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EDITORIAL

While at the Conference on Literature and Addiction at the University of Sheffield, a year ago last spring, I was struck by the number of (excellent) papers on such figures as Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs; and I must say that I was pleasantly surprised by the intense interest shown in the Beat Generation by the scholars and writers, some of them young people, who were at Sheffield. Since then there has seemed to be a virtual renascence of interest in the subject: The Portable Beat Reader (edited by Ann Charters) was published by Viking, and the film of Naked Lunch, directed by David Cronenberg, was released by 20th Century Fox. In addition, Douglas Brinkley of Hofstra University had the inspired idea of teaching a course, "An American Odyssey: Art & Culture Across America," that involved putting his class and himself on a bus for six weeks, travelling--somewhat in the manner of Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters--to literary shrines in 26 cities, many of them immortalized in the work of Kerouac et al. Owing to this resergence of interest, we have decided to devote the Winter 1993 and Fall 1993 issues of Dionysos to the literature of the Beats (the intervening Spring number will be a regular issue). Our European editor, Sue Vice, will be guest editor of "The Beat Generation from the European Perspective" (Winter); editorial board member George Wedge will be the guest editor of "The Beat Generation from the American Perspective" (Fall).

One of the things one notices when examining literature and addiction in the context of Modernism, is the anti-establishment rebelliousness of writers and artists, and the central part mood-altering substances play in that rebelliousness (see, e.g., the works on absinthe reviewed below). Prohibition, of course, was an invitation to break that icon of the Establishment: the Law. When liquor became legal again, what could be more challenging than to take up drugs? Writers and artists have been dropping out of the System since William Blake, but the Beats set some sort of record. I don't want to get ahead of the arguments we'll receive in the special issues, but I do have one thought for now. When the Report of the Wolfenden Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (the recommendation to legalize private sexual acts of consenting adults) was presented in 1957, it was powerfully supported by the libertarian H. L. A. Hart; it was equally powerfully attacked by Patrick Devlin, the Lord Chief Justice of England, in the name of "moral legalism." Hart won the debate, and the findings of the Wolfenden Report have pretty much been accepted in the Western World. Yet, it strikes me that there is irony here. The moment proscribed behavior is made legal, what happens to the inspiration of rebellion? If God told Milton's Eve, "Help yourself to the Tree of Knowledge, be my guest," what happens to the joy of defiance? I have an idea William Burroughs, for one, could help us with this question.

--R F

A WOMAN WRITING UNDER THE INFLUENCE: DJUNA BARNES AND NIGHTWOOD

Constance M. Perry

Study of the modern woman writer Djuna Barnes and especially of her novel Nightwood (1937) suggests the dramatic influence of addiction on the writing life and reveals one of the most compelling presentations of women and addiction in literature. A reconsideration of Djuna Barnes has been published recently in the 1991 essay collection, Silence and Power. edited by Mary Lynn Broe. Neither the amassed scholarship, nor new readings of Nightwood. however, raises the issue of an integral aspect of Barnes's life and writing: her alcoholism. I propose to show that Barnes's novel depicts a story of women and alcohol, in which lovers see their relationship destroyed by addiction and the Paris café culture that supports it. Although Barnes identifies alcohol and drugs as a leading reason for her lovers' break-up, critics and readers have overlooked this cause. Most recently, feminist critics have emphasized Barnes's view of patriarchy's pushing apart the lovers, Nora and Robin.[1] My view examines how Djuna Barnes's alcoholism--in addition to her woman-centered, lesbian identity--powerfully affected her as she chose the artistic subculture from which Nightwood emerged and as she composed and edited the book.

Barnes's story of women and alcohol in Nightwood is in part autobiographical, reflecting her choice in the twenties to leave Prohibition America for the thriving Parisian culture of alcohol. Moreover, Barnes had an intimate relationship in these years with the American expatriate sculptor Thelma Wood, whose behavior, as recorded in memoirs and reflected in correspondence with Barnes, was that of an alcoholic. Finally, Barnes's own alcoholism, suggested in memoir, biography, and correspondence, fed her preoccupation in writing Nightwood. in which she treats the alcoholic collapse of her relationship with Wood.

I. Alcoholism and Barnes's Family Background

As a child, Djuna Barnes was entangled in an incestuous relationship with her paternal grandmother, Zadel Gustafson, and possibly with her father and other family members. Her father situated his wife, his mistress, and their many offspring in one remote household in upstate New York. Barnes's correspondence with her grandmother suggests that she initiated Djuna sexually but also abandoned her at seventeen to an arranged marriage with a man three times her age, possibly to protect her from her father's sexual advances.[2] Barnes's grandmother also wrote a temperance tract, and alcohol use may have been important to Djuna Barnes psychologically in many ways. While "wet" Americans saw drinking as a way to rebel against a repressive society, for Barnes, such social rebellion would additionally provide a way to rebel against her family, possibly to act out anger at her grandmother for both initiating and abandoning her sexually, and to stifle such raw pain. While

the background of Barnes's alcoholism is a subject of speculation, it appears that by her early twenties, Barnes had fled her arranged marriage, was distancing herself from her family, and was on her way to drinking as an alcoholic. The environment in which she chose to live may be taken as one signal of her alcoholism. Barnes resided in Greenwich Village from 1913-1919 where she could support herself as a journalist. She also chose in the Village a notably "wet" environment,[3] where she might afford and maintain, probably unconsciously, a growing dependence on alcohol. She associated largely with companions who are noted in memoirs as alcoholics, such as her common-law husband, Courtenay Lemon, as well as Eugene O'Neill, Edmund Wilson, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, and others.

II. Alcoholism and Barnes's Expatriation to Paris

Djuna Barnes then left for Paris around 1920 along with a host of her literary compatriots. Nearly one-hundred of their profiles are drawn in a volume of the Dictionary of Literary Biography: Americans in Paris, 1920-1939. Literary historians have cited reasons for this great expatriation, such as a hope of camaraderie with geniuses, a desire for immersion in a rich and ancient culture, and a rebellion against American philistinism. Another reason was financial ease from the post-war exchange rate. Feminist critics have recently challenged this longstanding view of expatriate literary history and suggested that gender differentiates women's and men's motives for expatriation.[4] Shari Benstock suggests women already internalized a sense of being psychologically expatriated within the patriarchal home country. Many fled from oppressive Victorian families who expected them to marry, bear children, and abandon art. Barnes's family was especially unconventional, marked as it was by polygamy and incest which led to divorce and poverty. Also, for Djuna Barnes and members of the Natalie Barney circle, freedom to live openly as lesbians awaited them in Paris.[5]

Not insignificantly, this great literary expatriation occurred during Prohibition in America, which lasted from 1920 to 1933. While Americans at home were risking arrest at speakeasies and drinking expensive bootleg whiskey or homemade hooch, American writers abroad drank openly at cheap cafés. From reading biographies, memoirs, and journalism of the period, one observes that many alcoholic and hard drinking American writers, including Djuna Barnes, gravitated to Paris and developed a new culture there, one dominated by alcohol. Their "culture of alcohol" likely supplied at least as powerful a reason as any aesthetic or familial or psycho-sexual reason for drawing alcoholic American writers, both men and women, to Paris. The literary historian should factor in alcoholism when reviewing this era, since alcoholism, as defined by the authority E. M. Jellinek,[6] is a disease whose exigencies affect and ultimately override aesthetic, social, and sexual values. Thus, literary expatriates like Djuna Barnes altered the clientele

and atmosphere at Paris cafés. They developed professional and social reputations that were marked by alcohol use. They crowded libraries with memoirs canonizing their inebriated Parisian pasts. Finally, key authors, like Barnes, in the period's best literature, produced writing that reflects the culture of alcohol in the lives of expatriates.[7]

Yet no history of American writers in modern Paris focuses on the role of drinking in the production of literary culture, a surprising silence considering the period's backdrop of Prohibition. Only the sociologist, Robin Room, an authority on alcohol research, notes the unusual intersection of famous American alcoholic writers and their residence in Paris during the twenties. Notably, France was then the country with the "highest recorded per capita alcohol consumption in the world."[8] And with the emphasis on drinking rather than on eating, the French café or bistro resembled the recently closed American saloons.[9] Although France had a prohibition organization in the 1920's, it sought only to reduce the alcoholic content of beverages to twenty-three percent, while the American movement banned liquor above one-half percent alcohol.[10] American expatriate alcoholics thus experienced a culture in which drinking establishments were so commonplace and liquor so acceptable that it was sold in bakeries and theaters.[11]

Very likely, the Paris culture of alcohol affected men and women differently. A closer look at the context of American women's drinking in postwar Paris further suggests Barnes's particular habits as those of an alcoholic. According to Paula Fass, the American nineteenth-century onus on women who drank in saloons centered on an association with prostitution. This onus gave way to a perceived tolerance for women drinkers in the Parisian café culture. Certainly, marriage protected some women's reputations as public drinkers in the cases of Zelda Fitzgerald, Nora Joyce, or Hadley Hemingway. Djuna Barnes, without the protection a male spouse provided, still chose to drink in public. Benstock notes that portraits of Barnes appear frequently in memoirs of the era, showing her as an expatriate who drank almost daily in the cafés.[12] By contrast, not all American women expatriates chose to drink in public, notable abstainers being Natalie Barney, Gertrude Stein, and Sylvia Beach. Further, those single women who drank in the cafés might still be branded as debauchées. The cafés became the notorious backdrop to the lives of women with international reputations for prurience, most notably, perhaps, French model and prostitute Kiki of Montparnasse. Women drinking in cafés are caricatured as lascivious lesbians in Robert McAlmon's famous memoir, Being Geniuses Together. In fact, Djuna Barnes's lover, Thelma Wood, is recorded in John Glassco's Memories of Montparnasse as getting drunk and retiring with him to an upper room for sex. He depicts her acting like a nymphomaniac, pliable to the seductions of both men and women, but ultimately frigid.[13] Djuna Barnes chose to drink publicly during these years despite the risks to her professional reputation and despite the toll such a

lifestyle would take on her professional goals. The negative aspects of this lifestyle were perhaps balanced by the positive aspects in her reckoning. She did, after all, make literary contacts in the cafés, such as with McAlmon, who arranged the publication of her Ladies Almanack. And finally, her decision to join the expatriate culture of alcohol provided her with the setting and plot of Nightwood in which café drinking encourages the rupture between the women lovers.

III. Thelma Wood, The Alcoholic Muse

The drunken and promiscuous Thelma Wood staggering through Glassco's memoir may well be a titillating figment of that author's imagination. However, a struggle with alcoholism and sexual fidelity does appear in the correspondence of Wood to Barnes and supports the autobiographical interpretation of Nightwood as a story of alcoholism's sapping the energy of a passionate love. The novel's title Nightwood is probably punning on the night life of Thelma Wood, in terms of notorious nights out in Paris as well as the intimacy of lovers in the night. The following letter which Wood, nicknamed Simon, wrote to Barnes in 1927 clearly identifies the cause of their separation as Wood's drinking and consequent sexual and financial irresponsibility:

> I feel so shy at saying anything for fear it sounds like excusing which God knows I don't--but I've thought over it all and I think if I didn't drink maybe things wouldn't have happened--as that is usely [sic] when I get involved--Now Simon will not touch one till you come to America and I'll have my exhibition done--and I'll try and be financially independent perhaps that too would make things better. And then maybe if you still care--and look him over--and he again looks sweet to you Perhaps we could try it a new way--and if you will I will never again as long as you love me take one small drop of anything stronger than tea.[14]

The impact on Djuna Barnes of her more than ten-year relationship with the alcoholic Wood is likely reflected in the alcoholism that atrophies the central character of Robin in Nightwood.

IV. Djuna Barnes, Denial and Creativity

However, Djuna Barnes was possibly writing Nightwood not only to exorcise her alcoholic lover, as Benstock suggests (256), but to deny her own alcoholism, which seems to have cornered her finally after the novel's publication. Tom Dardis, in his study of alcoholic American writers, The Thirsty Muse. notes the phenomenon of the alcoholic's obsession with other drinkers as a typical evasion of self-analysis.[15] Notably, the Nora character in Nightwood. Barnes's counterpart, does not drink heavily. Instead,

Barnes creates a hopeless alcoholic in Robin. In reality, Barnes was hospitalized repeatedly after periodic binges, in Paris, London, and New York.[16] Unpublished correspondence within the Barnes family reveals a crisis regarding Djuna Barnes's alcoholism in 1939, the years just following Barnes's composition of Nightwood at Peggy Guggenheim's British home, Hayford Hall, nicknamed "Hangover Hall," for the alcoholic antics of guests. When Barnes returned to the States and was forced by finances to move in with her mother, reports of "Sister's" drinking circulated through the family. In the spring of 1940, letters from Barnes's elder brother Thurn and younger brother Zendon to their mother, Elizabeth Chappell Barnes, address with dismay their recent contact with Djuna. The brothers discuss Djuna's chronic and self-destructive drinking and want to hospitalize her for aversion therapy or some "cure."

