modifier that mars the clarity of the following sentence: "Faintly praised, as if they were afraid of this new organization [A. A.], critics spoke more negatively than positively" (252).

Despite these and similar snags in readability, Denzin's book is impressive in its scholarship, originality and thought-provoking observations. Hollywood Shot by Shot should spark yet further studies of alcohol in film from a variety of viewpoints, including those of the humanities as well as the social sciences.

FAMILY REGULATOR--FAMILY SYMPTOM

Amy Mashberg

Paula Marantz Cohen. The Daughter's Dilemma: Family Process and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991. 226 pp. \$32.50.

The Daughter's Dilemma offers a refreshing study of the representation of the family in the nineteenth-century English domestic novel. In a field dominated by the study of Freudian aspects of the family, Paula Marantz Cohen uses family systems theory as the basis for her analysis of changing patterns of familial interaction. Her book is of interest to Dionysos readers in that it charts the emergence, in the nineteenth century, of the closed nuclear family, a configuration which finds its historical roots in a reaction to the open families which dominated throughout the middle ages and subsequent centuries. Today we view the closed family system, with its rigid boundaries and static configuration, as one which usually presents symptoms such as alcoholism or, in the case of many daughters of such families, anorexia or other eating disorders. Cohen's book examines the role of the daughter in the emergence of the closed family in a diachronic fashion--beginning with Richardson's Clarissa, continuing with Mansfield Park, Wuthering Heights and The Mill on the Floss, and ending with Henry James' The Awkward Age. In each of the novels Cohen notes the daughter's regulating function, be it through her scapegoating or her mediation of and complementarity with the father as a member of a dyad or a triangle, and finally, in the case of Nanda in James' novel, mediation of a father figure based on an extended family. The author points out the toll this regulating function takes on the daughter who, in several cases, wastes away through lack of nourishment (i.e. anorexia). Finally, in an era where literary studies tend to discard, even to "kill" the author, Cohen's analysis introduces elements of the authors' lives which parallel and also provide an explanation of the family dynamics depicted in the various novels.

Cohen begins with a fictional case study by introducing us to what she terms "A Contemporary Clarissa." In doing so she creates a direct link between the modern anorectic daughter and the fictional young woman who wastes away in Richardson's novel. She notes that anorexia "has a plot behind it: a history bound up with the history of the family and with the history of domestic plot itself" (2). She will then go on to plot the changes which occur in the family by selecting works which diverge from the norm for each particular author and which represent a move on the part of both the novel and the family systems they depict towards further and further closure. As she notes in her introduction, the structure of the family changed "from a porous, extended network of relations to a more restricted, 'nuclear' unit of relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth century" (3). Similarly, the novel

evolved from "the loosely-stitched accounts of picaresque adventure to become the intricate, psychologically resonant narrative form that I refer to as the domestic novel" (3). She also notes how the modern family and novel have not been able to structurally withstand the closure which dominated in their predecessors.

Cohen remarks that the structural closure of the nuclear family depends upon the complementarity of the daughter-father relationship. While the husband-wife relationship is based on what Bateson terms escalating positive feedback (the same feedback which keeps the alcoholic returning to the bottle),¹ a check may be placed on this escalation which would soon destroy the system: it comes in the form of the triangulation of children. She notes that the only configuration which would ensure the closure of the nuclear family was in fact the father-daughter dyad. Yet the daughter's stabilizing role also includes high incidences of both hysteria and anorexia, illnesses which are in evidence in the novels Cohen studies.

In addition to an introduction, a conclusion, and a chapter on the family and the novel in general which introduces elements of family systems theory, the book is divided into chapters whose titles include the names of the novels studied and a subtitle indicating the type of nuclear family dynamic at work. Therefore we are presented with "Clarissa: Origin" to indicate how Clarissa depicts the origin of the closed nuclear family and of the daughter's regulating role within it. The author states that "Richardson's novel describes the superimposition of this ideology of family closure upon an open-lineage past" (39). Here she distinguishes between the Levi-Straussian notions of exchange and thus departure from the family, and the new ideology of closure. She explains how the novel's epistolary form inscribes both exchange and nuclear domesticity: "Thus, while the familial letter represents a system of exchange, it also defines a space of domesticity" (44). Finally, Richardson's family experience (he begins as an apprentice and goes on to gain middle-class status) is understood as "a paradigm for the ideological transformation of the English family during this period" (40). Cohen indicates how Clarissa represents change for Richardson. She compares this particular novel to Pamela noting how in the latter the daughter's status is that of an object of exchange, whereas in the former the drama focuses "not upon the heroine's transfer across families but upon the solidifying of her place within her family of origin" (46). Clarissa's role within this family--to reinforce the identities of the other family members through her own absence of definition--leads ultimately to her disappearance, her wasting away. The complementary escalation between Clarissa's victim role and her family's scapegoating "gets expressed in her representation as a weak, emaciated body--an anorectic body--that finally can no longer support life" (54). Clarissa's death will ultimately result in a further bonding of the family through the mechanism of collective guilt, a mechanism which is already in place in Cohen's

second chosen novel, Mansfield Park.

