

10045

DRINK, MODERNITY AND MODERNISM

REPRESENTATIONS OF DRINKING AND
INTOXICATION IN JAMES JOYCE, ERNEST
HEMINGWAY AND JEAN RHYS

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the representation of drinking in modernist literature. It takes as its core texts novels by James Joyce Ernest Hemingway and Jean Rhys. It argues that drinking came to acquire a specific set of social, cultural and political meanings in western modernity, and that an understanding of this process is crucial to understanding the semantic complexity which drink and drinking come to acquire in modernist literature.

This study combines a close reading of literary texts with a historical overview of changing social attitudes to alcohol, legislative reforms, popular representations and aesthetic theory. I not only argue that drink becomes a richly polysemic figure in literary modernism, but also that representations of drink and drinking can be theorised using a number of thematically specific critical techniques. Having outlined the development of the 'drink problem' in the nineteenth century, and the manifold ideological ramifications of temperance thought, I develop the concept of 'synthetic transcendence' by way of identifying a specifically modernist response to the ideological problematization of both drinking and intoxication. The notion of 'synthetic transcendence' – which is also a radical philosophical response to the experience of secularisation – produces an 'aesthetics of intoxication' through which I read the key texts of this study.

The specific narrative function of drink is considered in each of the close readings. At the same time, close analysis of the literature is used to embark upon a broader study of the cultural status of drink in the societies depicted. This thesis addresses a theoretical and analytical gap in prior criticism in that it addresses the broad social and ideological contexts out of which modernist representations of drinking emerged, establishes the intrinsic role of intoxication in a number of modernist texts, and provides critical tools with which these representations can be theorised.

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Introduction

Drink, Modernity, Modernism

In March 1851 Charles Baudelaire published a short essay in which he compared the intoxicating effects of wine and hashish. In it, he praises wine for ‘roll[ing] a sympathetic gold over humanity’, for ‘compos[ing] songs and poems’ and for showing that mankind ‘has always yearned for the infinite.’¹ Hashish, he conversely concludes, is ‘useless and dangerous.’² In the course of his discussion of wine’s positive effects on the mind, Baudelaire looks forward to the day when

a truly philosophical physician ... will write an authoritative study on wine, a kind of double psychological profile in which wine and man make up the two subjects. He will explain how and why certain beverages immeasurably augment the personality of the thinking being and create, as it were, a third person through a mystical operation whereby natural man and wine, the animal god and the vegetal god, representing the Father and Son of the Trinity, combine to engender a Holy Ghost, the superior man, who proceeds equally from the two.³

In this study, I will not take up Baudelaire’s challenge; indeed, I am only tangentially concerned here with any specific phenomenological or cognitive effects of alcohol on the individual drinker. Rather, what I will carry out is an excavation of the discursive conditions that made this utterance of Baudelaire’s both possible and meaningful. Following this, I will provide an analysis of comparable representations of drink and intoxication in a number of specific literary texts. In ‘Wine and Hashish’, Baudelaire is interested in the effects of intoxication on creative practice. Conversely, I am

¹ Charles Baudelaire, ‘Wine and Hashish’ (originally published as ‘Du vin et du hachish’, *Le Messager de l’Assemblée* [March, 1851]), Charles Baudelaire in *Artificial Paradises*, trans. Stacy Diamond (1869; New York: Citadel, 1996), pp. 8, 24

² *ibid.*, p. 25

³ *ibid.*, p. 13

interested in how this idea of intoxicated creativity and other related concepts become possible literary tropes. In other words, what I will present here is a study not of what drinking does *to* literature, but what drinking does *in* literature.

I do not suggest that Baudelaire's ironic and self-consciously iconoclastic depiction of drunkenness is a definitive articulation of the idea of drink as it emerges in the core texts of this study; nor that it is a blueprint for modernist representations of intoxication. Nonetheless, Baudelaire's formulation does introduce a number of essential themes. The very fact that Baudelaire wrote this disquisition on drunkenness at all reveals the consciousness of a looming confrontation between 'the flag wavers of sobriety' – 'idiots or hypocrites ... who know nothing of humanity or nature'⁴ – and those who persist in ascribing a positive value to intoxication in the face of an increasingly powerful hegemonic injunction to rationality and self-control. The fact that Baudelaire depicts intoxication in the figure of a sacrilegious trinity reveals an inherently transgressive structural association between the ideas of intoxication and transcendence; in this case a specifically ironic, earthbound, and artificial form of transcendence. Finally, the explicit association of art with an already confrontational idea of intoxication positions the drunken artist as the recalcitrant scourge of bourgeois values; both as exemplified in a hypocritical moral purity, and in an oppressive and assertive faith in the value and power of reason and restraint.

At first glance, the association of a faintly sacrilegious celebration of being drunk with an avant-garde strategy of aesthetic resistance to bourgeois hegemonic power in the sphere of cultural practice may seem, to say the least, overly expeditious. However, it is the task of this study to justify just such a critical assertion; or, rather, to justify the application of a critical perspective which would allow for such a conclusion to be drawn from analyses of the representation of drink in modernist literature. Beginning with the 'Gin Epidemic' – that series of moral panics around public drunkenness that spread across Britain in the mid-eighteenth century – drink, I will argue, becomes a nexus of social anxieties and conflicts in the modernising societies of Western Europe and America. I will further argue that drink becomes in the nineteenth century an integral element of the problematical discourses around selfhood, rationality and the uses of leisure thrown up by the experiences and projects of industrial capitalism. Consequently, I will suggest, drinking becomes more than

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

simply an incidental or extrinsic aspect of the modernist texts which emerged out of, and defined themselves both within and against, the experience of modernity. Given this very real relationship between drink, modernity and modernism, I will work from the premise that the representation of drink and intoxication in modernist texts can be analysed as an autonomous category requiring its own particular critical tools; but also that such an analysis must at the same time be a study of the discursive conditions by which alcohol became the possible locus of a range of particular and identifiable meanings. What I shall argue throughout this study is that at a relatively specific historical moment drink becomes both the site of a bid for hegemonic power in the sphere of social practice on the part of particular social elites (identifiable under the umbrella rubric of ‘the temperance movement’), and, as a result, the site of a possible mode of transgression and resistance in the sphere of aesthetic practice by particular artistic elites (something I shall identify broadly as a modernist ‘aesthetics of intoxication’). In other words, drink, as it appears in the texts that I discuss, is both an autonomous object of more or less mimetic representation, and an instrumental signifier of broader cultural values.