These letters reveal the family's animosity towards Barnes, as shown in the proposal of painful aversion therapy and in their sarcastic tone and name calling. Although Barnes moderated and finally ended her use of alcohol after the Paris years, and her family committed her to stays in sanitariums twice,[17] she seems not to have maintained sobriety. Benstock asserts that back in America, Barnes "ceased to drink, smoke, and involve herself in wearying love affairs in order to write."[18] However, Hank O'Neal's 1990 memoir shows Barnes avoiding the whiskey she kept on her kitchen shelf but dosing and sometimes overdosing herself with Darvon. The Darvon, used for arthritis of the spine, according to O'Neal, wouldn't kill her by inducing cirrhosis but produced "irritability, confusion, and sometimes irrational behavior."[19] Moreover, living in this drugged state certainly precludes sustained work and ultimately destroys creativity. Unfortunately, O'Neal describes Barnes's drug use on the one hand, and still, on the other hand, seems to have expected more from her creatively than any Darvon addict, even the Barnes genius maintained on Darvon, would be likely to perform.

Thus, Barnes seems to have substituted a medically prescribed narcotic for the alcohol her family interdicted. O'Neal provides Barnes scholars with crucial information about the effects of alcoholism and later drug addiction on Barnes's literary composition. When O'Neal examined a manuscript on which Barnes was working in the thirties, an autobiographical novel based on the papers of Baroness Freytag-Loringhoven, he describes her creative paralysis:

> Barnes's work habits in the early 1930s were not different from 1979. She had started the project in 1932 and then started again and again, always beginning from page one. Even then it seemed she had difficulty in beginning a story, poem, or, in this case a loosely autobiographical novel, and continuing through to a conclusion. She would begin, type a number of

pages, and stop. Then she would repeat the process with minor alterations. The project was never completed.[20]

O'Neal later painfully describes the aged Barnes attempting to work on poetry: "She could not begin work on a poem, stop, and begin the next day where she had stopped. She began again and again, each page noted again with her name, address, and date. The result was hundreds of versions of the same poems, . . . a draft from 1965 next to one from 1975 and many others mixed in seeming chaos."[21] O'Neal did help Barnes select publishable versions of many of these poems. In addition to this paralyzing ritual of composing, Barnes's self-destructive social behaviors suggest she was still struggling with unresolved depression and rage. To take merely one example, Frances McCullough's recollection, while respectful, still reveals the misery of Barnes's reclusiveness, martyrdom, and tyranny (she hit McCullough with a cane).[22] Indeed, Barnes's later life shows a frightening view of her alcoholic personality destroying relationships and crippling her creativity.

V. Alcoholism and the Editing of Nightwood

Further evidence of Barnes's alcoholism, in addition to her purposeful residence in Paris, her relationship with alcoholic Wood, her hospitalizations for alcoholism by her family, and the testimony of memoirists, appears in the editing she sanctioned on Nightwood[23] as well as the later play, The Antiphon (1958). Barnes's life in the café culture of Paris and her time at "Hangover Hall" probably prolonged the composition of Nightwood over its nine-year history to the near exhaustion of Barnes's inspiration and judgment. She was working on the story in at least two versions (only the final typescript and typescript fragments of earlier versions survive). Finally, near the end, she allowed her friend Emily Coleman as well as T. S. Eliot and his underling, F. V. Morley of Faber and Faber, to cut the manuscript to a third of its original size. These excisions and their effect on the novel are the object of current research.[24] Eliot's heavy editing of Barnes's The Antiphon amounts to "text bashing," in the words of Mary Lynn Broe, cutting as he did, the attempted rape/incest scene which explains the heroine's animosity towards her family.[25] Almost the remainder of Barnes's writing life was given over to this bitter play, in which Barnes chronicles the punishment of her incestuous past. Barnes may have been struggling towards emotional health by allowing herself to convey her story of incest, yet she allowed Eliot to silence her once again. Barnes's repeated consignment of so much of her writing to the judgment of one person, T. S. Eliot, peerless though he may have seemed, looks artistically unsound, if not pathological. Despite these lesions in Barnes's artistic judgment, likely impaired by active alcoholism, she preserves in Nightwood a testimonial to a relationship frustrated, and finally tragically doomed, by alcohol.

VI. Barnes's Story of Women and Alcohol

In Nightwood, Djuna Barnes creates two young American women, Robin Vote and Nora Flood, leading a liberated life as expatriates in Paris in 1923. Although the focus here will be on the alcoholism of Robin and on Nora's co-dependency, the novel's other major characters also take refuge in alcohol. Robin, who apparently has no profession, has deserted her husband and baby son in Paris and fled to New York where she meets Nora, a publicity agent for a circus. Returning to Paris together, the women live as lovers in an apartment, and Nora dedicates herself to protecting Robin from the café life. Nora sees the café culture as hedonistic and dangerous to their relationship because its habitués tolerate drunkenness, promiscuity, and crime.

After a number of years pass, Robin refuses to be sheltered and decides Nora is trying to stop her from enjoying life. Robin's loss of control over her drinking began much earlier, however. Her drinking is already implicated in such catastrophes as her unlikely marriage and her unwanted, mentally deficient son, whom she nearly throws to the floor before she abandons him. With Nora, she does smash the doll she gave her, their symbolic child. In fact, throughout the novel, Robin drinks uncontrollably when living with each of her lovers. None has the least power to stop her drinking. Instead, each of her lovers, except Nora, takes to drink also in the end. Nora tells her confidant, Dr. Matthew O'Connor, about Robin's denial of her alcoholism: "'When I tried to stop her from drinking and staying out all night, and from being defiled, she would say, "Ah, I feel so pure and gay!"'" (151). Robin's unrestrained alcoholic behavior may give rise to all the animal references surrounding her, including the novel's final scene where a drunken Robin fondles and teases Nora's dog.

Once Nora realizes her lover's alcoholism, she secretly begins to follow Robin to cafés as did her former husband. From her nights of drinking, Robin earns an appropriate nickname: "la sonambule." Nora compulsively shadows Robin because she fears Robin's intoxicated dalliances with women in the pissoirs of Paris or assaults by men who mistake her for a drunken prostitute. Later, Dr. O'Connor warns Nora about her futile compulsion to control Robin's life: "'When it [a homosexual relationship] drops into dissolution, into drugs and drink, into disease and death, it has at once a terrible and singular attraction. . . . so that if one of them [the addicted lover] were dying of the pox, one would will to die of it also'" (137). Eventually, Robin's alcoholism leads her to a sexual betrayal of Nora and a new relationship with the abusive Jenny Petherbridge.

Nora and Robin's fundamental conflict over Robin's drinking is revealed as Nora confesses to Dr. O'Connor the memory of a typical night when Nora was called to rescue her lover from a café. This central episode in the women's relationship, revealed late in the

novel, clearly establishes Barnes's focus on the alcoholic degradation of the café life as the cause of their break-up. A drunken Robin runs after Nora in the streets of Montparnasse. While Nora tries to make a passerby unhand Robin, Robin rejects Nora's concern. Instead, Robin turns the tables and accuses Nora, "'You are a devil! You make everything dirty! . . . You make me feel dirty and tired and old!'" (143). Nora, "terribly ashamed," watches a police officer fondle Robin and then watches Robin embrace a prostitute in the gutter. Robin continues to mock Nora, saying she acts like a temperance crusader and then saying to the prostitute, "'They don't want you to have your happiness. They don't want you to drink. Well, here, drink! I give you money and permission! These women--they are all like her [Nora]. . . . They are all good--they want to save us!'" (144) Robin's allegiance is not to the prostitute as a woman, but to the prostitute as a drinker, a fellow outlaw, defying the social convention of sobriety. Only by striking Robin can Nora compel her to return to the apartment. And from this assault, others follow, until Nora takes the role of abusive parent and Robin that of victimized child. With this parental dynamic ruling their relationship, Nora feels their bond becomes incestuous. Ultimately, such violent, drunken scenes occurred so often in their relationship that Nora feels Robin is safe from the molestation of others and Nora's own rage only when Robin lies unconscious from alcohol. Desperate, Nora addresses a sleeping Robin thus, "'Die now, so you will be quiet, so you will not be touched again by dirty hands, so you will not take my heart and your body and let them be nosed by dogs--die now, then you will be mine forever'" (144-45). This curse encapsulates the shame and despair of their relationship, now dominated by alcohol.

As illustrated in Nora's confession to Dr. O'Connor, she is appalled at Robin's promiscuity but not her lesbian sexuality. Indeed, Nora is relieved that Robin's sexual liaisons occur with women, thinking Robin will then "be protected, moved out of death's way by the successive arms of women" (64). Robin's alcoholism and its effect of promiscuity, quite apart from her lesbian identity, become Nora's shame. Again and again, she expresses to Dr. O'Connor her shameful observation of Robin's alcoholic mischief: "'There's something evil in me that loves evil and degradation'" (142). Nora intuitively understands that Robin as a practicing alcoholic comes to hate her because Nora reminds Robin of the consequences of her drinking: "She [Robin] turned bitter because I made her fate colossal. She wanted darkness in her mind--to throw a shadow over what she was powerless to alter--her dissolute life, her life at night" (156). Nora comes to believe that Robin cannot stop her drinking and the destructive behavior spiraling out from every evening. Nora, sober to the end, and even heroic in her sobriety, appears to recognize they are both victims.

This Nora, who Barnes renders idealized and aloof in her sobriety, is made human and tender once again in her final

expression of love for Robin. She continues to believe their passionate physical and emotional bond was a precious reality Robin's café lifestyle destroyed. As Nora tells Dr. O'Connor, and these are her lyrical last words in the novel, words of genuine forgiveness, "'In that bed we would have forgotten our lives in the extremity of memory, moulted our parts as figures in the waxworks are moulted down to their story, so we would have broken down to our love'" (158).

At the end of Nightwood, after Nora breaks with Robin, Nora retreats to her farm in New England, but Robin follows her there and secretly lives in the abandoned chapel until Nora finds her one night. In the strange last scene of the novel, Nora's dog is nosing Robin who is crawling, apparently drunk, around the chapel: "[Robin] began to bark also, crawling after him [the dog]--barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. . . . until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping" (170). Metaphysical interpretations of this scene abound, but perhaps Barnes is presenting final alcoholic degradation of the lover, Robin. Robin's final scene, showing her in apparent alcoholic despair, parallels the immediately preceding scene of a hysterically drunken Dr. O'Connor collapsing in a Christ-like posture of woe. Hank O'Neal reports Barnes in her old age insisting that people had misinterpreted the novel's ending:

> People say Robin is making love to the dog. . . . There was nothing like that in her [Barnes's] mind when she wrote the scene. In fact, it was taken from an actual scene she once observed: a lady named Fitzi was drunk as a hoot and crawling around on all fours and her dog, Buffy, was running around her, growling and barking. She [Barnes] talked about how animals get all worked up when they see their masters in an unusual state.[26]

Barnes brought this matter up to Chester Page as well, suggesting how the misinterpretations annoyed her and how central Robin's alcoholism was to Barnes's conception of Nightwood.[27] Granted, Barnes's retrospective views of this scene may be mocking the critics' sophistry. Still, the final panorama of Robin's bizarre behavior fits her deteriorating physical and emotional state and actualizes Nora's earlier lament, which climaxed her confession to Dr. O'Connor: "Die now [Robin], so you will be quiet, so you will not be touched gain by dirty hands, so you will not take my heart and your body and let them be nosed by dogs--die now, then you will be mine forever'" (144-45). The ending suggests that Robin's alcoholism has led her to the gutters to be nosed by dogs. To Nora, no reversal of Robin's condition appears possible. Obviously, Barnes and her generation did not speak of alcoholism as a disease, but she did recognize the alcoholic personality as a type and the behavior of the alcoholic as a hopeless downward spiral, creating the central tragedy of Nightwood's lovers.

Djuna Barnes and her lover Thelma Wood apparently embraced the social freedom for drinking women in Paris. In the cafés, they might socialize unchaperoned by men. Women could smoke, drink, and discuss art, religion, politics, and sex. They could write in public. Women could even become publicly drunk and escape public condemnation. However, the Parisian sanction of public intoxication also encouraged the personal collapses depicted in the estrangement of an alcoholic Robin and of Nora in Nightwood. On a personal level, the novel probably functioned for Barnes not only as an exorcism of her relationship with Thelma Wood, but as a prolongation of Barnes's denial of her own alcoholism, as she dramatized Wood's collapse and thus minimized her own deterioration. Barnes's novel reflects her emotional exit from a café culture which condoned alcoholism and sexual promiscuity, a culture which, in the end, would turn her female exiles into sonambulists living a nightmare.

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NOTES

1 See Shari Benstock, "Djuna Barnes," in Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940 (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986). See also Judith Lee, "Nightwood: 'The Sweetest Lie,'" and Jane Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus: Nightwood as Woman's Circus Epic," in Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes, ed. Mary Lynn Broe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U P, 1991).