Her study of the daughter's regulating position within the family continues as she notes how the scapegoated daughter Clarissa finds an imitator in Jane Austen's Fanny Price. The intertextual nature of Mansfield Park incorporates the notion of scapegoating but "her role as scapegoat has been integrated into a family interactive structure that knows how to check itself" (61). Thus Cohen sub-titles this chapter "Stabilization." The check on scapegoating here comes in the form of the complementary relationship established between Fanny and Sir Thomas. While he is away Fanny remains on the periphery of the family, in the role of scapegoat. The return of Sir Thomas integrates Fanny within the family through her relationship with him and further solidifies the closure of the unit: "For such a system to stabilize itself at Mansfield Park, Fanny and Sir Thomas, the weak and the powerful, the outsider and the insider, must achieve an interactive relationship" (73). Cohen compares the family interaction in Mansfield Park with modern-day "enmeshed" families in which psychosomatic illness occurs in at least one member of the family. Austen's so-called happy ending, she notes, is "the illusion produced by the form" (84).

In Wuthering Heights the daughter's regulating role in the family takes on a further dimension. For as the inter-generational story indicates, both Catherine Earnshaw and Cathy Jr. are triangulated into playing mediating roles. Cohen describes the "elaboration" of the daughter's role through the triangle formed by Catherine, her father, and Heathcliff: here, "she alternates in her allegiances, serving as mediator between the domesticity of the family and the wildness of the outsider's character" (969). She also indicates how these wild oscillations from one pole to the next would result in Cathy's symptoms of both hysteria and anorexia (96). Similarly, the second-generation story shows how Cathy Jr., though seemingly involved in a dyadic relationship with her father, is nonetheless forced into the same outsider/insider mediation as her predecessor. Thus the "elaboration" (as Cohen's sub-title for this chapter indicates) of the family dynamic continues. Cohen notes how Emily Brontë's own mediating role between her father and brother might have contributed to the family dynamic she depicts in her novel.

Cohen's analysis of The Mill on the Floss seems a turning point. Closure within this family system exists at the outset: the family "exists at the beginning of the novel as a relatively closed stable system" (122). Within this closed system Maggie once again plays the role of the scapegoat, and the scapegoating is kept in check by her father. While Cohen notes the similarities between this novel and Mansfield Park, she also explains how the scapegoating dynamic is already in place in the later novel and will prove ineffective as the novel concludes: "the plot . . . begins with the family in temporary equilibrium and charts the

inefficacy of the original family dynamic in the context of later life" (124). The family's later loss of its "governor," as Bateson would put it, finds Maggie searching for a substitute for her father in her subsequent relationship with her brother Tom. In addition, the scapegoating at the hands of her brother can now proceed unchecked. His attempts to become like the father and her attempts to mediate him fail, yet her need for the primal relationship causes her to seek him out nonetheless.

The final novel studied by Cohen is Henry James' The Awkward Age, and she sub-titles her chapter on this novel "Revision." In a spiraling movement which is often associated with recovery from addiction, Cohen returns to her starting point, Clarissa, only with a slight twist. If Clarissa represented the origin of the closed nuclear family, James' novel also originates a new form of family interaction. Father/daughter complementarity is no longer viewed as a stabilizing force for the nuclear family. Cohen notes how in his fiction, men are "inadequate" and that many of the female protagonists are "the unfortunate complements of these inadequate men" (154). These "desperate regulators of failing systems" (154) are also "creative facilitators of new forms of relationships" (155). Thus The Awkward Age presents a "revision" of the failing closed nuclear family, a failure documented in her chapter on The Mill on the Floss. Cohen points out how the Brookenham family is defined by cybernetic language (terms such as "merge," "set," "the whole" place the family clearly within the systems theory mold). According to Cohen, The Awkward Age represents a transition, just as Clarissa did. However here "the nuclear family is being superimposed upon in turn--producing a third-order change . . . a new order of relationship emerges in which the female, formed as a mediating subject, is no longer under the sway of paternal authority, and, hence, is given free play" (162). The new type of female mediation (here represented by the constant discourse within the family, as opposed to the narratorial presence so prevalent in James' other novels) "assures the stability of the new, open-ended (anti-) family, a stability that is a matter not of closure but of a mobile connectedness made possible through the continual potential for a new or extended interpretation" (173).⁷ In describing James' own family, Cohen notes the extreme regulating power of the author's younger sister Alice. In fact Cohen suggests that Alice's psychosomatic wasting away seems to have propelled the author to critique the closed nuclear family which he nonetheless continued to cling to. His discovery of her diary "must have suggested to him that his sister could have played a different but equally facilitating role in his life and the life of others that would not have involved her debilitation" (176-77).