It may be argued that in asserting a relationship between intoxication and transgression, drink – as opposed to any number of alternative intoxicants – seems an odd subject of study. Looked at from a contemporary vantage point, drink appears to be the least oppositional, and the most culturally privileged of intoxicants. It brings with it neither the connotations of dangerous female power that both Inquisition and Reformation saw in the hallucinogens associated with witchcraft, nor the Orientalist fantasies of torpor and decadence that opium and hashish conjured up in the minds of nineteenth century observers and users.⁵ With Prohibition forming a cautionary but largely forgotten backdrop, contemporary debates around intoxicant abuse and control focus almost exclusively on ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ drugs; ‘drugs’ itself being a performative linguistic category that both announces deviance and excludes from its parameters drink and tobacco. Drink, on the other hand, is an integral part of the social practices of everyday life in the West: the romantic glass of wine, the jovial pint, the celebratory bottle of champagne, the friendly pub, the arcane wine cellar, the warming glass of malt by the mythic homely fireside. And yet, beyond debates over

⁵ In his extended account of opium consumption, Thomas De Quincey explicitly associates opium with the Orient (Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* [1821; Oxford: Woodstock, 1989]) Similarly, Charles Baudelaire writes of hashish producing ‘that blissful state so dear to Orientals.’ (Baudelaire, p. 45)

the relative efficacy of any war on drugs, alcohol simultaneously remains the site of some of our most profound and perennial anxieties: the violence of the drunk and the drunkenness of the hooligan, the uncontrollable addiction of the alcoholic, the risk of foetal damage caused by drinking during pregnancy. While one of the roles of this study will be to scrutinise the historical emergence of these positive and negative connotations of alcohol, central to this project is a desire to make sense of at least some (albeit historically specific) aspects of a practice which is at once so central to Western culture, and yet at the same time so profoundly ambivalent.

That alcohol consumption is historically a culturally privileged activity in Western culture is, in fact, absolutely crucial to this study. I am interested in drink, drinking and drunkenness precisely *because* they represent a largely unexpected site of transgressive practice; because they emerge as possible forms of transgression while simultaneously occupying a place at the heart of the social and religious practices of the West. The historical span of drinking as a privileged cultural practice in Western societies is in many ways self-evident and broad to the extent that a detailed discussion of this history is beyond the scope of this particular study. Suffice it to say, by way of an illustrative example, that when Andrew Sherratt, in a closely researched anthropological study, concludes that in antiquity ‘wine ... in both secular and religious use, was the metaphorical lifeblood of Mediterranean civilization’,⁶ he is in no way contradicting our popular and commonsense images of Greek and Roman culture. Equally, Gregory Austin’s extensive overview of textual references to alcohol from antiquity to 1800 reveals legislative interventions pertaining to the consumption of alcohol dating back from the Babylonian Hammurabi Codex to the first European medieval statutes regulating alcohol consumption in the thirteenth century.⁷ Drink as a highly visible social practice and the object of both regulatory and celebratory discourses over more than two millennia of European history is testified to in the wealth of documentary sources collected in Austin’s chronology.

While I do not wish to dwell further on the depth and breadth with which drink saturates cultural practices in the West generally, there are two seminal figures of drinking in Western culture that are central to my later discussion which I will

⁶ Andrew Sherratt, ‘Alcohol and its Alternatives: Symbol and Substance in Pre-industrial Cultures’, in J. Goodman et al. eds., *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), pp. 11-46 (p. 20)

⁷ Gregory A. Austin, , *Alcohol from Antiquity to 1800: A Chronological History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Information Services, 1985), pp. 7, 94

briefly introduce here. Firstly in Judeo-Christian culture, seminal representations of alcohol can be traced back to Noah's plantation of a vineyard after the Flood, and his subsequent and disastrous drunkenness. However, most important for this study is the crucial function of wine in the Last Supper and the subsequent Christian doctrine of transubstantiation. The consequent association of wine with both orthodox, Christian notions of transcendence and with the established cultural and political hierarchy of the Catholic church informs many of the representations of drink discussed in this study. Secondly, the classical association of drunkenness with Dionysus and the Dionysian will receive detailed treatment below. As I will discuss particularly in my reading of Hemingway, the classical Dionysian – and the drunkenness implacably associated with the god of the vine and of metamorphoses – is not only at the heart of the violence and upheaval of the bacchanalia, but is in equal measure central to the idealised male intellectual exchange of the symposium. It will again be the task of this study to illuminate the degree to which these religious and classical constructions of drinking inform, or provide critical tools which aid the reading of, the texts under discussion.

While the long economic, legislative and religious histories of drink inform this study, they enter it essentially as supporting evidence, not the central object of concern. Equally, while I would agree with Mary Douglas that 'drunkenness ... expresses culture in so far as it always takes the form of a highly patterned, learned comportment which varies from one culture to another',⁸ this thesis will not be an anthropological study of drinking as a practice of everyday life. It is beyond the scope of this study to embark on a comparative study of the different conceptions of intoxication as a set of quasi-regulated practices either across various non-European cultures, or over an extended period of time. I mention the broader history of drink here only in order to point out its deep and extensive cultural roots. Nevertheless, this is not to say that I intend to ignore the importance of drink – and drunkenness – as a somatic practice. Rather, any discussion I provide concerning the cultural meanings attached to the rituals of drink and to drunken comportment will refer to their representation in literature. That is to say, my discussion of the practices of drink will

⁸ Mary Douglas, 'A distinctive anthropological perspective', in Mary Douglas ed., *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drinking from Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 3-15 (p. 4). It is notable that two of Douglas's predecessors in the anthropology of everyday practices – Norbert Elias and Marcel Mauss – do not deal with drinking and intoxication to any great degree. As will be seen, this is a critical blindspot shared by Michel Foucault and, more problematically, Mikhail Bakhtin.

be a discussion not of those practices in and of themselves, but of how those practices are re-presented in particular literary, and in some cases visual, texts. What I shall be commenting on then are not so much ‘real’ practices of drink, as meanings these practices acquire depicted in literature and art. In other words, this is essentially a literary study informed by cultural and historical analysis, not vice versa.

The specific association of drink and literature in Western culture is itself ancient. As I will later discuss, Nietzsche’s influential notion of the Dionysian in art (one which profoundly sublimates the facticity of drunkenness) is inextricable from the etymological derivation of ‘tragedy’ from the Greek *tragos* – meaning ‘goat’: a figure of Dionysus.⁹ One notable classical assertion of the connection between drink and poetic inspiration is Horace’s observation that ‘poems written by water drinkers will never enjoy / long life or acclaim.’¹⁰ The wealth of evidence collected in anthologies such as Simon Rae’s *Faber Book of Drink, Drinkers, and Drinking Places* (1991) testifies to a rich heritage of pre-modern references to drink in literature. Again, however, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide anything more than a cursory overview of this tradition here.