2 Mary Lynn Broe, "My Art Belongs to Daddy: Incest as Exile, The Textual Economics of Hayford Hall," in Women's Writing in Exile, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: U of N Carolina P, 1989) 42-43.

3 Lewis A. Erenberg, Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture: 1890-1930 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981) 252-53.

4 Jane Marcus, "Asylums of Antaeus: Women, War and Madness," in The Differences Within: Feminism and Critical Theory, ed. Elizabeth Meese and Alice Parker (Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 1989): 49-81; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987, 1989); Shari Benstock, "Expatriate Modernism: Writing on the Cultural Rim," in Broe and Ingram.

5 Benstock in Broe and Ingram, 28.

6 E. M. Jellinek, The Disease Concept of Alcoholism (New Brunswick, N.J., Hillhouse, 1960).

7 For other fictional works depicting the expatriate culture of alcohol see Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (1925), A Farewell to Arms (1927), A Moveable Feast (1964), and The Garden of Eden (1986); Robert McAlmon, Distinguished Air (Grim Fairy Tales) (1925); John Thomas, Dry Martini (1926); Harold Loeb, Professors Like Vodka (1927); Solita Solano, This Way Up (1927); Elmer Rice, The Left Bank (play) (1931); F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender Is the Night (1933); Edgar Calmer, All the Summer Days (1961). Memoirs, short stories, and poems enlarge the body of this literature considerably.

8 Robin Room, "A 'Reverence for Strong Drink': The Lost Generation and the Elevation of Alcohol in American Culture," Journal of Studies on Alcohol 45 (1984): 542.

9 Roland Sadoun, Giorgio Lolli, and Milton Silverman, Drinking in French Culture (New Brunswick: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1965) 16.

10 Hallie Grace Woods, "Prohibition Movement in France," Current History 28 (1928): 721.

11 Viola Irwin Williams, "France--Wet Paradise: The American Tourist Sees Only the Poetry of a Wine-Drenched Eden," The Ladies Home Journal (1923): 144.

12 Benstock, Left 230.

13 John Glassco, Memories of Montparnasse (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1970) 46-47.

14 Andrew Field, Djuna: The Formidable Miss Barnes (Austin: U of Texas P, 1985) 156.

15 Tom Dardis, The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer (New York: Ticknor, 1989) 170.

16 Field 16.

17 Field 22.

18 Benstock, Left 237.

19 Hank O'Neal, "Life Is Painful, Nasty & Short . . . In My Case It Has Only Been Painful and Nasty": Djuna Barnes, 1978-1981: An Informal Memoir (New York: Paragon, 1990): 18.

20 O'Neal 148-49.

21 O'Neal 86.

22 Frances McCullough, "Reminiscences," in Broe, Silence 365-68.

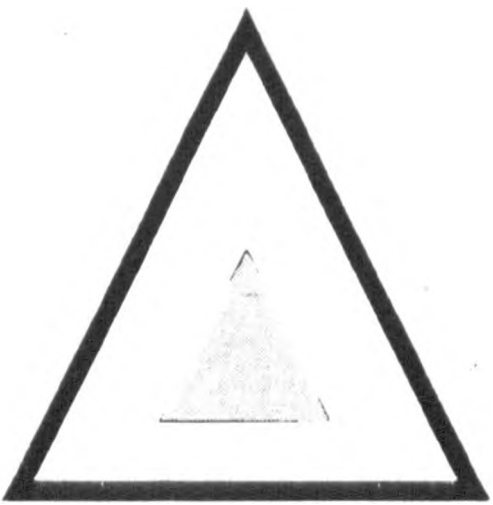
23 Djuna Barnes, Nightwood. 1937 (New York: New Directions, 1961).

24 For discussions of the editing of Nightwood see Miriam Fuchs, "Djuna Barnes and T. S. Eliot: Authority, Resistance, and Acquiescence" forthcoming in The Journal of Modern Literature as well as Cheryl Plumb, "Revising Nightwood: "A Kind of Glee of Despair," Unpublished Paper. The Djuna Barnes Centennial Conference. College Park, 2 Oct. 1992.

25 Broe, Silence 6.

25 Hank O'Neal, "Reminiscences," in Broe, Silence 353.

27 Chester Page, "Reminiscences," in Broe, Silence 362.



EUPHORIA AND DESPAIR: YOUTHFUL ADDICTION IN THIS SIDE OF PARADISE AND NOVEL WITH COCAINE

Timothy M. Rivinus, M.D.

I

The period of late adolescence and early adulthood harbors monumental challenges for young people, especially those rendered vulnerable by nurture or nature. These challenges coincide with strong developmental forces affecting the nascent adult: identity formation, separation and individuation from family, the resolution and establishment of vocational choice, the testing of romantic relationships, sexuality, the impulse to take health- or life-threatening risks, and the acquisition of peers and habits that support or undermine growth.[1] Many great novels have focused on the decade of human development between ages fifteen and twenty-five to portray the intensity, the passions, the impulses, the feats and defeats, the hopes, the ennui, the peaks, and the tragedy of this sometimes brightly and sometimes darkly lit period. However, even though psychoactive chemical use by young adults in Western society has become an urgent problem, few classic novels of adolescence have illuminated the psychology and process of addiction in the struggles of their young protagonists.

Two novels, F. Scott Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise and M. Ageyer's Novel with Cocaine, dating from the first third of this century, are exceptions. Both are works of literary merit that graphically depict youthful addiction in a way that older, nonaddicted people seldom comprehend or can even imagine possible. Both novels offer convincing clinical portraits of the progression of addiction to alcohol and cocaine respectively. Their authenticity is assured because their authors appear to have experienced the addictive process personally. One author struggled through his tragically foreshortened life with alcoholism; this, his first widely acclaimed autobiographical novel, describes how the process had already begun. The other author seems, from the point of view of the clinician, to have known cocainism intimately and to have reflected deeply on the psychology of its allure and rapid progression--a circumstance that makes the mystery of his identity (and the controversy surrounding it) and his subsequent disappearance after the novel's publication the more intriguing. Furthermore, because these novels are set in different cultures and in a time before our own, they also offer insight into the timeless nature of addiction, which has only become more common in our age because of the greater availability of alcohol and other drugs to increasing numbers of young people who are not unlike the protagonists of This Side of Paradise and Novel with Cocaine.

II

This Side of Paradise by F. Scott Fitzgerald is a classic

autobiographical novel of American college life.[2] It is set in the late teens and early twenties of this century--a period of postwar social turmoil, of the rapid but unstable economic growth before the Great Depression and the establishment of a federal "Prohibition" of alcoholic beverages in the United States. The novel's title captures the great expectations implied in a young man's acceptance to a Ivy League college, Princeton, the promise of "this side of paradise." However, the protagonist Amory Blaine who, like Fitzgerald, came from the Midwest to Princeton and to the literary and drinking life of the East, instead experiences arrested growth and disappointment in the context of alcohol abuse.

Fitzgerald establishes the framework for the novel with suggestive chapter headings. The first chapter, "Amory, Son of Beatrice," sketches Amory's genetic and social legacy. He is the son of an alcoholic mother. Beatrice Blaine is a dominating, self-absorbed, wandering, heavy-drinking socialite, who has learned "in England to prefer whiskey and soda to wine" (4). Amory has been her constant companion from early youth and witnessed her first alcoholic breakdown in Mexico, where she had taken "a mild, almost epidemic consumption . . . [which] later she made use of as an intrinsic part of her atmosphere--especially after several astounding bracers" (4).[3]

The peripatetic ventures of mother and son lead to Amory's early introduction to alcohol. At Hot Springs Amory "sampled his mother's apricot cordial, and, as the taste pleased him, he became quite tipsy" (5). Beatrice, outwardly horrified, inwardly celebrates the event. "[It] secretly amused her" because it implies that Amory might follow her "line" (5).[4]

> "This son of mine," he heard her tell a room of awestruck, admiring women one day, "is entirely sophisticated and quite charming--but delicate--we're all delicate; here you know." Her hand was radiantly outlined against her beautiful bosom; then sinking her voice to a whisper, she told them [the story] of the apricot cordial. (5)

Amory's weakness for alcohol is hereditary; but like consumption, it is also a sign of delicacy, it is fashionable, a touch of the artist, "the beautiful and damned": It is his mother's gift to him; and it is inevitable.

After his arrival at Princeton, Amory is initiated into the sophisticated offerings of college life. In the chapter "Spires and Gargoyles" Amory encounters the charmed heights and the grotesque depths of the society he has come to idealize and admire. A college mate, Dick Humbird, who has seemed to Amory, "a perfect type of aristocrat" (77), is suddenly the casualty of drunken driving. "Dick was driving and he wouldn't give up the wheel; we

told him he had been drinking too much--and there was this damn curve--oh, my God!" (86).[5] In "Spires and Gargoyles" it is clear that Amory himself has begun his own unwitting, intoxicating, exhilarating, but abusive relationship with alcohol.

> During all this time it never occurred to him that he was delirious or drunk. He had a sense of reality such as material things could never give him. His intellectual content seemed to submit passively to it, and it fitted like a glove everything that had ever preceded it in his life. It did not muddle him. It was like a problem whose answer he knew on paper, yet whose solution he was unable to grasp. He was far beyond horror. He had sunk through the thin surface of that, now moved in a region where the feet and the fear of white walls were real, living things, things he must accept. Only far inside his soul a little fire leaped and cried that something was pulling him down, trying to get inside a door and slam it behind him. After that door was slammed there would be only footfalls and white buildings in the moonlight, and perhaps he would be one of those footfalls. [Emphasis added.] (115)

Intoxication seems to offer Amory a supermaterial, almost spiritual, liberation. It permits him imaginatively to follow the footfalls of his mother who had so often left him during alcoholic breakdowns to enter hospitals ("white buildings in the moonlight"). Prophetically, Fitzgerald may be beginning to depict not only Beatrice's legacy to Amory but the early signs of alcoholism as they were beginning to unfold in his own life. Fitzgerald also seems here to link alcoholic intoxication with the obsession with writing ("a problem . . . on paper" [115]), and as such it may be an early epitaph for an entire generation of American writers who struggled to be creative as they became alcoholic.[6]

The chapter aptly titled "Narcissus off Duty" marks for Amory a brief, sober holiday of developmental unfolding and renewal. He becomes immersed in his studies, in books, in radicalism, in the world of the mind, and in a hopeful relationship with a sensitive intellectual woman named Clara. These bright horizons, however, quickly cloud in the chapter "The Debutante" as Amory moves to an empty copywriter's job in an advertising agency and attends heavy-drinking parties in Manhattan. He enters a torrid but dead-end relationship with a new woman, a partygoer named Rosalind. After breaking up with Rosalind, Amory attends even more functions, quenching his psychic pain in binge drinking. During one of these Amory has a flashback:

> As the new alcohol tumbled into his stomach and warmed him, the isolated pictures began slowly to form a cinema reel of the day before. Again, he saw Rosalind curled weeping among the

> pillows, again he felt her tears against his cheek. Her words began ringing in his ears: "Don't ever forget me--Amory--don't ever forget me--" (201)

Alcoholic hallucination revives the past, and remorse floods him. Amory drinks again, trying to extinguish memory, but this produces only catharsis: "After another glass he gave way loosely to the luxury of tears" (201). Awaking fully clothed on the following day, Amory "realized slowly that he had been very drunk the night before, and that his head was spinning again wildly. He laughed, rose, and crossed again to Lethe . . . " (202). In the company of a heavy drinking crowd in the Biltmore bar he now toys with the idea of suicide.

> "Decided to commit suicide," [Amory] announced suddenly.
>
> "When? Next year?"
>
> "Now. Tomorrow morning. Going to take a room at the Commodore, get into a hot bath and open a vein . . ."
>
> "Did you ever get that way?"
>
> "Sure!"
>
> This provoked discussion. One man said that he got so depressed sometimes that he seriously considered it. Another agreed that there was nothing to live for. (203)

By the chapter "Experiments in Convalescence," Amory has lost all control. Trying to recover from despair by continuing to drink, he experiences blackouts and fights. While drunk, he quits work in advertising and embarks on a three-week binge, euphemistically described as a "spree." The spree, however, results in "so much dramatic tragedy . . . that [after it, he] was emotionally worn out" (209). Following his mother, Amory thus has his own first alcoholic breakdown.