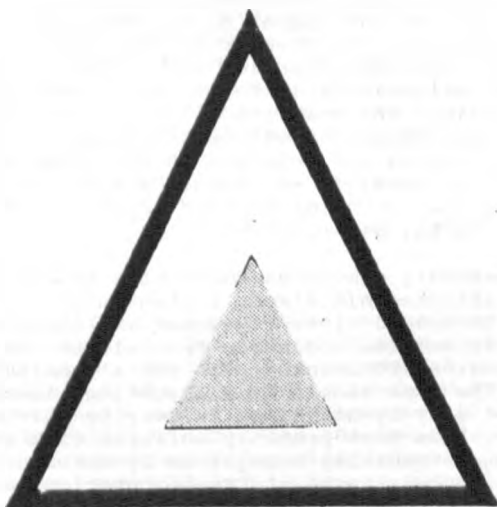
Thus Cohen's analysis has posited the daughter's dilemma as well as a solution. If the closed nuclear family can only survive through the use of the daughter as a regulator (via scapegoating or enmeshed complementarity), then the survival of the daughter depends on a less restrictive, more open-ended family system.

* * * * *

NOTES

1 In his essay entitled "The Cybernetics of Self: A Theory of Alcoholism," Gregory Bateson explains this type of escalating feedback in terms of symmetrical behavior. Not only is behavior surrounding drinking an escalating phenomenon (one example being contests which measure who can drink the most) but the alcoholic's relationship with the bottle itself exhibits the same tendencies. The more the bottle beckons, the more the drinker must show the ability to withstand the temptation--an attempt which usually fails. As Bateson notes: "The relationship between the alcoholic and his real or fictitious 'other' is clearly symmetrical . . ." [Steps to an Ecology of Mind (New York: Ballantine, 1972) 326].

2 Family systems theorists have often compared the healthy family to a mobile in which all the connected parts shift towards homeostasis as new information is allowed into the system. See, for example, John Bradshaw's Bradshaw on the Family (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, 1988).



CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

I was fascinated by Marty Roth's "The Unquenchable Thirst of Edgar Allan Poe" in the Winter, 1992 edition, both for its dissection of alcoholic motifs in Poe's stories, and for its overall conclusion as to the difficulty of applying master theory of addiction to the personality and work of an individual author --or person.

Roth comments perceptively on the "confusing circularity" in trying to separate purely alcoholic behavior from "symptoms of unmanageable, often abusive and self-destructive behavior that circulate through alcoholism." How do we tell the drinker from the drink? Are the fundamental characteristics of the alcoholic personality as [we] recognize them--grandiosity, guilt, resentment, etc. (all laid out by Chairman Bill in Chapter 5 of the Big Book)--really only the hallmarks of a destructive psychology exacerbated and made manifest by drink? As for Poe, was the writer simply a perverse, self-destructive personality whose perversity and self-destruction were brought out by alcohol?

In Poe's case, I think, some light is shed by considering the kind of drinker he was--an intermittent binge drinker whose personality changed radically under the influence.

I have just finished reading in manuscript Jeffrey Meyers' extensive biography of Poe (Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy, slated for publication in September by Scribner's), a work which devotes the most thorough attention yet to Poe's alcoholism. Meyers documents extensively in Poe a twenty-year history of responsible behavior--and sustained literary production--interrupted by catastrophic bouts of drinking during which he produced almost nothing and indulged in the usual sordid pattern of self-destructive behavior we associate with the alcoholic (neglected work, lost jobs, bitter and irrational fights, asocial behavior of all sorts, guilt.)