Beyond the quasi-mythic juxtaposition of intoxication and creativity in the figure of the Dionysian, and beyond the enduring notion that drunkenness inspires creative activity on the part of the artist, more practical and instrumental reasons exist for the appearance of drink and drunkenness particularly in prose fiction. In terms of specific narrative functions, drink, to paraphrase Samuel Johnson, can perform the important role of putting in motion ‘what has been locked up in frost.’¹¹ In other words, diegetic drunkenness can serve as a basic tool for powering a narrative forward. At its crudest, a drunken scene can function as a kind of *deus ex machina* creating events and confrontations that would otherwise seem unlikely or impossible. An extended example of this would be the drunken debacle that Gordon Compstock embarks upon in George Orwell’s novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). While a

⁹ Robert Graves, in *The Greek Myths, Volume One* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1957), suggests an alternative etymology: ‘tragedy may derived not from *tragos*, ‘a goat’, a Virgil suggests ... but from *tragos*, ‘spelt’ – a grain used in Athens for beer-brewing.’ (p. 108, n. 3) This etymology nevertheless retains the link to intoxication.

¹⁰ Horace, *Book 1 Epistle 19*, trans. Niall Rudd, quoted in Simon Rae, *The Faber Book of Drink, Drinkers and Drinking Places* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), p. 242

¹¹ Johnson, in an only partially condemnatory observation, stated that ‘Wine gives man nothing. It neither gives him knowledge nor wit; it only animates man, and enables him to bring out what a dread of company has repressed. It only puts in motion what has been locked up in frost. But this may be good, or it may be bad.’ (quoted in *ibid.*, p.315)

lengthy and interesting drunken scene in itself, the event essentially serves as a marking point in a broadly sober narrative of social and spiritual despair. Compstock's drunk, the narrator explains, marks 'a period in his life [which] had dragged him downward with a strange suddenness.'¹² It is, fundamentally, an instrumental narrative hinge on which swings the door dividing Compstock's behaviour as socially acceptable and socially disgraceful.¹³

The second, and perhaps most crucial, narrative function of drink is not an aspect of drink itself, but is the space in which drink is consumed. The public drinking place – the pub, the bar, the saloon, the café, the club – provides, in narrative terms, uniquely heterogeneous public space. At its simplest the bar represents a space outside of the limiting spheres of home and work, a site of simultaneous performance and revelation, in which disparate characters can come into direct discursive contact with one another. It is, in this sense, a space in which narrative events can happen or be prepared for. However, my reading of the core texts of this study – all of which rely heavily on the depiction of drinking in bars – is predicated on the assertion that the drinking place is also a regulated, codified and ritualised space. It is largely by way of justifying this predicate that, in Chapter Three, I discuss in depth the emergence of the bar as a discursive site of conflict over its values and meanings in terms of class and, more particularly, gender. In my readings of Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys, conflicting mythologies of the bar and its meanings – produced as much by discourses which served to condemn public drinking as by celebratory notions of public drinking – will be foregrounded in order to illuminate the often veiled, but always profound and ambivalent, polysemy of the bar as a narrative space.

The third important issue around the diegetic depiction of drink and drinking is that the literary representation of drunkenness produces a particular set of technical problems around the representation of cognitive states. In asking how the author is to represent drunkenness, the literary representation of drunkenness asks how literature is to represent states of mind in any form. Clearly this is a pressing issue for a modernist prosaics in which, as Virginia Woolf famously argued, the 'proper stuff of fiction' is the 'ordinary mind on the ordinary day ... [the] semi-transparent envelope

¹² George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 221

¹³ In many ways, this novel is an anglicised reworking of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* (1864). It is notable that in both books, drunkenness leads the anti-heroes to brothels and forms of sexual humiliation. That both these books depict humiliating drunken sexual encounters is characteristic of a structural relationship which I will identify as crucial to this study: one which imbricates drink with both deviant sexuality and perverted fertility.

surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.’¹⁴ What the representation of intoxication foregrounds in this regard is the degree to which the ‘ordinary mind’ is itself always already a literary construction. The very alterity of drunken cognition, and the problems of representing it in simultaneously comprehensible and accurate language, throws into relief the essential literariness of any rendering of consciousness in prose. Why, it asks, should ‘sober’ consciousness divide itself neatly into sentences and paragraphs if drunken consciousness does not? At the same time, however, those very real questions about the limitations of mimesis that intoxication poses open up the possibility of self-conscious literary experimentation at its most radical. Indeed, I will suggest in my analysis of *Ulysses* that it is precisely the attempt to depict intoxication as a cognitive condition rendered in literary form which Joyce manipulates as a means to performing his most audacious feat of literary experimentation, and his most self-aggrandising assertion of his own radical modernity.

If the representation of intoxication is a specific problem for modernist literary aesthetics, then the acknowledgement of intoxication as a possible conscious condition is a problem for modernity as a philosophical and ethical project. I have suggested already that the ascription of positive value to intoxication becomes a possible antagonistic stance on the part of avant-garde writers and artists because of ideological value ascribed to reason and sobriety in the culture of industrial capitalism. This dialectic in which conflicting value systems confront each other in the metonymies of drink and sobriety is a foundational element of this study and will be returned to throughout. On a strictly philosophical level, however, the possibility of intoxication raises questions about the relationship between consciousness and rationality, and the relationship between consciousness and both the material and / or metaphysical ‘real’. This again has profound implications for aspects of modernist aesthetics. In order to clarify what is at stake here, I will briefly discuss the idea of intoxication as it emerges in William James’ analysis of religion and religious feeling *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

In a passage considering the different levels of mystical experience to which humans have access, James argues that:

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’, quoted in Miriam Allott ed., *Novelists on the Novel* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 77

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the *Yes* function in man.¹⁵

What is important in this observation is not so much the positive value James ascribes to intoxication as the fact that he acknowledges it as a possible conscious state that is fundamentally other to rationality. What is more important again is that throughout his discussion of religion, James ascribes the mystical state not to the intercession of a numinous other – at least not to any intercession that can be verified – but to the inherent tendencies of the human mind. That is, while James ambivalently affirms a belief in God at the end of his lecture series, he does so for essentially pragmatic reasons: because a belief in God can produce positive effects in terms of human happiness. For James, drunkenness is valuable because it is ‘one bit of the mystic consciousness,’¹⁶ and the mystic consciousness is good for two reasons: firstly because it produces positive effects on the experience of being (which is not to say it produces more valid truth claims); and secondly because it foregrounds the problematic assumption of privileged truth claims on the part of rationality. Mystical states do not prove transcendent truth, but rather prove man’s capacity for experiencing transcendence; at the same time, they ‘absolutely overthrow ... the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe.’¹⁷