The final chapters of the book, "Young Irony," "The Supercilious Sacrifice," and "The Egotist Becomes a Personage," reinforce the impression of Amory's adult character as a solitary literary being with "nothing to live for." True to his mother's early predictions, he has become a "sophisticated but delicate" man who escapes to writing and to alcoholism. Amory's knowledge of himself, of his lifescript, its stark limitations, and inexorable outcome appears frozen. Bleakly, he writes of a

> new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds,

> through a revery of long days and nights; destined finally to go out into that dirty gray turmoil; to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken. . . . (282)

In this same vein he has also drafted a mature poem, one of pain and prediction:

> Oh, might I rise again! Might I
> Throw off the heat of that old wine,
> See the new morning mass the sky
> With fairy towers, line on line;
> Find each mirage in the high air
> A symbol, not a dream again . . .
> But old monotony is there:
> Endless avenues of rain. (254)

Finishing with an "old monotony" and "endless avenues," the poem suggests that for Amory, addiction to "that old wine" is already well under way.

Fitzgerald opens This Side of Paradise by quoting Oscar Wilde, "Experience is the name so many people give to their mistakes." When we are young (and when we deal with the young), we tend to minimize the signs of addiction because we are so hopeful (for them), because we know the pains and joys of life to be so real, and because we know that the experimentation of those years is so crucial to the processes of discovery, independence, and identity. Yet alcoholism, in the case of Amory Blaine, sets its hook quickly and firmly in the susceptible tissue, foreclosing those processes and foreshortening their possibility. An addicted man without knowledge of the sources of his sickness, Amory speaks the final line of this first novel: "I know myself, but that is all" (282). Sadly, "that is all" is a cul de sac in the search for a self in relation to a greater whole so common in the experience of the addicted. When this novel was greeted in the 1920s with such great acclaim for its author, it was little recognized that it described the tragic beginnings of its author's own terminal addiction.

III

Written in the 1930s by an author about whom little is known, Novel with Cocaine describes the addictive power of cocaine.[7] The title, rendered in English as "Novel with Cocaine," can be better understood when it is known that the Russian word for novel, roman. has various meanings, which include not only novel, but romance, affair, or love relationship with impetuous, illicit, and romantic overtones. The title could, therefore, equally appropriately be

translated as Romance with . . . , Infatuation with . . . , Affair with . . . , or even Fatal Attraction to Cocaine.[9]

The novel's protagonist, Vadim Maslennikov, a university dropout at the time of the Russian Revolution, is the only son of a single, doting, destitute mother who earns money to support herself and her son by prostitution. In the opening section of the novel, Vadim cruelly repudiates his mother, leaving to join university friends, including the eloquent and charismatic intellectual Burkewitz (46). Vadim identifies himself with the revolutionary goals and emancipation of the 1918-1919 Russian Revolution. The backdrop of the time is always apparent in the novel, seeming to serve as a metaphor for adolescent revolt and, perhaps, even for the turmoil and casualty of addiction.[9] Protesting war, its enslavement of the people, particularly the young, and identifying the antihumanist and oppressive power of the church, czarist, and revolutionary orthodoxies, Burkewitz is brutally imprisoned by university and state officials for his independent voice and his attack on the church. Stunned, Vadim visits Burkewitz in jail, but his courage fails him as he misconstrues his strong affection for his friend. In panic about homosexuality, Vadim flees the prison, betraying and rejecting Burkewitz. This rejection of Burkewitz returns to haunt him in the hallucinatory final moment of the novel.

Vadim also falters in his early romantic attempts. He enters into an intense but impossible relationship with a married woman, Sonya. Vadim discovers that he cannot really understand her as an individual separate from himself and his sexual drives. When Vadim finds himself sexually impotent with her, he and Sonya fight and break up (117). The occasion of impotence and failed romance with Sonya is a painful personal wound for Vadim, and he smarts with the shame of loss and of defectiveness. Sonia cruelly writes him, "Your relationship to me is a kind to me of unending fall, a constant impoverishment of the emotions, which, like all forms of impoverishment, humiliates more the more the riches it supplants" (124)

Vadim turns at this vulnerable moment to a group that introduces him to cocaine.[10] Outlining the frame of mind in which he finds himself susceptible to the drug, he admits

> I had only the vaguest idea of what cocaine was like. For some reason I associated it with alcohol (at least in terms of the danger it posed to the organism). And since on that evening, as on every other for that matter, I had no idea what to do with myself or where to go, and since I happened to have fifteen rubles, I accepted the invitation [to use cocaine] with glee. (135)[11]

With his first cocaine "hit" Vadim experiences the exhilarating ritual of distribution and loss of "nasal virginity" (145-46). In the process of snorting cocaine, Vadim becomes quickly imprinted to cocainism and its subculture.[12] Inadequacy and loneliness are magically vanquished by cocaine euphoria. He experiences a commanding sense of invulnerability, uniqueness, power, joy, and connection.[13] "The joy within me has grown so strong, it can pass unscathed through any humiliation. It is like a cloud; it cannot be scratched by the sharpest knife" (153). After the high, Vadim experiences symptoms of rapid withdrawal--the crash. Faithful to our current knowledge of the pharmacokinetics and psychology of cocaine, Vadim suffers a frightening paralysis accompanied by symptoms of anorexia, exhaustion, and temporal and perceptual distortion. Paradoxical feelings of self-hate, self-love, somatic dissociation, and craving flood him (152-160). The rapid departure of the chemical from his brain and its effects on his sensibility propel Vadim back into painful reality, heightening feelings of alienation, and magnifying and distorting his loneliness. More cocaine seems the singular answer to these feelings (159-163). His interior monologue at this moment brilliantly characterizes the hunger, euphoria, the paradoxical psychology, philosophy, and theology of the cocaine "score":

> The problem was that before I first came in contact with cocaine I assumed that happiness was an entity, while in fact all human happiness consists of a clever fusion of two elements: 1) the physical feeling of happiness, and 2) the external event providing the psychic impetus for that feeling. Not until I first tried cocaine did I see the light; not until then did I see that the external event that I had dreamed of bringing about--the result I had been slaving day and night for and yet might never manage to achieve--the external event was essential only insofar as I needed its reflection to make me feel happy. What if, as I was convinced, a tiny speck of cocaine could provide my organism with instantaneous happiness on a scale I had never dreamed of before? Then the need for any event whatever disappeared and, with it, the need for expending great amounts of work, time, and energy to bring it about.
>
> Therein lay the power of cocaine--in its ability to produce a feeling of physical happiness psychically independent of all external events, <u>even when the reflection of the events</u> in my consciousness <u>would otherwise have produced feelings of grief, depression, and despair</u>. And it was that property of the drug that exerted so terribly strong an attraction on me that I <u>neither could nor would oppose or resist it</u>. (Emphasis added.) (175)

Cocaine seems to Vadim the perfect intoxicant and defense, an existential answer to the problem of unwanted and unpleasant

emotion. This is the delusional idée fixe that lies at the heart of the addictive process.

Driven by this reasoning and by the absence of ready drug money, Vadim returns to his mother's apartment to steal and sell her treasured brooch. All sense of family allegiance, morality, and affection are eclipsed by his hunger for cocaine. The normal distancing from a parent expected of the young adult is polarized absolutely as Vadim "uses" (abuses) his mother in order to "cop" his next cocaine supply.[14]

> The feelings I experienced under the spell of cocaine were so potent that my power of self-observation dwindled to a state found only in certain of mental illnesses; my "feeling I" grew to such proportions that my "self-observing I" all but ceased operation. There being nothing left to bridle my feelings, they poured out with total abandon--in my face, in my movements, in everything I did. (178)[15]

Vadim notes (rationalizing also) that his ego was overwhelmed by libidinal necessities of the addicting chemical, that his consciousness and conscience had surrendered to the demands of the pleasure seeking limbic brain. As a description of the psychology of substance abuse and the surrender of the observing ego to the forces of cocaine-induced sensation, this passage has few peers in contemporary literature.

After a second high, Vadim suffers the deepening despair of second inevitable crash.

> The moment the cocaine was gone and the misery took over, I began to see myself for what I was; indeed, the misery consisted largely in seeing myself as I had been while under the influence of the drug. (178)

The cycle of addiction has begun.

Reflecting on questions of existence, Vadim poses a crucial psychological question of late adolescence: Can I make it as an adult, or will I retreat to the implied comforts of being a child? If the pure pleasures and comforts of intoxication are not <u>always</u> possible, are corruption or death the only alternatives?[16]

> Hence the question: Did this succession of sentiments constitute nothing more than a by-product of cocaine, one it imposed upon my organism; or was it a property peculiar to my organism, one the cocaine only brought out more clearly? . . . I asked myself,

> "Isn't the human soul something like a swing which, once given a push in the direction of humanity, is ipso facto predisposed to return in the direction of bestiality?" (183)

These dark ponderings provide a psychological cadenza to Vadim's short life. Physically and psychically exhausted, Vadim recalls his rejection of mother and of his friend Burkewitz, and his own rejection by Sonya. Believing that he has cut himself off irrevocably, he dies alone and without help, the victim of malignant cocainism.

Unanswerable questions haunt us concerning the author of Novel with Cocaine. Did M. Ageyev, as translator Michael Henry Heim speculates, disappear into the violence and repression of post-revolutionary Russia?[17] Or did he succumb in Istanbul (whence in the 1920s the manuscript of the novel was allegedly sent to a Paris publisher), or somewhere else, to cocainism? Or equally intriguing, is M. Ageyev yet another pseudonym for the always elusive author "Sirin" who, in 1934, was only regionally (mostly to the Russian emigré community in Paris and Berlin) familiar? Later that same author became internationally recognized as the literary genius, Vladimir Nabokov.[18]

What we certainly may take, however, from this brilliant confessional novel is that its author, building on the psychological traditions of the great Russian writers of the 19th century (especially Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov), has produced a literary, powerfully philosophical, modern work. Ageyev shares with his Russian forebears, as with modernists like Nabokov and with great authors of adolescence in other languages, the acute sense of the rootlessness of the emancipated but not yet mature adult. At the same time, Novel with Cocaine is a clinically exacting account of cocainism, the developmental breakdown of a youth in its addictive grip, and a portrait of a generation of youth lost at an early and critical point in the turmoil of the 20th century. Ageyev has given us an unsurpassed description of how addiction begins--sharing with other addicted literati the extraordinary interior monologue, exaltation, and despair of the chemically tormented artist.

IV

Psychoactive substances can be radiantly attractive to adolescents and young adults. They may provide a social lubricant for the callow, the shy, and the uninitiated--offering a magic potion for those who would be sophisticated or socially adept. They may relieve present or past emotional pain. They may provide brief moments of intense, unalloyed, heretofore unexperienced group unity and pleasure. In the 1990s they are commonly available where young people meet and mingle. They may fuel the normal adolescent sense of independence and rebellion from the ways of their elders.

They may create the illusion of bonding to those of like mind. They are often used in youth rituals of victory or defeat--after games, examinations, or a day's work. They provide the initiation rites for young people and for youths who feel daunted by the ways of adult life and an uncertain future. In societies like our own undergoing rapid social change or turmoil that have few, if any, initiation rites, visions, or roles for young adults mentored by responsible adults, the use of psychoactive substances often proliferates. Those who regularly use them and who are vulnerable for reasons of nature or nurture may, like Amory or Vadim, become caught in the web of addiction.

This Side of Paradise and Novel with Cocaine, though worlds apart geographically and socially, describe the same dilemma. Amory Blaine would appear to be entering a world of opulence and promise. For the Princeton graduate the future seems to promise success, opportunity, and endless possibility in New York, "the Big Apple." Yet the "jazz age" was short--only a decade--and marked by frenzy, illusion, disillusion, oppression, escapism, and economic disaster. Amory finds himself, repeatedly, alone in the glitter of college and city life. Intoxication at first assuages, then entrenches his isolation.

Vadim Maslennikov leaves home to join the decadent but heady bohemian world of the student intellectual during the Russian Revolution. He is quickly confronted with the realities, the dreariness, confusion, and oppression of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Moscow. Political and social revolt cannot meet the needs of personal upheaval. Vadim's relationships begin hopefully but quickly collapse. With little or no comfort in the world of relationship, Vadim receives, from cocaine intoxication, a crystalline alternative of well-being and unalloyed pleasure. Rapidly, however, fulminant cocainism engulfs him in despair, depression, unscrupulous drug seeking, and physical and psychic collapse.

Alcohol offers Amory a solution to a developmental dilemma, a synthesis--it "fitted like a glove" (115). For Vadim cocaine is magical, "a tiny spec [of which] could provide [his] organism with instantaneous happiness" (175), "a kind of happiness [he] had never known" (176). Although differing in their chemical properties, routes of administration, and social acceptance, alcohol and cocaine are similar as agents of addiction and despair. When they are readily available, they each provide a temporary solution to the developmental troubles of the novels' protagonists. Their addictiveness rests on the fact that their chemical grip is so initially welcome, and their consequences so unanticipated and unopposed by internal and external resources.