Meyers repeatedly describes Poe's high susceptibility to alcohol, which affected him almost instantaneously and disastrously. He became violently drunk and thoroughly dysfunctional (to use the addiction specialists' favorite word), invariably on one or two drinks. Poe was a classic "Jekyll/Hyde" alcoholic, and the dark side of his psychology seems to have been elicited, if not only by drinking, largely by it. Meyers speculates that, "Poe most probably suffered from hypoglycemia, or low-blood-sugar--possibly brought on by chronic liver disease, which can also induce altered states of consciousness. Hypoglycemia made it difficult for him to metabolize and tolerate alcohol."

This is hardly a new theory. Roth's article documents studies and primary sources indicating that Poe was a "one-drink drunk." Daniel Hoffman wrote twenty years ago that Poe's "one besetting vice was a total inability to hold his liquor. Poe had an abnormal allergy to alcoholic toxicity." However, Meyers' work points to the importance of recognizing the great difference between Poe drunk and Poe sober. He was not a drunken writer, but a man who wrote when he was not drunk, and in him the distance between the drunk psychology and the sober was perhaps much greater than in most alcoholics.

Certainly, even had he never had a drink it is doubtful that Poe would have exhibited the equanimity of Longfellow (understandably his amiable bête noire). It does seem to be true, though, that the truly perverse and self-destructive side of Poe's personality was brought out by drink, and perhaps only by drink. In Poe, at least, what was "unmanageable, often abusive and self-destructive" was clearly alcoholic.

To an extent, then, Robertson, Lauvriere, and William Howard in "Poe and His Misunderstood Personality" are correct in drawing a distinction between dipsomania or binge-drinking and chronic day-to-day alcohol abuse. Both are alcoholism, but the chronic alcoholic's drinking may be indicative of a more pervasive overall "alcoholic personality" than that of the binge drinker.

This does not, of course, mean that the alcoholism of the chronic drinker is either more or less "serious" than that of the binge drinker. It does mean that in some people a dysfunctional psychology is more clearly alcohol-related than in others, and Poe seems to be one of the former. He had a ravingly alcoholic personality when he drank and a far more conventional one when he didn't. Without liquor, Poe was apparently relatively normal. Whether he would ever have had access to his visionary talent had he never picked up a drink is another question.

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Marty Roth responds

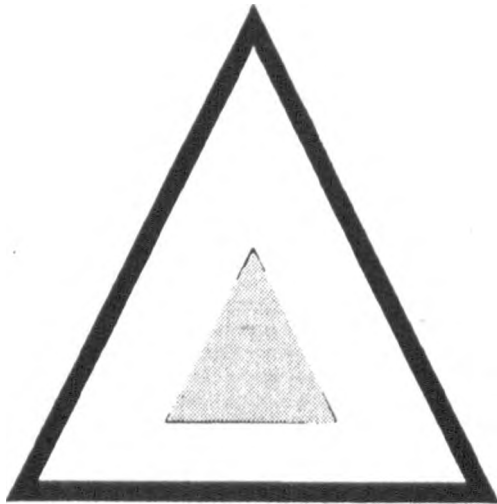
I grant that there are problems of conceptualization with the alcoholic personality. One common problem is slippage between two meanings of the term: the personality that is likely to become alcoholic and the personality produced by alcoholic behavior. However shaky either may be they are preferable to their various alternatives, including the one raised by Mr. Cobb, the "destructive personality exacerbated and made manifest by drink." This third "personality" (which is not caused by drink but is latent until drink brings it out) feels messy; first, because it does not matter. It has no explanatory force of its

own. Yet, secondly, it has the rhetorical effect of dissolving this thing called alcoholism.

Was Poe another alcoholic who could become "violently drunk" on one drink? I resist this notion, as I indicated in my article; I tend to regard the condition alluded to as an enabling fiction. It is so like an alcoholic alibi ("Just put me in the same room with a bottle and I'm staggering"), and it seems to me that in this case as in many others the "scientific" establishment is doing the alcoholic's work for him.

Finally, I cannot accept the logic in the claim that Poe "was not a drunken writer but a man who wrote when he was not drunk." AA very wisely refuses to identify not drinking with sobriety and suggests that an alcoholic is just as "drunk" when dry as when drinking. That paradox speaks to me. My Poe was a writer who was also a drunk, and that description signifies beyond the simple facts of literal intoxication and sobriety.