Understood in these terms, intoxication is not only ideologically oppositional in relation to instrumental rationality, but also the means to a form of transcendence that can be divorced from theology. This amounts to what I will describe later as ‘synthetic transcendence’; that is, a form of atheistic and anthropocentric transcendence both actually and symbolically afforded by alcohol and which emerges in differing guises in the work of such varied modernist writers as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Walter Benjamin. The roots of ‘synthetic transcendence’ can be traced back to Immanuel’s Kant’s transcendental philosophy,

¹⁵ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902; London: Fontana, 1962), p. 373

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 411

the emergence of which in the intellectual culture of Western Europe has been identified by critics ranging from Clement Greenberg to Michel Foucault as instituting the self-critical perspective on which modernism in the arts is predicated.¹⁸ Louis Sass in a study of the relationship between madness and modernism argues that ‘Kant initiated the transcendental turn whereby the structures of reality came to be seen as subordinate to those of the knowing subject, and it is this that makes him the true source of modernism in both art and thought.’¹⁹ In Chapter Four, I will discuss the combined relationship between a Kantian philosophical position which disbars possible access to the numinous, a collapse in theological perspectives, and the subsequent emergence of a modernist aesthetic in which the ironic, dangerous, and self-consciously synthetic transcendence of intoxication becomes a pivotal figure in literary and artistic attempts to represent the experience of modernity.

To this extent, then, I am concerned with the relationship between drink, modernity and modernism in two specific trajectories: the degree to which drinking as a practice becomes a transgressive action, and the degree to which intoxication as an idea becomes an aesthetic category. In concrete terms, I am interested in the practice and representation of drinking as a culture which has at its heart the increasingly problematic social space of the bar, and in the representation of the drinker which has at its heart the problematic phenomenological experience of intoxication. I am less interested, therefore, in pursuing purely metaphorical analogies between the fluidity and disorientation of modernity – such as those which figure so prominently in Marshall Berman’s analysis of modernism – and the fluid nature of alcohol and the disorientations of being drunk.²⁰ I will argue below that the very real physical and cognitive effects of drunkenness are crucial to an understanding of the literary representation of drunkenness; however, this study is not predicated on the metaphorical similarities between this and an experience of modernity in which, as James McFarlane puts it, ‘thought seemed to undergo something analogous to a

¹⁸ Greenberg identifies ‘Kant as the first real Modernist’ (Clement Greenberg, ‘Modernist Painting’, in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison eds., *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* [London: Harper and Row, 1982], pp. 5-10 [p. 5]). Foucault identifies Kant as inaugurating the ‘attitude’ of modernity (Michel Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment’ [<http://eserver.org/philosophy/Foucault/what-is-enlightenment.html>])

¹⁹ Louis Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature and Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 302

²⁰ A characteristic excerpt from Berman reads: ‘Fluidity and vaporousness will become primary qualities in the self-consciously modernist painting, architecture and design, music and literature, that will emerge at the end of the nineteenth century.’ (Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* [London: Verso, 1982], p. 144)

change of state: a dissolving, a blending, a merging of things previously held to be forever mutually exclusive.’²¹ What I am interested in is not the fact that intoxication is ‘a bit like’ certain depictions of the experience of modernity, but rather the way ideas of intoxication respond to that experience of modern life which Wyndham Lewis described as ‘the everyday drunkenness of the normal real.’²²

It is well documented that the writers I focus on in this study drank to some degree.²³ However, I am not concerned with Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys as drinkers *per se*. To this extent, my study diverges from the majority of work previously carried out on the relationship between drinking and literature.²⁴ One of the first, and certainly the most explicitly biographical, book length studies into the relationship between drink and literature is Tom Dardis’ *The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer* (1990). Here, Dardis pursues the argument that the alcoholism of particular American modernist writers such as Hemingway and Faulkner can be identified as leading to a decline in their literary skills.²⁵ In arguing that ‘the idea of the writer as drinker seems to be a particularly American one’,²⁶ Dardis follows the lead set initially by Alfred Kazin in his 1976 essay “‘The Giant Killer’: Drink and the American Writer’.²⁷ Here Kazin lists five out of six American Nobel Prize winners who can be identified as either alcoholic or heavy drinkers. This list will re-emerge, with some additions and modifications, in both Robin Room’s article ‘A “Reverence for Strong Drink”: The Lost Generation and the Elevation of Drink in American Culture’ (1984), and in John W. Crowley’s book length study *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction* (1994).²⁸

²¹ James McFarlane, ‘The Mind of Modernism’, in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane eds., *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (1976; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 71-93 (p. 80)

²² Quoted in Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 269

²³ What biographical references there are to the drinking habits of Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys will be cited as and when they become relevant in the subsequent discussion.

²⁴ The biographical tendency which informs much previous criticism in this field will be discussed and critiqued in detail later in this study, particularly in chapter seven.

²⁵ Tom Dardis, *The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer* (London: Abacus, 1990)

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 4

²⁷ Alfred Kazin, “‘The Giant Killer’: Drink and the American Writer’, *Commentary* (March, 1976), pp. 44-50. Kazin’s basic argument here is that American writers tended to drink as it simultaneously allowed them ‘to be different from the unsophisticated “booboisie” [and] the same as “regular fellers”’. (p. 50)

²⁸ See Robin Room, ‘A “Reverence for Strong Drink”: The Lost Generation and the Elevation of Drink in American Culture’, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (1984), pp. 540-6 (p. 541), and John W. Crowley, *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 36-7. Sue Vice, reviewing the criticism in this area so far,

Robin Room's article 'A Reverence for Strong Drink' looks beyond the immediate social situation of American writers in their home country and considers briefly some of the issues around the adoption of drinking as a conspicuous practice by the avant-garde that I will discuss at length here. However, Room's goal is fundamentally to identify the specific social effects of the representation of drinking in the work of Hemingway and Fitzgerald on the drinking habits of young Americans in the years following the repeal of Prohibition. The most sustained attempt to provide a critical framework in which to assess the relationship between drink and American writers *as* modernists comes in John Crowley's *The White Logic*. While Crowley deals with some texts that I deal with here (specifically Ernest Hemingway's *Fiesta*) and covers a similar period – albeit from a specifically American perspective – I fundamentally dispute his foundational argument that the anomie and alienation which he describes as the 'Modern Temper' are an effect of alcoholism. In other words, I am unconvinced by his basic assertion that the excessive drinking which he ascribes to modernist writers is the basic cause of their dissatisfaction with the world as they find it. I will return to a critique of specific aspects of Crowley's analysis later in this study. At this stage, however, I would assert that my disagreement with Crowley is twofold: firstly that he reduces 'modernism' to the literary output of a select number of identifiably hard drinking authors whose texts he reads as fictionalised autobiography, and secondly he constructs an aetiological relationship between alcohol and modernist literary practices which both reduces the complexity of the relationship to one of cause and effect and which ignores the huge complex of social, economic, philosophical, cultural and demographic changes – in effect the 'experience of modernity' – out of which modernist art and literature emerges.