Deprived of the influence of fathers and struggling to separate from their mothers, substance use gives Amory and Vadim a temporary feeling of social and spiritual connectedness and a

brief, false sense of what it is to be men. But as the effects of the chemicals wear off, they are revisited by heightened feelings of the isolation experienced because of the abandonment by their fathers and the failed separation from their mothers.[19]

Both novels also portray directly or indirectly the struggles of artists to connect with others and with a greater whole. Amory Blaine and F. Scott Fitzgerald turn to writing, to drinking partners, and to alcoholic sprees in their search for connection. Although Vadim succumbs to cocainism, the author of Novel with Cocaine survives, apparently, to tell his own story. Like intoxication, writing may briefly offer a spiritual liberation and a glimpse of one's greater potential. But writing may also meet with rejection and failure. The release and enslavement of the creative artist may sometimes resemble the world of the alcohol or cocaine addict when writing becomes a consuming passion leading to fame, fortune, failure, or to all three. Artistry, like intoxication, does not usually give easy answers to the questions of how life is to be successfully lived. The personal tragedies of many great writers, like Fitzgerald, who have turned to chemical euphoria, escape and, ultimately, addiction may be an indirect testament to the still poorly understood connections between art and addiction.

Both novels, written by authors who would appear to have "been there" well before the current emergency resulting from the widespread use of psychoactive substances, movingly remind us of the abiding nature of the human search for temporary relief from developmental challenges through the use of mind-altering chemicals. Vulnerable youths who regularly use chemicals in response to the challenges of emancipation, social turbulence, and the search for creative outlets may, without ready intervention or help, find themselves propelled down an "endless avenue of pain."

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NOTES

1 One of the best discussions of late adolescence as a developmental stage can be found in Peter Blos, The Adolescent Passage (New York: International U P, 1979).

2 F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Macmillan, 1920, 1986). Page numbers refer to this edition.

3 Note that Beatrice's alcoholism is here euphemistically ascribed to the more socially acceptable "consumption" (4) or, in other places, "nervous breakdown" (8). Tuberculosis (TB) was, before its cause was identified, called consumption. TB is similar to alcoholism in its ability to produce immune suppression, malnutrition, physical decline, and early death. Before its identification as a disease in the 1950s (Edward Jellinek, The

Disease Concept of Alcoholism [New Haven: College and University, 1960]) alcohol dependence was commonly called "nervous breakdown." Until alcoholism and TB were identified clearly as diseases in their own right, they were usually shrouded in confusion, superstition, and denial. For reasons beyond the scope of this essay, alcoholism and the other addictions still are.

4 Beatrice's word "line" implies "genetic inheritance," and "script" (or "lifescript") is a term used the transactional analysis school established by Eric Berne. A lifescript is a narrow set of responses to one's entire life and the situations of life that is stereotypic, may serve one well or ill in the course of development, and may dictate how one usually feels, thinks, and acts. See Eric Berne, Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy: A Systematic Individual and Social Psychiatry (New York: Grove, 1961).

5 This may be the earliest literary account of what has become the most common cause of death among the college-age population in the United States. See R. Blum, "Contemporary Threats to Adolescent Health in the United States," Journal of the American Medical Association. 257 (1987): 3390-95 for automobile accident statistics, past and present in the young.

6 Alcoholism was terminal for Fitzgerald, prematurely extinguishing his art and life. He died of coronary complications of alcoholism at age 43. See Andrew Turnbull, Scott Fitzgerald (New York: Scribner, 1962); James R. Mellow, Invented Lives (Boston: Houghton, 1984); and Scott Donaldson, Fool for Love (New York: Delta, 1983). Discussions of Fitzgerald and other alcoholic American writers, many of whom were members of the "lost generation," can be found in Thomas B. Gilmore, Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature (Chapel Hill: U of N Carolina P, 1987); Tom Dardis, The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer (New York: Ticknor, 1989); and Donald W. Goodwin, Alcohol and the Writer (Kansas City: Andrews, 1988).

7 M. Ageyev, Novel with Cocaine. trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper, 1983). Page numbers refer to this edition. Roman s Kokainom (Novel with Cocaine) was first published in serialized form in the weekly Illustrirovannaya Zhizn ("Illustrated Life") Nos. 1-17 from March 15 to July 5, 1934. The first part of the novel appeared in the tenth volume of Chisla ("Numbers"), a journal that ceased its publication with this volume. It then was published as a separate book in a collection of the Paris Writers Association without a date but probably in the fall of 1935 (one year after the supposed death of the author of the novel). When the circa 1935 edition of Novel with Cocaine was rediscovered in France in the early 1980s after a half-century of obscurity and was translated into English and French, it was immediately hailed as a classic. A jacket blurb on an American edition announced that the novel provided "an oblique but powerful commentary on the impending

deluge"--referring to the American cocaine epidemic of the 1980s. Ironically, although the cocaine epidemic continues in the United States and is spreading elsewhere, the English translation of Novel with Cocaine was not a publishing success and was out of print in 1990.

8 Of the English translation, Igor Zelljadt of the Department of Slavic and German languages at Smith College writes: "The translation of the novel [drives] home one more time a very crucial fact, something that Nabokov had tried to show in his [1964] anti-translation translation of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin . . . that a good work of art cannot be translated. Practically everything in the original evokes different associations than the English version . . . [and the] decidedly 'playful' and 'sophisticated' and 'decadent' style of the Roman is pretty much absent in the Novel" (Personal communication, February 17, 1992). I am deeply indebted to my friend Igor Zelljadt for his assistance in reviewing the Russian language publishing history and the authorship controversy of Novel with Cocaine, and for helping me understand how much more brilliant, playful, even Nabokovian, this roman is in the original Russian. In English translation its brilliance can be sensed but not savored.

9 If Novel with Cocaine was written by a White Russian emigré, presumably embittered by the events of the Russian Revolution and impelled to leave his country, we would expect an ironic view of the 1917-1919 revolutionary aims and methods. To have done this using cocaine addiction as a parallel metaphor is, of course, a brilliantly ironic literary stroke. This conclusion is made doubly ironic and poignant by the historical fruits of the Russian Revolution: genocide, human rights abuses, and ultimate collapse, and, by the presence of widespread cocaine use and addiction in the United States, the major capitalist nation.

10 Typical of cocaine-using peers, the group Vadim enters is incapable of relating to those outside the drug culture. A female member of the group, Nellie, for example, "freeloads" cocaine from Vadim's purchase, demanding, "I slave a whole day, I get a whole gram" (143). Her relationship to the drug is typically entitled drug focused, and opposed to sharing or negotiation.

11 This is an important observation and relevant to the current controversies about the capacities of alcohol and cocaine. Many people are still as ignorant as Vadim regarding the experimental use of cocaine. Unlike alcohol (for which the consequences of long-term addictive use are equally grave and far more widespread), very brief experimental use of cocaine, especially when injected or smoked, can become quickly addictive (that is, within a period of days or weeks).

12 Ageyev and the drug culture that Vadim enters choose terms that accurately capture the neurological and sexual associations that since have been shown to have analogues in the human brain and in drug subcultures. Psychoactive chemicals act on the same pleasure centers that govern sexual pleasure. Early use of cocaine often is combined with increased sexual behavior, but chronic addictive use is associated with severely attenuated or absent libido. For recent speculations and experimental evidence of the neuropsychological pathways and clinical manifestations of cocaine addiction see Paul H. Earley, The Cocaine Recovery Book (New York: Sage, 1991); Jeffrey S. Rosecan, Henry I. Spitz, and Barbara Gross, "Contemporary Issues in the Treatment of Cocaine Abuse," in Cocaine Abuse: New Directions in Treatment and Research. Henry I. Spitz and Jeffrey S. Rosecan, eds. (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1987) 299-324; Andrew E. Skodol, "Diagnostic Issues in Cocaine Abuse," in Spitz and Rosecan 119-137; David E. Smith and Donald R. Wesson, Treating the Cocaine Abuse (Minneapolis: Hazelden, 1985).

13 Cocaine may have an extraordinary appeal to the rudderless adolescent who has not resolved the conflicts of separation, vocation, relationship, sensuality, self-worth, and self-efficacy, and who may have little or no psychological ammunition to deal with loss, anxiety or despair, or to resist the Faustian imperatives of the drug. The process of reinforcement described so originally by Ageyev in relation to cocaine (and by his countryman Pavlov as "classical conditioning") is true not only of addiction to chemicals but also probably of other compulsive behaviors such as gambling, binge eating, unbridled acts of passion, self-injury, and aggression.

14 Stealing is a common symptom of cocaine addiction and, as such, is to be seen as a symptom that distorts psychological processes and is an antisocial act in the service of the addiction. Addiction has distorted Vadim's normal psychological processes of separation/individuation from his mother into contorted, absurd, and cruel survival mechanisms.

15 See Nori Geary, "Cocaine: Animal Research Studies," in Spitz and Rosecan 19-47; Edward Nunez, and Jeffrey S. Rosecan, "Human Neurobiology of Cocaine," in Spitz and Rosecan 48-96; Arnold M. Washton, Cocaine Addiction: Treatment, Recovery and Relapse Prevention (New York: Norton, 1989) 35-47.

16 These are Hamlet's immortal questions, too, captured in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy.

17 For Novel with Cocaine's English translator's speculations on the identity of M. Ageyev, see Michael Henry Heim, "Introduction," in Novel with Cocaine v-viii.

18 The speculation that Novel with Cocaine is by Nabokov has evidently existed for some time and has most recently and eloquently been argued by Nikita Struve who bases his case on matters of style and the mystery of its authorship (a long-standing Nabokovian theme) in "Roman-Zagadka" ("Novel-Riddle"), Khudozhestvennaya Literature Moskva (1990), 200. Two prominent Nabokov biographers argue, however, that Novel with Cocaine was probably not written by their subject. Andrew Field makes the point that the novel may have been by another emigré Georgy Ivanov, who in Roman s Kokainom was probably imitating Sirin's (Nabokov's) literary style (Andrew Field, VN: That Life of Vladimir Nabokov [New York: Crown, 1986] 135-36). Biographer Brian Boyd makes the point (also made by Field) that Nabokov's authorship of Novel with Cocaine was denied by Nabokov and, posthumously, by his family. Boyd states that Novel with Cocaine is set in Moscow where Nabokov had never been and asserts that Nabokov "despised" drugs, whereas the novel is by an author with intimate knowledge of the psychology of cocainism (Andrew Boyd, Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years [Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 1992] 572-573, n. 1). If Boyd is correct that Nabokov had no personal experience with cocainism, I too would conclude that it would have been difficult (but perhaps not impossible for the imaginative Nabokov) to have been its author.

19 Amory Blaine's father is barely visible in the narrative and is referred to only as a source of income squandered by Beatrice (100). Vadim Maslennikov's father is never mentioned in the text. The onset of substance use can serve in adolescence as a "transitional object" for missing objects such as fathers, mothers, or absent, abusive, or neglectful caregivers in childhood. The transitional object, first described by Donald Winnicott in "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomenon" (International Journal of Psychoanalysis 34 (1953): 89-97), can stand for an absent important person in a child's life (like a parent or caretaker) during a period of transition. Security blankets, teddy bears, and imaginary friends are, for example, healthy transitional objects for children. Healthy transitional objects later in life may include photographs, letters, locks of hair, etc. Transitional objects that become preoccupations, obsessions, compulsions, or destructive habits (such as chemical or sex addiction) in a person's life, or those that persist beyond the expected time of mastery of the transitional period, may be regarded as regressive or pathologic transitional objects. See Timothy M. Rivinus, "College Age Substance Abuse as a Developmental Arrest," Journal of College Student Psychotherapy 6 (1992) in press.

UNCLE CARL, NOT CLOGGING

I've since decided it was the open bar,
and not my sister's wedding, that did him in.
In any case, I know it hit him hard:

His favorite niece, bouquet aloft, the car
papered and canned outside. What ruined him
I've since decided was the open bar.

He staggered early on, enough to jar
us by buck-dancing through the toasts--a grin
too big in case we thought it hit him hard.

While we lobbed rice he shuffled on, bizarre,
not clogging. When he fell, he split his chin.
It was the wedding. It was the open bar:

The price was right, a bourbon reservoir
four hours deep, for free. He couldn't swim,
in any case, and I know he hit it hard.

Last call they found him bruised, a dancing war
he lost. No hero, but he could've been.
I've since decided it was the open bar.
In any case, I know it hit him hard.

--Jack Williams

"I CANNOT TRUST YOUR OATHS AND PROMISES: I MUST HAVE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT": TALK AND TEXT IN THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL

Catherine MacGregor

In her introduction to Anne Bronte's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,[1] Brontë scholar Winifred Gérin praises the novel's modernity, by which she means its boldness in depicting Helen Graham's struggle to escape from the world of her alcoholic husband and to support herself and her young son through her painting. She suggests, however, that the plot-within-a-plot device is a technical failure. The story is told through a series of letters from Gilbert Markham to his brother-in-law, letters which include a journal shared with Markham by his wife, Helen Graham, and which give a harrowing account of her first marriage. Gérin criticizes this device as less dramatic than face to face dialogue between Helen and Markham, an error of execution, a consequence of authorial inexperience. Gérin also comments on the autobiographical sources of the novel: Anne's unhappy years as a governess at Thorp Green with its atmosphere of intrigue and adultery; her brother Branwell's alcohol and opium addiction; Anne's decision to stay on there for Branwell's sake (she had arranged for him to become tutor at Thorp Green after a series of ignominious dismissals from other posts); and the horrific years of Branwell's final decline. She suggests that Lowborough (the sensitive recovered addict) and not Huntingdon (the shallow hedonist) was modeled on Branwell. The question of which character most resembles Branwell is, I believe, a red herring: it is the narrative strategy itself and not the character portrayal which ought to be of interest to addiction-sensitive readers.