Marty Roth



NOTES AND COMMENT

Laurence Block's A Walk Among the Tombstones, the eleventh Matt Scudder novel, is due in September (see George Wedge's piece on the now-recovering alcoholic detective in the Spring 1991 Dionysos). . . . Another fictional alcoholic protagonist, the Cajun detective Dave Robicheau, receives his fifth treatment by James Lee Burke, in A Stained White Radiance (Hyperion 1992). The previous four volumes are now available in paperback. "'Dave [Robicheau] has no illusions about the nature of alcohol,' says Burke [in an interview in Publishers Weekly]. 'In effect, whiskey for him is like putting his head in a blast furnace. I reached a point myself where I didn't care whether I lived or died. After I bottomed out, I was a white-knuckle alcoholic, dry for five and a half years and more miserable than I'd ever been before. It was far worse than when I was drinking. After a buddy of mine pointed out that I still had all the problems of an alcoholic, I went with him to a 12-step program. At that first meeting I knew that I was home. I used to think that alcohol somehow enhanced a person's writing. It took me years to realize that I had written in spite of alcohol, not because of it. If a writer is drinking, it gets onto the paper. One way or another, it's on every page. The 12-step fellowship gave me back my life, literally. Then I began to write about it in The Neon Rain. Dave and the 12-step recovery program came together'" (20 April 1992: 34). . . . Bill Sharp, reviewing John Welter's Begin to Exit Here: A Novel of the Wayward Press (Algonquin) in The New York Times Book Review, concludes that through the "recovering-alcoholic antihero," the author "provides a powerful and revealing look at alcoholism, reminding us that the torture of the illness is not just what alcoholics suffer when they drink, but what they suffer when they do not" (21 June 1992: 16). . . . Richard Price's new novel, Clockers, exploring the world of drugs, alcoholism, and poverty, has just been published by Houghton Mifflin. . . . The "defiantly incorrect," now-paraplegic-and-former-boozer, cartoonist, and author John Callahan (Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot [Vintage 1990]) is featured in a recent New York Times Magazine (7 June 1992). . . . John M. Bower's excellent article, "'Dronkenesse Is Ful of Stryvng': Alcoholism and Ritual Violence in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale," appears in ELH 57 (1990): 757-84. . . . Lawrence Driscoll (English, University of Southern California) writes that he is "currently working on a book on the relationship between literature, gender and drug addiction." He suggests that his chapter on Freud and cocaine will be of particular interest to readers of Dionysos. . . . Catherine MacGregor, whose article on Dostoevsky appeared in the Fall 1991 issue of Dionysos, has just published a piece on co-dependency in Under the Volcano, in the special number of Mosaic: "Diet and Discourse: Eating, Drinking and Literature" (Summer/Fall 1991). This issue will be reviewed in Dionysos. . . . Dionysos will be included in these forthcoming (1992) directories: MLA Directory of Periodicals and Poet's Market.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

John L. Cobbs (Ph.D. in English, North Carolina), a communications specialist based in Collegeville, PA, wrote the article on John O'Hara for the Encyclopedia of American Literature (Ungar, 1989).

Thomas B. Gilmore, professor emeritus of English, Georgia State University, is the author of Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature (U of N Carolina P 1987) and of "James Boswell's Drinking," Eighteenth Century Studies (Spring 1991).

Amy Mashberg is an assistant professor of modern languages at Creighton University, where she teaches courses on French language and literature. Her "Co-Dependence and Obsession in Madame Bovary" appeared in the Spring 1990 issue of Dionysos. She has presented several papers dealing with family systems communication in Balzac.

Frank Morral is a professor of English at Carleton College, a licensed psychologist, and a part-time therapist at the Center for Human Resources in Northfield, Minnesota. He is working on a book on the effects of alcoholism and violence on D. H. Lawrence's life and work.

John Maxwell O'Brien, associate professor of history at Queens College of the City of New York, is an authority on the role of alcohol in history. His research and publications on Alexander the Great's alcoholism leading up to Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy created a world-wide stir, after they were publicized in The New York Times in 1980.

John Peck lectures in English literature at the University of Wales, Cardiff. He is joint general editor of the New Casebook series and of the How to Study Literature series. His most recent publication is the New Casebook on Middlemarch; he is currently working on Thackeray and Dickens.

Mark Rodell is a graduate student in creative writing at Syracuse University, and a former brakeman.

Marty Roth is a professor of American literature, popular culture, and film studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. In addition to his article on Poe, he published the piece on The Great Gatsby in Dionysos (Fall 1990). He is writing a book tentatively entitled Theorizing Addiction on the theorization of drink and intoxication, of alcoholism, and of addiction in culture and civilization.

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

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