Thomas Gilmore's study *Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth Century Literature* (1987) problematises the whole project of reading the private drinking habits of authors into their texts, dismissing such a critical technique as producing 'neither good biography nor good literary criticism.'²⁹ Gilmore instead

describes the emergence of a 'fairly stable canon of addicted texts' all of which are American, and two of which – *Fiesta* and *John Barleycorn* – I will discuss here. (Sue Vice, 'Intemperate Climate: Drinking, Sobriety, and the American Literary Myth', *American Literary History*, Vol. 1, No. 4 [Winter, 1999], pp. 699-709 [p. 699]). The idea of a special relationship between American culture and excessive drinking is reiterated by Norman K. Denzin, who asserts that 'Drinking is basic to the American way of life.' (Norman K. Denzin, *The Alcoholic Society: Addiction and the Recovery of the Self* [London: Transaction, 1993], p. vii)

²⁹ Thomas Gilmore, *Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth Century Literature* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 5

analyses the representations of drink as they appear in his chosen texts. Gilmore suggests, without developing the idea himself, that it would be possible theoretically to pursue a putative link between modernism and alcohol consumption. What interests Gilmore in this regard is the notion that maybe ‘a historical argument can be made for the modern period as one of cultural alcoholism.’³⁰ As this suggests, Gilmore’s concern is to draw from his study insights into alcoholism as an addiction and an illness. While I will not attempt here to dismiss the idea of alcoholism as it is currently understood, nor undermine the attempts of critics such as Gilmore to use literature to find useful approaches to the cure of alcoholism, my analysis will set out with the very different aim of identifying the emergence of alcoholism as a discourse. Contrary to Gilmore, I will argue that the modern period is not one of cultural alcoholism, but a culture in which ‘alcoholism’ is a possible idea; and that it is for precisely this reason that drink becomes an issue for modernist fiction. To this extent, my interest in alcoholism is precisely an interest in it not as a fact, but as an idea.³¹

This critical focus further distances my study from previous criticism in the field of addiction studies.³² While, for example, Edmund O’Reilly is concerned with providing a critical analysis of narrative forms in *Sobering Tales: Narratives of Alcoholism and Recovery* (1997), it is precisely as narrative forms that reflect a given understanding of alcoholism as addiction that the texts interest him.³³ For O’Reilly, alcoholism informs the text as an extradiegetic fact – albeit a problematic fact in terms of definition – not a diegetic idea. While O’Reilly looks for the constructive effects of recovery in particular narrative forms, Doris Lanier, in her study of the relationship between absinthe and art in nineteenth century Paris, looks for the destructive effects of absinthe on literary and artistic production. Lanier’s analysis is coloured by its acceptance of the contemporary temperance literature produced on absinthe as fact. As a result, Lanier becomes solely concerned with either the detrimental physiological

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 15-6

³¹ There have been three special journal issues published which are relevant to my thesis: *Yale French Studies*, No. 50: ‘Intoxication and Literature’ (1974) contains articles on representations of intoxication in Gautier, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Breton, and Céline; , *Mosaic*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June, 1997) contains a number of articles on intoxication and literature; *Diacritics* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Fall 1997) also contains contributions on this subject. *Dionysos: The Journal of Literature and Addiction* is the primary forum for research in this field. I will refer to specific articles within these publications as and when they are relevant to my discussion.

³² As such, the majority of the contributions to Sue Vice et al. eds. *Beyond the Pleasure Dome: Writing and Addiction from the Romantics* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1994) fall outside the scope of this study.

³³ Edmund O’ Reilly, *Sobering Tales: Narratives of Alcoholism and Recovery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997)

effects of absinthe on particular writers and artists or with their representation of it as a deadly and addictive drug.³⁴ In Chapter Four I will argue, similarly to Barnaby Conrad, that absinthe is not ascribed a negative value (or even necessarily a perverse positive value predicated on its facility self-destruction) in modernist art and literature.³⁵ In accepting one model of the meaning of absinthe (that of anti-absinthe campaigners in France and America) and applying it uncritically to a reading of texts largely produced from a position of more or less explicit antagonism towards the cultural values represented by temperance, Lanier's account ignores the complex and dialectical nature of the conflicting discourses which emerged around drink in the late nineteenth century and of which the representation of absinthe became an important locus.

Two books whose critical methods do inform parts of this study, particularly in Chapter Four, are Anya Taylor's *Bacchus in Romantic England: Writers and Drink, 1780-1830* (1999) and Nicholas Warner's *Spirits of America: Intoxication in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1997).³⁶ Both Taylor and Warner discuss the notion in Romantic literature of "two wines – one sublime, one mundane";³⁷ or what Coleridge describes in a notebook as a 'heavenly Bacchus' and a 'bastard Bacchus'.³⁸ While I find their fundamental arguments concerning the relationship between intoxication and transcendence in Romantic literature persuasive and useful, I crucially identify a shift from the Romantic ideas of transcendence discussed by Taylor and Warner towards my concept of synthetic transcendence as a specifically modernist aesthetic. Taylor discusses the dialectic in Romantic thought between seeing intoxication as a genuine, and therefore valuable, means to transcendence and seeing it as a false, earthbound simulation of the transcendent. Taylor then identifies the extent to which value is ascribed, if it is ascribed at all, to the false escapism that drink is limited to providing. Intoxication remains here on the other side of the equation from creativity; either a form of lesser creativity or an escape from the bonds of the creative spirit. I will argue that modernist aesthetics close down this dialectic

³⁴ Doris Lanier, *Absinthe the Cocaine of the Nineteenth Century: A History of the Hallucinogenic Drug and Its Effects on Artists and Writers in Europe and the United States* (London: McFarland, 1995)

³⁵ See Barnaby Conrad III, *Absinthe: History in a Bottle* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988)

³⁶ Anya Taylor, *Bacchus in Romantic England: Writers and Drink, 1780-1830* (London: Macmillan, 1999); Nicholas O. Warner, *Spirits of America: Intoxication in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997)

³⁷ Warner, p. 17

³⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 3: 1808-1819*, ed. Katherine Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), no. 3623

and produce instead an idea of both poetic inspiration *and* intoxication as equally earthbound; an aesthetic in which the heavenly Bacchus and the Bastard Bacchus are subsumed in the category of the all too human (but triumphantly so) Dionysian. In a similar conclusion to Taylor, Warner writes that intoxication in nineteenth century American literature forms what he calls ‘the argument with reality’; that is, the desire to escape the real world – whether to heaven or hell.³⁹ Conversely, I would argue that for modernism intoxication forms an argument with metaphysics, and represents not so much the desire to remain earthbound as the acknowledgment that the earthbound real is, finally, all that there is.