What I wish to argue is that the use of the epistolary form of the novel and its imbedded journal is not a technical failure at all. It is connected, moreover, with Anne's experience of her brother's addiction in a way not yet addressed by critics.[2] The epistolary form is utterly appropriate for two reasons: first, because of the consistent pattern within the text of details which privilege the written word over the oral word, and second (and this is related to the first reason), because of the centrality in Helen's life of alcoholism. This second argument is unapologetically ahistorical: it is only in the last decade that a consensus among alcoholism researchers, clinicians, and self-help groups has emerged regarding the problems and needs of people in Helen Graham's position. Helen is the spouse and daughter of alcoholics, and like all co-dependents, she lives in a world of forgotten or broken promises, suppressed information, gossip, twisted arguments, misunderstood confrontations, rationalizations, and lies. The oral word is thus unreliable: unremembered or ineffectual if true, malicious if false. The written word, by contrast, offers fixity. It is a refuge from many problems: among them, the evasions of argumentative drunkards and the gossipy rationalizations of

uncomprehending onlookers. As Arthur Huntingdon creates an alternate and spurious reality for himself in his drinking, so Helen must create an alternate but authentic reality--a record of her experiences and feelings on paper.

When she offers this journal to Gilbert, I suggest, she does so not because her creator's inadequate technical equipment rendered her dependent on a Richardsonian gimmick, but because her creator knew that those who live inside a world of addiction cannot or will not talk about it, just as those who live outside that world too often cannot or will not listen to representations of it. Our own decade's flood of publications about therapeutic strategies for spouses, siblings, and children of alcoholics all uniformly recommend journal keeping and letter writing as a means of clarifying issues to oneself and to one's alcoholic relatives and others.[3] Ultimately, the written word is an essential element in the reclamation of one's own life. I am sure that this is why the written word means so much to Helen Graham; it may also be part of why it means so much to Anne Brontë. The "modernity" of the novel may lie in this subtle emphasis on the healing power of writing, as well as in the frequently noted feminist tendencies of both Helen and Anne. Coexisting paradoxically with this pattern, however, is another. Misinformation and suppression of accurate information have created the "narratable" situations, to use D. A. Miller's term.[4] The novel betrays its anxiety about its forced dependence on written communication in several moments when it is clear that honest oral communication would have eliminated serious problems for the characters. The ultimate irony of the text may be that after twenty years of marriage to Helen, Gilbert is passing on her journal, which he had sworn never to share, to the brother-in-law (and presumably Rose, Gilbert's gossipy sister) on the eve of their annual visit.[5] In this novel, therefore, the closural problems begin in the first part of the letter to Halford; regrettably, I cannot pursue this question here.

Returning to the outset of the novel, we see that oral communication is represented in the text far less positively, in general, than is written communication. It is clearly less powerful: Markham's introductory letter to Halford is an attempt to "atone" (33) for his failure to reciprocate when Halford had told him anecdotes about his own life; he invokes the authority of the journal he later passes on so that Halford's "credulity may not be too severely taxed" (34). His reluctance to discuss the experience and his fear of Halford's disbelief are both credible, as is his decision to explore his experience in writing.

The untrustworthiness of conversation emerges quickly in the portrayal of the neighbors. Chapter 1 introduces the Markhams, Wilsons, and Millwards, many of whom are incorrigible busybodies, prying into the affairs of the polite but resistant newcomer and offering her unasked-for advice on cooking, household management, spirituality, and child rearing. Being open to the experience of

others may be desirable, but it is also difficult, as is clear in the anecdotes about Gilbert's mother and the vicar. Of particular interest is Mrs. Markham's resentment of the parenting theories of the Reverend Millward, a man whom she otherwise venerates: "I wish to goodness he had a son himself! He wouldn't be so ready with this advice to other people then;--he'd see what it is to have a couple of boys to keep in order" (43). The irony rebounds on Mrs. Markham, who attempts to convince Helen that giving her five year old Arthur some wine with his cake is harmless and that her decision to make Arthur hate spirits will make him unmanly. Helen's argument is spirited, eloquent, and lengthy. It occupies most of Chapter 3, "A Controversy," and is echoed in Chapter 4 in Lawrence's dispute with the opinionated vicar, whose inadequacies are pointedly clear. (Neither the characters nor the readers know at this point that Lawrence is Helen's half-brother.) Lawrence, whose father dies of drink (64; see also the account in Chapter 31, 279), suggests what all modern addiction researchers know--that some people are incapable of moderation and that the tendency towards addiction runs in families (64). (Whether this is the case for biological or psycho-social reasons is irrelevant here.) Not only is Reverend Millward ignorant of and insensitive to Helen's and Lawrence's experiences of addiction; he may well be blind to his own excessive consumption of ale and wine, which he rationalizes in religious terms. Lawrence is resistant to his harangue, as was Helen. Much later, in Chapter 51, although Millward and the community know far more than they did about Helen's predicament, and it is no longer seen as scandalous, Millward remains as self-righteous and ignorant as ever. He obstinately maintains that Helen was wrong to leave her husband (462). Millward's prestige in the community and his presence in the midst of those whose distinguishing characteristics are their tendencies to tell Helen what to do and then to gossip frivolously or maliciously about her represent the authorial undermining of the value of conversation.

Books foster Gilbert's relationship with Helen; speech confounds it. Helen is polite to, but distant from, him and the community; he attempts to breach this gap in Chapter 8 by conversations on impersonal subjects and, more successfully, by lending her books and borrowing hers. In quick succession, he makes a gift of a puppy to little Arthur, then a book (approved in advance by Helen), then a copy of Scott's Marmion to her--which she accepts only after attempting to protect her independence by paying for it. The dog wins Arthur's heart, but Helen is to be approached through texts. Chapters 9 through 15 chronicle the vicious rumours spreading through the community that Arthur's resemblance to Lawrence must indicate that Helen and Lawrence are lovers. Though the lovesick Markham has been appropriately skeptical of the innuendo, his misunderstanding of a fragment of furtive conversation he overheard between Helen and Lawrence seems to confirm the slander. What he has heard enrages him so much that he physically attacks and seriously injures Lawrence (Chapter 14). In the ensuing confrontation between him and Helen, he takes her posses-

sion of Lawrence's copy of Humphrey Davy's Last Days of a Philosopher as one more corroboration of their guilt, and though she refuses to explain her painful mystery orally, she does give him her journal--with the most recent pages, her impressions of him, ripped hastily away.

Following the journal (which encompasses Chapters 16 through 44), we are reminded of the double timeline of the novel: Markham resumes his letter to Halford in the present and that letter recounts his resumption of his distanced relationship with Helen, a "reconciliation" (the title of Chapter 45) effected mostly through the reading of her letters to her brother. Although Gilbert apologizes to Lawrence for having attacked him, he tells Lawrence that "a little candour and confidence" on Lawrence's part might have prevented the quarrel (414), thus reminding the reader both of the negative power of slander and of the wistful desire for full disclosure. Helen leaves to attend her estranged husband through his last, fatal illness, and the "reconciliation" is maintained, though in a strained fashion, through letters. Lawrence grants Gilbert permission to read her letters, passages of which Gilbert memorizes and enters in his own diary (Chapter 49, 444). Inscribing these fragments of her letters shows that his love for her grows; it is an utterly private devotion, however. Understandably reacting (perhaps overreacting) to her concern for propriety, he neither attempts to contact her nor makes serious inquiries about her of her brother. Helen later berates him for his reticence, arguing that he should have been more assertive. I shall return to this detail. What I wish to stress is that whether his conduct or her criticism of it was appropriate is beside the point: the very ambiguity points to a wistful desire for open, oral communication at the same time that it confesses its reliance on writing, its distrust of the very possibility of honest speech.

Only when gossipy rumours (false, of course) of her second marriage reach him does Gilbert become bold enough to pursue and confront her with his desire to marry her. The wedding he arrives at is of Lawrence and Esther Hargrave; ironically, Lawrence had sent Gilbert a letter, which had not yet arrived (Chapter 51, 468) about his impending marriage. Had the letter arrived in time, it would have cleared up the mystery, but it also would have prevented the cautious Gilbert from seeking out Helen. It is not clear whether Lawrence intentionally delayed posting the letter. If Lawrence's intentions are unimportant, the coincidence of the tardy letter emphasizes the truth value of written communication at the same time that its failure points to the desire for oral disclosure. Local gossip exacerbates Gilbert's reservations about courting Helen: he realizes that her double inheritance from her husband and uncle have made her very wealthy. Aware of her sensitivity to scandal, he does not want to be seen as a fortune-hunting adventurer: "She's a widow, but quite young yet, and uncommon handsome--a fortune of her own besides, and only one child. . . . I should think she'll marry none but a nobleman,

myself" (Chapter 52, 476). The gossip, while not false about her wealth, leads to yet another of Gilbert's false conclusions. Happily, he does not attack anyone this time.

Gilbert has believed all along that he has been respecting Helen's wish for privacy. The final chapter, in which the lovers are brought together, is suffused with even more details about reading. Gilbert and the reader learn that Helen is angry that Gilbert neither wrote to her, nor, according to her brother's letters, inquired about her. When he does encounter her, little Arthur observantly "read[s]" Gilbert's reaction to Helen's not wearing a widow's cap. In her nervousness, Helen instinctively reaches for what had always been her comfort or escape--a book--and begins "to turn over the leaves in an energetic kind of abstraction . . . turning over a dozen leaves at once" (481). Deciding to clarify matters once and for all, Helen secures privacy for their long-deferred oral confrontation by dispatching little Arthur in search of yet another book. The lovers clear up their misunderstandings, declare their love for one another, and make a commitment to marry within a year, another deferral to be coped with by reading and writing. Gilbert's objections to "the misery of so long a separation" are met with Helen's rejoinder, "It would not be a separation: we will write every day . . . " (486). At the moment that the time of their wedding is established, Arthur returns, saying, "'Mamma, I couldn't find the book in either of the places you told me to look for it' (there was a conscious something in mamma's smile that seemed to say, 'No dear, I knew you could not'), 'but Rachel got it for me at last'" (487). A brief, epilogue-like account of their wedding and happy twenty years of family life concludes the extended letter to Halford and the text's preoccupation with the ways in which writing and books can overcome problems caused by false gossip and inappropriate oral reticence.

Within Helen's journal, which is embedded in the narration occupying Chapters 16 through 44, the same pattern of details indicating dependence on writing and distrust of, yet yearning for, reliable oral communication is evident. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the subplot of Helen's timid friend Milicent and her husband Hattersley, one of Huntingdon's drinking cronies. Like Lowborough (and unlike Grimsby who later dies in a drunken brawl), Hattersley eventually stops drinking and rebuilds his life. In Chapter 42, "A Reformation" (a contemporary writer would call it a "recovery"), in a gesture which strikingly anticipates current clinical interventions with alcoholics, Helen helps him to see reality by showing him the difference between the frank letters his wife (and Helen's friend) Milicent sent to Helen and the timid ones she sent to Hattersley regarding his drinking (384-85). It is only the written letters addressed to Helen which have an impact on Hattersley. Helen believes that Milicent ought to have confronted him herself, but Milicent is equally sure that "anything that I could have said . . . [would] only have bothered him." Hattersley responds, "You never tried me, Milly" (386). Whether Millicent's

defeatism is justified is unclear; Helen's earlier oral attempt to confront him was unsuccessful. When Helen had told Hattersley in Chapter 31 what Milicent would not tell him (despite his attempts to physically bully the secret out of her), that she was crying because of her "shame and humiliation" at his drunkenness, he reacted with "a stare of stupid amazement" at Helen's "impudence" and anger--expressed by throwing books at the laughing Huntingdon. In the subsequent chapter, "Comparisons: Information Rejected," Hattersley repeatedly blames their marital problems on everything but his own intolerable behaviour. His last defense is Milly's silence: "If my ongoings don't suit her, she should tell me so" (299). Whether an oral challenge from his wife would have been any more effective than the oral challenge from Helen in making him see the light is uncertain. What is clear is that reading his wife's misery in her letters did so. It is the power of the written word that precipitates his reformation/recovery.

Neither oral nor written discourse between Helen and Huntingdon has any effect on Huntingdon's spiraling addiction. His denial is overcome--too little, too late--by the ravages of his illness. Helen's own writing, however, is important in her own recovery. Writing permits her to explore her own sometimes contradictory feelings, to make a permanent record of her confidences (the double meaning of the word "confidence" is important), and to preserve her sanity. As Huntingdon declines, Helen becomes stronger and wiser. The early journal entries record her earnest intention to "save" him (Chapter 17, "Further Warnings," 167) and "deliver" him (Chapter 20, "Persistence," 190), an inclination, incidentally, which is widespread among daughters of alcoholic fathers who marry men with drinking problems as they so frequently do. The journal chronicles and her subsequent letters to her brother demonstrate her movement to a realistic awareness that the task is beyond her power (451). The pattern, therefore, seems to be that writing is at first a private, illusion-filled refuge from reality, but one which soon becomes a refuge from the madness around her--her only way to confront reality. A typical journal entry, this time after the confrontation with Huntingdon about his infidelity, occurs after she reassures Rachel (who has urged her to grieve more volubly) that "I <u>am</u> calm." Nevertheless, despite this resolution,

> I found my bed so intolerable that before two o'clock I rose . . . and sat down in my dressing-gown to recount the events of the past evening. It was better to be so occupied than to be lying in bed torturing my brain with recollections of the far past and anticipations of the dreaded future. I have found relief in describing the very circumstances that have destroyed my peace, as well as the little trivial details attendant upon their discovery. No sleep I could have got this night would have done so much towards composing my mind and preparing me to meet the trials of the day. (317)

This orientation towards contemporary experience rather than "the far past" and "the dreaded future" gives her the ability to focus realistically on her needs, including venting her pent-up emotions and planning a practicable escape scheme.

The journal is the most important way in which the written word is linked with truth and therefore with some measure of power; it is not, however, the only way. The irresponsible Huntingdon is hostile to the world of writing, and not merely to Helen's journal. At the outset of Chapter 24, entitled "First Quarrel," he prevents Helen from reading (221), tries unsuccessfully to do so himself (222), and attacks one of his favorite hunting dogs by throwing a book at it (223). Helen's victory over him consists not merely of her own escape but of her success in both physically protecting their son from his influence and legally protecting him from being disinherited. Because she has learned to distrust his promises, she insists that Huntingdon sign a statement about the property in the presence of witnesses. Despite his prolonged evasions and excuses, he finally does so, an important moment (Chapter 47, "Startling Intelligence," 431). Thus the written word redeems the future for Helen's family, much as her claiming her mother's maiden name--Graham--redeems her past. Once again the written word confers value and permanence in a context in which the spoken word is inadequate.

Helen's journal writing takes place in the library, and it is surely not an accident that in this large country house, it is this same library which is also the site for the activity that makes her escape possible: her painting. This is the room that Huntingdon ransacks in his attempt to destroy her journal and her art. When Helen confronts the dissimulating and adulterous Annabella Lowborough with her knowledge of her affair with Huntingdon, she does so by scribbling her a note on the flyleaf of a book (Chapter 34, "Concealment"), a challenge which is rapidly followed by a confrontation in the library. Out of Helen's regard for the pain which the disgrace would cause Annabella's relative and Helen's friend, Milicent, they agree to avoid a public exposure of the scandal. Because of this silence, Lord Lowborough later accuses Helen of having participated in the deceit (Chapter 38, "The Injured Man," 347). In a longer paper I would like to devote more attention to the implications of this shame-based conspiracy of silence: there are several other instances in which characters keep quiet about their own feelings out of an inappropriate regard for the sensitivities of others. For now, however, I must be content with stressing the significance of books and writing as channels for honest feelings and ideas, and as catalysts, in some situations, for honest spoken communication.

Despite our assumptions in contemporary literary theory about the inherent slipperiness of all language, written and oral, it seems to me that this Victorian realist text asks us to make a valid distinction between them. We have to take seriously not just

Anne Brontë's didactic intention but current insights about writing and speech which emerge from awareness of addiction experience. Oral communication in this novel is represented negatively, more often than not as ineffectual, mean spirited, or false; and written texts--significant and trivial alike--are associated with truth. "I wished to tell the truth," Anne Brontë said in her preface to the second edition (29). "Oh, Reader! If there were less of this delicate concealment of facts--this whispering 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace, there would be less of sin and misery to the young of both sexes who are left to wring their bitter knowledge from experience" (30). Anne's truth is Helen's and Gilbert's truth: that documents--letters and books--have a power to maintain sanity, courage, and love in the presence of both malicious falsehoods and realities which cannot or will not be spoken.

Readers of Dionysos who consider contemporary fiction and reconsider older texts in the light of emerging awareness of addiction ask questions that could not have been posed a few years ago and that cannot yet be answered with certainty now. I would suggest that one avenue of enquiry leading from The Tenant of Wildfell Hall to other alcoholic texts is this: Does addiction create a whole different linguistic economy? It seems clear that writing achieves its special power in the alcoholic, co-dependent relationships within The Tenant of Wildfell Hall because there is no trust; one must enter a sphere where evidence replaces one's word. What remains unclear to me--and I hope to see this question addressed for this text and for others--is whether the linguistic ideal remains oral, a nostalgia for the idea of full disclosure, of honest speech--or whether, in addiction-related texts, a new understanding of the function of language emerges at some point. Is writing still "second-best," or does it in fact become primary? This--not the quest to determine which fictional drunkards are barely transmuted versions of particular historical drunkards--is the sort of question which ought to engage the energies of addiction-sensitive readers interested in the subtle but powerful impact of familial alcoholism on co-dependent writers.

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NOTES

1 Anne Brontë, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. ed. G. D. Hargreaves, (London: Penguin, 1979). All page references are to this edition and will be cited in the text.

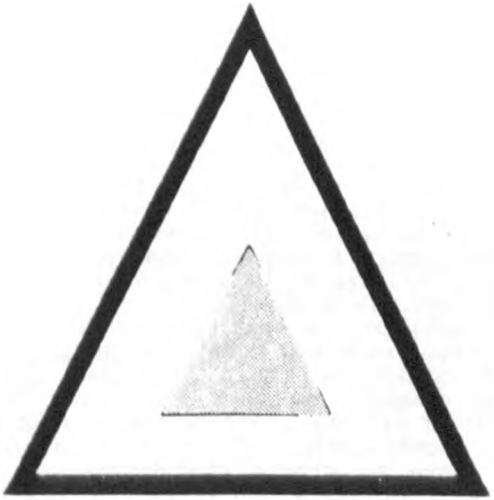
2 None of the standard studies addresses this question; neither does the only article I came across which looks at The Tenant of Wildfell Hall as a representation of alcoholism: Annette Federico's "'I must have drink': Addiction, Angst, and Victorian Realism," Dionysos 2 (Fall 1990): 11-25. Jan Gordon's excellent study of the relationship between the novel's orality and its textuality, which

I discovered after completing this paper, is a lucid defense of its structure. Gordon is silent, however, on the special anxiety about orality engendered in an alcoholic context. See "Gossip, Diary, Letter, Text: Anne Bronte's Narrative Tenant and the Problematic of the Gothic Sequel," ELH 51.4 (Winter, 1984): 719-45.

3 For example, see Sharon Wegscheider, Another Chance: Hope and Health for the Alcoholic Family (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior, 1981); Claudia Black, It Will Never Happen to Me: Children of Alcoholics as Youngsters, Adolescents, Adults (Denver, CO: M. A. C., 1982); Janet Woititz, Adult Children of Alcoholics (Hollywood, FL: Health Communications, 1983); Robert Subby and John Friel, Co-Dependency and Family Rules: A Paradoxical Dependency (Hollywood, FL: Health Communications, 1984; Rachel V., Family Secrets: Life Stories of Adult Children of Alcoholics (San Francisco: Harper, 1987).

4 D. A. Miller, Narrative and Its Discontents (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981).

5 For this reason, among others, P. J. M. Scott argues that Gilbert is not as much of an improvement on Huntingdon as is generally supposed. See Anne Bronte: A New Critical Assessment (London: Vision, 1983) 94-7.



Review Article

SYMPOSIA AS RITUAL AND DISEASE

Roger Forseth

John Maxwell O'Brien. Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy. A Biography. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 336 pp. $29.95.

> O Dionysus, . . .
> Punish this man. But first distract his wits;
> bewilder him with madness.
>
> Dionysus, Dionysus, not Thebes,
> has power over me.
>
> --Euripides. The Bacchae

Among scholars and researchers in the field of the history of alcoholism, a perennial question is whether there was such a disorder or disease before the advent of clinical medicine with its etiologies and its descriptive precisions. The demystification of intoxication and drunkenness, with its concurrent tendency to convert moral and metaphysical dilemmas into treatable disorders, is a phenomenon peculiar to Modernism. But drinking and the abuse of drink is as old as the discovery of fermentation, and I (for one) am not convinced that our current clinical analysis of mood-altering substances and addiction has removed all that much mystery from intoxication.[1] It is therefore refreshing to read a detailed investigation of the culture of drink and of alcoholism in the ancient world.

This new biography[2] of Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 B.C.), by John Maxwell O'Brien (professor of history, Queens College), is an exhaustively researched, full-scale life that, as part of the examination of Alexander's character and achievement, traces his gradual and destructive descent into alcoholism. The Invisible Enemy (i.e., Dionysus, the jealous man/god who drove mad all who did not properly worship him) is documented with 37 pages of notes and a 53-page bibliography. Woven like a Greek chorus through the text are quotations from Homer's Iliad and Euripides' Bacchae, a technique that I found increasingly effective as the biography unfolded. "Alexander is said to have slept with a copy of Homer's Iliad under his pillow" (ix), and on his campaigns he had his annotated copy of the epic carried in a specially-built casket. He also reportedly had committed The Bacchae to memory. It surely is no coincidence that Alexander was particularly enamored of this tragedy, or that he became devoted to the sacrificial worship of Dionysus. Altogether, I find this biography to be a model of scholarship, but since I am not a classical historian, I'll leave to others the definitive evaluation of O'Brien's use of sources, and concentrate, in this review, on the account the author provides of Alexander's complex, ambivalent

sacrifices to Dionysus and his concomitant devotion to undiluted wine.

Greek myths, like Greek tragedies, are family affairs, and since alcoholism to a significant extent is an affliction of families, it is useful to be told that Alexander's father, Philip II of Macedon (382-336 B.C.), was himself a boozer of monumental proportions:

> The Athenian orator Demosthenes and the historian Theopompus of Chios, both of whom knew King Philip II, provide us with graphic descriptions of his drinking. Demosthenes likens Philip to a sponge; Theopompus claims that the Macedonian king not only got drunk on a daily basis, but was often in this same state when he rushed into battle. Political and personal biases permeate these accounts, but there is no question that Philip's drinking was, as J. R. Hamilton claims, "notorious." Philip gave protracted drinking parties, engaged in drinking bouts, and got drunk with predictable regularity. His drinking seems to have followed the pattern of a reward cycle: great expenditures of energy on the battlefield were followed by raucous celebrations and the consumption of huge quantities of "uncut" wine. Theopompus rightly characterized Philip, who was rumored to sleep with a gold drinking cup under his pillow, as a philopotes, a lover of drink. (7)

Ritual justification for vice is an ancient rationalization, and therefore it is no surprise to discover that Dionysian practices formed an important part of Macedonian drinking customs. To the modern (Enlightenment) mind such rituals suggest the ultimate excuse: God encourages one's drinking, indeed demands it. "Dionysus proffered himself through wine, and mortals revealed his personality (as well as their own) through drinking and drunkenness" (2). The ecstasy of intoxication worship, however, had its down side:

> 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. (2)

Dionysus's "divine plan," in short, "is to convert a reluctant suppliant into one of his own devotees and then sacrifice him" (3).

O'Brien's characterization of Philip suggests a primitive, rather crude, soldier, an Enobarbus of almost cartoon proportions. But his son is a different matter. Alexander was, like Napoleon, an extraordinarily complex personality: a moralist, an aesthete, a charismatic leader of enormous subtlety, imagination, and courage. His glory and his tragedy are both to be found in his sacrifices to the spirit of Dionysus: to use a distinction from AA, while the father was the drunk, the son was the alcoholic. In this sense the characterization of Alexander's drinking in this biography, in its delineation of detail, could be extracted from the most recent scientific accounts of alcohol addiction.

One is tempted simply to urge that Alexander's drinking was an inheritance from his father specifically and generally from the Macedonian culture of immersion in the "liquid semblance" of Dionysus (23), but one suspects that his mother, Olympias, was an equally important contributor to his affliction. The Queen was a figure of vital force, the single most powerful influence in her son's life. "Sir William Tarn once wrote that Alexander 'never cared for any woman except his terrible mother'" (12). Though mysterious in its details, her influence is to be found everywhere, in statecraft as well as in mothering. Yet, even "Alexander's devotion was occasionally strained to its limits, . . . On one occasion he is said to have asserted that his mother was charging an awfully high rent for those few months she had lodged him during her pregnancy" (13). And then there was the matter of Olympias and the cult of Dionysus. "She led private bands of women in revelry, and may have become an official priestess in the god's public cult" 13). Both Philip and Olympias were initiates in Bacchic rituals; they surely influenced Alexander's life-long devotion to the god, and to his founding of Dionysian temples throughout the areas of his conquests.