My analysis of temperance fiction in Chapter Three exists essentially in order to identify tropes through which drinking as a social practice was discursively problematised in the literature of the temperance movement. A more detailed study of the narrative forms of temperance is contained in David Reynolds and Debra Rosenthal’s collection of essays *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* (1997).⁴⁰ In his contribution to this collection, Reynolds argues that the temperance literature of the mid-nineteenth century provided a range of narrative tropes which became influential in later American literary representations of evil and alienation.⁴¹ Again, I find his argument persuasive and useful. My analysis of the relationship between temperance and modernist texts, however, pursues a slightly different line of thinking. Rather than tracing specific tropical influences that are passed from temperance to later fiction, my analysis of temperance fiction serves instead to identify the production and reinforcement of specific ideas about the meaning of drinking as a cultural practice which contribute to the broad discursive environment out of which my core texts emerge.

Three books have been published in Britain in the last two years which deal in varying degrees with the relationship between drink and literature. The first is a collection of essays edited by myself and Susan J. Owen which in many ways reflects the concerns of this study in that it broadly avoids biographical readings of literary texts and in that as a whole it aims to illuminate the production of drink as a problematic through the study of its representation in the literature of the modern

³⁹ Warner, p. 220

⁴⁰ David S Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal eds., *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997)

⁴¹ David S. Reynolds, ‘Black Cats and Delirium Tremens’, in *ibid.*, pp. 22-59

period.⁴² More recently, Steve Earnshaw has published *The Pub in Literature: England's Altered State* (2001).⁴³ Here, Earnshaw focuses on one of the central concerns of my study: the drinking space. While Earnshaw shares my interest in attempting to read the changing meanings ascribed to the drinking place over time, his concern is solely with this movement as it applies to England and notions of Englishness. His analysis fundamentally revolves around a shift he identifies in Shakespeare's *Henry IV and V* in which Hal's rejection of Falstaff and the Boar's Head Tavern inaugurates a problematisation of the association between the public house and ideas of communal Englishness which it is taken to represent. As such, his concern is with the pub as a metaphorical space in the national imaginary, whereas I am more interested in the drinking place as a literary space whose idealisation both foregrounds its relation to class identities and effaces its role in gender relations.

Finally, Stuart Walton's book *Out of It: A Cultural History of Intoxication* addresses the role of intoxication in Western culture since Ancient Greece. Walton's polemical argument is founded on his assertion that intoxication is 'a biological necessity' and that, ultimately, intoxication 'is our birthright, our inheritance and our saving grace.'⁴⁴ Walton engages only briefly in a discussion of the relationship between drink and literature – specifically looking at Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* as a particularly eloquent depiction of the author's alcohol-fuelled mind. On the whole, however, Walton's argument is illustrative and descriptive, providing as it does a broad and detailed account of the ongoing confrontation in monotheistic Western societies between the individual drive to intoxication and the authoritarian desire to suppress such practices. I agree with Walton's position that this dialectic is constantly productive; however, my aim here is to analysis precisely the nature of that productive process in the last two and a half centuries. It is characteristic of the relative thinness of Walton's critique (a thinness which is entirely understandable given the breadth of his subject matter and the polemical nature of his project) that he identifies the entire period following Romanticism as one in which the 'understanding of the actions of intoxicants began to be made, and altered consciousness was duly wrested away from its poetic implication in heavenly delirium, to be exposed as a

⁴² James Nicholls and Susan J. Owen eds., *A Babel of Bottles: Drink, Drinkers and Drinking Places in Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000)

⁴³ Steve Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature: England's Altered State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

⁴⁴ Stuart Walton, *Out of it: A Cultural History of Intoxication* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2001), p. 205, 264

squalid chemical business, artificial through and through'.⁴⁵ It is my contention here that it is from precisely this acknowledgement of the artificiality of intoxication that the complexities of modernist representations of drinking emerge. Our contemporary images of the intoxicated artist may owe much to the Romantic image of Coleridge, De Quincey and Shelley striving tragically for the numinous through the defile of laudanum. However, they also owe much to that complex discursive process, and that identifiably modernist gesture, by which both art and intoxication acquired a position as the synthetic consolations for – and defiant challenges to – a profoundly godless cosmos. It is this discursive process, and this aesthetic trajectory, that I will trace here.

Methodologically, this thesis divides into two main blocks with the outline and clarification of my own theoretical position concerning the aesthetics of intoxication in Chapter Four providing the bridge between them. In the first three chapters literary, visual, political, and medical texts are analysed by way of providing the conceptual foundation for the close readings of specific novels contained in the final three chapters. To this extent, my critical methodology in the early chapters is broadly informed by a Foucauldian approach to the subject matter. In other words, what I aim to produce in the first half of this thesis is an analysis of the emergence of drink as a discourse. While specific aspects of Foucault's analyses of the history of madness and medicine will be discussed at various points in this study, it is broadly the model provided in *A History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1984) that informs my overall approach. In other words, I would argue that to understand the meaning of the representations of drink in the core texts – particularly if that representation is taken to be in at least some degree resisting dominant cultural values – then one has initially to outline the complex processes through which drink is constructed as deviant and dangerous. Paraphrasing Foucault's observations on sexuality, I would argue that one has to 'account for the fact that [drink] is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it ... the way [drink] is "put into discourse."⁴⁶ The texts studied in the first part of this thesis are discussed in order to trace the construction of drink as a problematic with specific and identifiable characteristics over a specific and

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 237

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1976; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 11

identifiable period of time. Understanding the discursive production of drink as a problem is absolutely crucial to understanding its depiction in the core texts and it is to this end that the first three chapters are directed.

The starting point of this genealogy – William Hogarth’s 1751 engravings *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* – is to an extent both arbitrary and inevitable. It is arbitrary inasmuch as drink did not suddenly appear *ex nihilo* as an issue in 1751 – Gregory Austin’s chronology testifies to this fact, and it has been argued that the beginnings of a modern, addiction based understanding of alcohol consumption can be identified as early as the mid-seventeenth century.⁴⁷ However, my contention is that the Gin Epidemic represents the first occasion in which public drunkenness on a mass scale – specifically drunkenness associated with the relatively new phenomenon of spirit drinking – becomes the object of sustained and concerted anxiety. Put another way, the Gin Epidemic of which William Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* has become a defining image, is the first modern moral panic around drink. It is self-evident that the Gin Epidemic was made possible only by the material fact of distillation having been popularised as a mechanical process in the preceding century and a half. However, the discursive nature of the Gin Epidemic, the concerns it raised, and the images it produced are identifiably modern.⁴⁸ More specifically, the Gin Epidemic and Hogarth’s *Gin Lane and Beer Street* engravings, articulate concerns around urban poverty, the rational expenditure of time and money, and the techniques of policing of an increasingly concentrated population, that are characteristic of anxieties specific to modernity understood as the lived experience of the social relations of capitalism. Thus, in a study which is concerned with the production of drink as a problem in the culture of Western modernity, and its representation in modernist art and literature which took everyday life as its prime object (something Hogarth presciently adumbrated in his art), the 1751 engravings of *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* emerge as perhaps the only place to begin.

The first three chapters, then, will outline the emergence of drink as a problematising discourse. The fourth chapter will discuss in detail how this problematic discourse produces a set of responses in the sphere of aesthetic practice in

⁴⁷ See Jessica Warner, “‘Resolv’d to Drink No More’: Addiction as a Preindustrial Construct’, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 55, No. 6 (November 1994), pp. 685-691

⁴⁸ That Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* engravings were produced within twelve months of Britain adopting the Gregorian calendar, Diderot publishing the first volume of his *Encyclopedie*, James Boswell beginning his life of Johnson, Voltaire beginning work on his *Philosophical Dictionary*, and Benjamin Franklin inventing the lightning conductor is, I would suggest, only partially fortuitous.

the terms I have identified above. The rest of this study will consist of readings of specific literary texts – James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Ernest Hemingway’s *Fiesta* (1927) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1941), and Jean Rhys’ *Quartet* (1928), *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) – in order to show how these processes of figuration manifest themselves in particular examples of modernist literature. In identifying Joyce, Rhys and Hemingway as modernist writers, I am not attempting to suggest that they definitively represent modernist writing either singly or as a group. I am equally aware of the degree to which the label ‘modernist’ becomes problematic particularly in relation to Hemingway and Rhys. However, my choice of these three authors is predicated on both a temporal framework within which they can be classified fairly as modernist, and on issues of subject matter and style which equally justifies their selection under this terminological rubric.

The period to which I have limited my choice of core texts is from 1922-1941 (although both *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Good Morning, Midnight* are set in 1936 making this more properly the end point of my study). This period has been chosen for a number of reasons. Importantly, it covers the apex and subsequent decline of Paris as an imagined centre of modernism in the arts. Each of the texts I discuss is either partially or wholly set in Paris, or, as in the case of *Ulysses* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, is defined to some extent by its perceived distance from a mythical modernist Paris. While the immediate pre-war period could be seen as a more proper high point of Parisian modernism,⁴⁹ it was in the decade following the end of the First World War that the explicit association between English language modernist writing and Paris achieved its high water mark. Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys all lived in Paris for some or all of the period I discuss. Furthermore, this was a city in which, certainly until the crash of 1933, one could hope to encounter Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Djuna Barnes, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ford Madox Ford, Aleister Crowley, Josephine Baker, Wyndham Lewis, William Faulkner, and any other number of

⁴⁹ Particularly 1913. In this year Guillaume Apollinaire published *Les Peintres Cubistes* and the collection of poems entitled *Alcools* (the poem ‘Vendémiaire’ contains the lines ‘Hear me I am the gullet of Paris / I shall drain you again if I wish / Hear my songs of universal drunkenness’ [Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools*, trans. Anne Hyde Greet [1913; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965], p. 3. For a more detailed discussion of this poem, see James Nicholls, ‘Barflies and Bohemians: Drink, Paris and Modernity’, *Dionysos*, Vol. 10, No. 1 [Winter 2000], pp. 5-21). 1913 also saw the publication of Proust’s *Du côté de chez Swann*, the publication of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, and the first performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

modernist luminaries (and, of course, what Orwell would later call ‘such a swarm of artists, writers, students, dilettanti, sight-seers, debauchees, and plain idlers as the world has probably never seen’)⁵⁰ hanging around the cafés at the crossroads of the boulevards Raspail and Montparnasse. The centrality of café culture both the real and imagined social world of Montparnasse between the wars shows that this was a Paris whose modernity was intimately associated with its drinking culture, and in which modernism and drinking achieved their closest imaginative union.

Added to this, it is in keeping with my overall critical framework that my period of study should largely coincide with the era of Prohibition in the United States (1919-1933). These were texts produced not only in and around a city in which drink and modernity had become closely associated, but in a historical moment in which the nascent cultural and economic superpower, the ultimate victor in the Great War which had in so many ways signalled a seminal crisis of modernity, had outlawed the sale and consumption of alcohol entirely. While previous critics such as Room and Crowley have marked the somewhat self-evident link between Prohibition and the conspicuous drinking of American writers in Paris between the wars, I agree with Gilmore that while ‘Prohibition was a catalyst for heavy drinking in some circles ... it becomes impossible to maintain that the heavy drinking of writers or its incisive exploration began and ended with Prohibition or its immediate aftermath.’⁵¹ Rather, Prohibition provides a structuring framework for this study because it represents the apotheosis of the hegemonic struggles over the meanings of drink that I argue are crucial to a proper understanding of the representation of drink in modernist fiction.

To repeat, then, the texts chosen for close analysis have not been selected as representative of modernism in literature *per se*. Rather, they are texts that are representative of a) the use of drink and drinking places as a means to textual experimentation and the creation of literary styles which challenge traditional forms; and b) the use of intoxication as a means of problematising both a complacent rationalism and a dogmatic idealization of sobriety which had reached its apotheosis in Prohibition. That is, the chosen texts represent three different examples of a broadly modernist response to a post-war crisis in liberal European and American

⁵⁰ George Orwell, ‘Inside the Whale’ (1940), in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 9-50 (p. 9)

⁵¹ Gilmore, p. 16

culture in which drinking, for reasons which I will identify in Chapters One to Four, assumes a pivotal role.