There are three alcohol-related incidents in Alexander's brief existence that epitomize the tragic destructiveness of his drinking, what O'Brien terms his "metamorphosis." In 328 B.C., while on a campaign that reached to Marakanda (Samarkand--"the northeastern limits reached by the god Dionysus" [131]), Alexander murdered Cleitus, the co-commander of the Companion Cavalry who had saved the king's life during the battle of Granicus. At the climax of a dispute between the two during a prolonged drinking-party (symposion), Cleitus hurled at Alexander the line from Euripides' Andromache: "Alas, what evil customs reign in Greece," a reference to a warrior taking credit for another's bravery, whereupon the king "wrenched a spear from one of his bodyguards and killed Cleitus on the spot" (137). Terrible remorse followed, including Alexander's momentary flirtation with the Homeric solution of suicide, but Aristotelian reason, if not moderation, prevailed.

The Ephemerides (or Royal Diaries of Alexander) sets forth, in another incident, the following account of the king's drinking behavior the year before his death:

> They say that on the fifth of the month Dius he drank at Eumaeus', then on the sixth he slept from the drinking; and as much of that day as he was fresh, rising up, he did business with his officers. . . . And on the seventh he . . . drank again; and on the eighth he slept. On the fifteenth of the same month he also drank, and on the following day he did the things customary after drinking. (211)

It was during one of these drinking-parties that the king's alter ego, Hephaestion, whose "capacity for alcohol seems to have at least equalled Alexander's" (212), drank himself to death. The king, who had Hephaestion's physician executed for not stopping his friend from drinking "lay weeping on his comrade for a day and a night before being pried away" (212). Devastated by his loss, Alexander nevertheless learned nothing from it, for these "circumstances foreshadowed the king's own demise within less than a year" (212).

Finally, the king's death itself was alcohol-related. While in Babylon he attended an elaborate symposium. Upon leaving that affair, he was invited

> to a more intimate and intense drinking bout. Alexander drank heavily at this second gathering. He then returned to his rooms, bathed, and slept until dinner was served on the following day. On the 30th [of May, 323 B.C.] he . . . drank heavily again but, believing he felt a fever coming on, bathed and slept in a cool bathhouse. By the 31st Alexander had to be transported on a litter to make his sacrifices. . . . By June 7 [he] was unable to speak. Over the next two days he continued to deteriorate. . . . He died as evening approached on June 10, a month or so short of his thirty-third birthday, not in the midst of a violent encounter or displaying his martial virtue, but frail and ingloriously disabled. (223-24)

All the contemporary accounts of Alexander's last days, according to O'Brien, point to destructive and tragic alcohol indulgence:

> [A]t his last drinking party Alexander called for a 6-quart cup, the cup of Heracles. . . . Proteas, whose drinking prowess had made him a folk hero among fellow Macedonians, took the huge vessel, recited the king's praises and drank deeply, to everyone's applause. Shortly thereafter, Proteas called for the same cup once more and repeated the toast. The king then insisted on another turn at the heroic cup himself. "Alexander took it and pulled at it bravely, but could not hold out; on the contrary, he sank back on his cushion and let the cup drop from

> his hands. As a result, he fell ill and died, because, as Ephippus says, Dionysus was angry at him for besieging his native city, Thebes." (225-26)

Alexander the Great indeed. Alexander the Grandiose: "once again the god humiliated him" (The Bacchae 632).

I have, of course, conveyed only a part of the story. Alexander was the greatest warrior and one of the greatest statesmen of the ancient world, but by weaving the king's affliction into his narrative, O'Brien has vividly conveyed the humanity of his subject without demythologizing (and thereby trivializing) it. As convincing as his case is, however, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the biographer's exploration of Alexander's alcoholism has not been received without controversy. A dozen years ago, O'Brien began publishing his preliminary research.[3] The New York Times picked up the alcoholism theme[4], which was followed by similar accounts (all based on O'Brien's research) in the London Times, Newsweek, Life, the International Herald Tribune, the San Francisco Chronicle, The Journal (Canada), The Weekend Australian, Punch, Le Point, Der Siegel, Franfurter Allgemeine, Europeo, the Athenian Daily, and no doubt in other publications. Why rather obscure material from classical antiquity should elicit sudden and widespread interest is perhaps suggested by a letter from a (Greek?) physician, in response to the original account of O'Brien's research in the New York Times (21 Oct 1980):

> Your article portraying Alexander the Great as an alcoholic was subtitled "Historian Describes a 'Textbook Case.'" Should we teach that to our children? One has to become an alcoholic in order to become great? Perhaps Dr. O'Brien is thinking of the so-called "Irish Disease." If he had ever visited Greece, he would verify the fact that there are no alcoholics. I would challenge him to visit New York hospitals' emergency rooms in quest of a Greek alcoholic.

I rather doubt that Professor O'Brien's book-length treatment of Alexander's alcoholism would change this correspondent's mind. But, in this reviewer's view, the case has been definitively made. A final note: the aim here has been to focus on the evidence and argument for Alexander's alcoholism. It should be made clear that The Invisible Enemy is not solely a monograph limited to the king's affliction, but, in addition, a carefully balanced and beautifully written general biography that is a model of thoughtful scholarship.

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NOTES

1. Progress, however, in the historical examination of alcohol addiction is being made. See, for example, John M. Bowers, "'Dronkenesse is ful of stryvyng': Alcoholism and Ritual Violence in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale." ELH 57 (1990): 757-84; Thomas B. Gilmore, "James Boswell's Drinking." Eighteenth-Century Studies 24 (1991): 337-57; Marty Roth, "The Unquenchable Thirst of Edgar Allan Poe," Dionysos 3.3 (Winter 1992): 3-16; Timothy M. Rivinus, "Tragedy of the Commonplace: The Impact of Addiction of Families in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy," Literature and Medicine 11 (1992): 237-65.

2. "Dionysus," the Prologue to Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy, was published in Dionysos 4.1 (Spring 1992): 3-13.

3. "The Enigma of Alexander: The Alcohol Factor," "Alexander and Dionysus: The Invisible Enemy," Annals of Scholarship 1 (1980): 31-46, 83-105; "The Grand Elixir 2,300 Years Removed: Attributes of Wine in Alexander the Great's Reading," Drinking and Drug Practices Surveyor 16 (1980): 19-21; "Alexander the Great," British Journal on Alcohol and Alcoholism 16 (1981): 39-40.

4. "Alcoholism Defeated Alexander the Great, Research Asserts," 23 Sept 1980; "Letters," 21 Oct 1980; Alexander's Alcoholism Disputed in Greece," 14 October 1980.

Brief Review

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE LIQUOR BOTTLE

Barnaby Conrad III. Absinthe: History in a Bottle. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988. 160pp. $18.95.

Wilfred Niels Arnold. "Absinthe." Scientific American 260.6 (June 1989) 112-17.

Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) is reported to have said, "Whiskey and beer are for fools; absinthe for poets; absinthe has the power of magicians; it can wipe out or renew the past, and annul or foretell the future." The author of Cynara also wrote that "absinthe makes the tart grow fonder." And, in his prose poem Absinthia Taetra he declared: "The man let the water trickle gently into his glass, and as the green clouded, a mist fell from his mind. . . . Memories and terrors beset him. . . . And that obscure night of the soul, and the valley of humiliation, through which he stumbled, were forgotten." These and a multitude of other gems are to be found in Barnaby Conrad's tour of what is perhaps the most

romantic (and destructive) of all drinks. His history is beautifully illustrated with contemporary posters, advertisements, paintings, and photographs. The text covers the literary and artistic fin-de-siècle world of absinthe drinkers and addicts with flair, and includes an appendix, "A Modern Analysis of Absinthe," and an extensive bibliography.

The phrase, "the culture of drink," was never more appropriate than when applied to the rituals associated with absinthe. A young Parisian author and playwright, Henri Balesta, wrote (in Absinthe et Absintheurs [1860]): "In the morning, at lunchtime, the habitués invaded the bistro. The professors of absinthe were ready at their station, yes, the teachers of absinthe, for it is a science, or rather an art to drink absinthe properly, and certainly to drink it in quantity. They put themselves on the trail of the novice drinkers, teaching them to raise their elbow high and frequently, to water their absinthe artistically, and when, after the tenth little glass, the pupil rolled under the table, the master went on to another, always drinking, always holding forth, always steady and unshakable at his post" (Conrad 22).

Thus the story of absinthe begins; and, like all good stories, it also embodies a middle, a complication that includes among its celebrants many of the most famous cultural figures (as well, alas, as a multitude of ordinary folk) of the second half of the nineteenth century. The end of the story is set forth by Wilfred Niels Arnold (in his comprehensive, technically informed "Absinthe"): "A prohibition on both the sale and manufacture of absinthe in France was formalized in 1915, but there was some vacillation, and the ban was not reasonably enforced until some years later. Belgium, Switzerland, and the U.S. and Italy took similar actions between 1905 and 1913" (116). It is not difficult to see why. "The binge drinker [of absinthe]," Arnold writes, "experienced hallucinations from acute intoxication; the chronic imbiber suffered some irreversible brain damage to an extent dependent on the amount of absinthe and the frequency of consumption" (117). Absinthe, of course, is a narcotic (wormwood) as well as an alcoholic beverage, and physiologically (and indeed mentally) is far more permanently destructive than that other famous synthesis, laudanum (tincture of opium).

But, to this reviewer at least, perhaps the most fascinating part of the story is the iconography that enriched the culture of absinthe like the art-work of a cathedral high altar: the paintings, posters, photographs, advertisements (including a clock!), and, above all, the incredible bottles that are beautifully reproduced in Barnaby Conrad's book.

NOTES AND COMMENT

Dwight B. Heath (anthropology, Brown; editor, Alcohol and Drug Study Group Newsletter) contributed the article "US Drug Control Policy: A Cultural Perspective" to the special issue of Daedalus: "Political Pharmacology: Thinking About Drugs" (Summer 1992). . . . Dionysos contributor Timothy M. Rivinus's article, "Tragedy of the Commonplace: The Impact of Addiction on Families in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy," appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of Literature and Medicine. . . . A poll, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, indicates that depression "was considered to be a health problem by 46 percent of those surveyed, while 43 percent saw it as 'a sign of personal or emotional weakness.'" "Alcoholism was regarded as a personal weakness by 58 percent of those polled and as a health problem by 46 percent" (The New York Times, 11 Dec 1991). . . . "'It's just a disgrace to an entire generation,' said Hunter S. Thompson, when asked about Mr. Clinton's decision not to inhale. Mr. Thompson, reached at his home in Woody Creek, Colo., was clearly astounded by Mr. Clinton's reserve. But he had to get off the phone in a hurry, he said, because the local police were accusing him of firing a military rocket at a snowmobile" (The New York Times, 7 April 1992). . . . "Princess Diana urged people not to judge alcoholics and drug addicts. Speaking to the 36th International Congress on Alcohol and Drug Abuse [at Glasgow, Scotland], Diana said addicts are often highly sensitive and creative people. 'Sadly, many people still regard addiction as a moral weakness. A number of these self-appointed moralists even choose to make such judgments from behind a cloud of cigarette smoke.' She said people with lively imaginations often hide in fantasy for protection from the world. 'Imaginative children lose themselves in fantasy worlds through stories. Later they might choose to escape through Ecstasy, uppers, alcohol and addiction'" (Associated Press, 17 August 1992). . . . "Our victim culture is fueled in large measure by the desire to redefine inappropriate conduct as disease or 'addiction.' If our philandering, gambling, shopping or even our criminal conduct is the result of 'illness' rather than the result of poor character, or immoral decisions, we are off the hook. We have abolished sin by medicalizing it" (Charles. J. Sykes, "I Hear America Whining," The New York Times, 2 Nov 1992; from his A Nation of Victims: The Decay of American Character [St Martin's, 1992]. . . . "Psychoactive substance dependence" [addiction] occurs, if: "The substance is taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than the person intended. There is persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to stop. The person spends a great deal of time trying to get the substance. Using the substance disrupts important social obligations or work activities. The person continues to use the substance despite knowing that it is causing problems. There is marked tolerance. There are withdrawal symptoms. The substance is taken to avoid the withdrawal symptoms" (The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised).

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Timothy M. Rivinus is director of the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Service at Butler Hospital in Providence, Road Island, and is assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the Brown University School of Medicine. His recently published article on Hardy is noted in "Notes and Comment."

Jack Williams, whose Marla II will be published in the Spring 1993 issue of Dionysos, has published poems in The Quarterly and The Chattahoochee Review. He won the 1990 Agnes Scott College Writers' Festival Poetry Award. He is a technical writer working and living in Atlanta.