While there is little argument over the status of Joyce as modernist writer *par excellence*, some justification may be needed for my inclusion of Hemingway and Rhys. Arguments over whether Hemingway ‘passes’ as a modernist can be traced back at least as far as Virginia Woolf’s review of his second collection of short stories in which she suggested that ‘Hemingway is not modern in the sense given; and it would appear from his first novel that this rumour of modernity must have sprung from his subject matter and from his treatment of it rather than from any fundamental novelty in his conception of the art of fiction.’⁵² However, it is precisely Hemingway’s treatment of the subject matter of drink and drinking that is relevant to my discussion. As one of the most visible and popular chroniclers of the expatriate society of between the wars Paris, Hemingway’s depiction of the drinking culture has become a definitive depiction of the relationship between drink and both modernity and modernism. I will argue below that while Joyce is primarily of interest for his treatment of intoxication as a cognitive condition and literary opportunity, Hemingway is primarily of interest for his representation of the drinking place as the *locus classicus* of modern and modernist culture.

Jean Rhys is, I would argue, identifiably modernist to the extent that her work is explicitly and self-reflexively experimental and to the extent that, like Hemingway, she centres her narratives around a Paris that had become the perceived heart of modernism in literature and the arts. In the framework of this study, her profoundly ambivalent narratives serve to problematise a number of the foundational assumptions upon which both Joyce and Hemingway’s modernist depictions of drink, drunkenness and drinking cultures are predicated. Rhys’s fiction calls to account both the structural association in Joyce between intoxication and literary creativity as a metaphor of childbirth, and the implacable gender exclusivity of Hemingway’s quasi-utopian depictions of the drinking place. Indeed, my analysis of Rhys’s early fiction provides an endpoint which retrospectively illuminates the depth and intricacy of the gender specificity of the semantisation of drink which I trace in the preceding chapters.

⁵² Virginia Woolf, ‘Review of *Men Without Women*’ (1927) in Jeffrey Meyers ed., *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 101-107 (p. 103)

While my methodology in the first three chapters is informed by the work of Michel Foucault, in the final three chapters I will periodically employ critical categories taken from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, specifically the two ideas of carnival and chronotope. In doing this I aim both to illuminate elements of the texts themselves and problematise Bakhtin's own critical position. My problematisation of Bakhtin's notion of carnival is informed by Marty Roth's essay 'Carnival, Creativity and the Sublimation of Drunkenness' in which Roth argues that Bakhtin's refusal to engage with the material reality of drink and drunkenness as a formative and perhaps foundational aspect of the carnival culture he describes 'betrays his own desire to be true to the body and instead locks it into an official hierarchy.'⁵³ In other words, Bakhtin finds the limits of his own tolerance of carnivalesque activity in the problematic phenomenon of public and unregulated drunkenness. While I will more fully discuss this problem in the light of my preceding analysis at the start of chapter five, I will also identify a comparable manoeuvre in Hemingway's depiction of the carnivalesque as that which must be regulated.⁵⁴ Similarly, I will apply Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope to a narrative space – the bar – which Bakhtin himself only acknowledges in passing.⁵⁵ My aim in doing this will not be to provide a 'Bakhtinian' set of readings, but rather to allow the subject of drink and intoxication to provide a critical perspective from which to assess the uses and limitations of Bakhtin's critical categories. In other words, just as the representation of alcohol and drinking will illuminate previously veiled aspect of the texts under discussion, so it will illuminate critical aporias in the theoretical positions of Bakhtin and others which are employed in reading those very texts.

In conclusion, then, this study argues that there is an identifiable relationship between the representation of drink, drinking and drinking places and modernist

⁵³ Marty Roth, 'Carnival, Creativity and the Sublimation of Drunkenness', *Mosaic*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June, 1997), pp. 1-18 (p. 8)

⁵⁴ In my discussion of this, it will be seen that Hemingway's idealisation of the regulated carnivalesque dovetails into the criticism forwarded by both Terry Eagleton and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White that Bakhtin's carnivalesque is, in fact, that which is always already regulated. See Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981) and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986). Again, I will discuss this issue in more detail in chapters five and six.

⁵⁵ Bakhtin only explicitly mentions public drinking places twice in his major works. Once while discussing the 'slum naturalism' of Menippean satire he lists adventures as taking place 'on the high roads, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, marketplaces, prisons ... and so forth'. Later in the same text, he lists possible 'carnival square' spaces as 'streets, taverns, roads, bathhouses, decks of ships and so on.' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problem's of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Wayne C. Booth [1963; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984], pp. 115, 128

literature, but that this relationship cannot be understood in the terms by which it has previously been assessed. Rather, the meanings which drink accrues in the core texts I analyse can only be fully understood in the light of the emergence of drink as a specific social problem since the middle of the eighteenth century and the emergence of intoxication as a specific aesthetic category in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addressing this argument, the aims of this study are threefold: to trace the emergence of discourses in which drink becomes positioned as a social problematic; to trace the emergence of an aesthetics of intoxication which appears in dialectical relationship to the problematisation of drinking; and to provide usable and useful critical language for analysing the representations of drink in the core texts. The overall objectives, therefore, are to contextualise the relationship between drink and modernist literature historically, and to provide critical tools for looking at the representations of drink and intoxication in literary texts. In other words, my aim is to provide what Sue Vice argues is the much needed ‘development of a theory of *écriture alcoolique*’;⁵⁶ one, however, which continues to assert the need for the rigorous discursive contextualisation of the literary objects of criticism. My interest and methodological approach in the following set of readings, therefore, will be to highlight both the inherent semantic complexity in any literary representation of drinking, but also to reveal how the particular representations within the core texts reveal the heightened and historically specific meanings which drink took on in the period in which they were produced.

⁵⁶ Vice, ‘Intemperate Climate’, p. 709

Chapter 1

A New Kind of Drunkenness: Alcohol and Modernity in William Hogarth's *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*

This Day are publish'd, Price Is. each

Two large Prints, design'd and etch'd by Mr. Hogarth, call'd

BEER-STREET and GIN-LANE

A number will be printed in a better manner for the curious, at Is. 6d. each.

And on Thursday following will be publish'd four Prints on the Subject of Cruelty, Price and Size the same.

N.B. As the Subjects of these Prints are calculate to reform some reigning Vices peculiar to the lower Class of People, in hopes to render them of more extensive use, the Author has publish'd them in the cheapest Manner possible.

To be had at the Golden Head in Leicester-Fields, Where may be had all his other Works.

(*London Evening Post*, 14th-16th February, 1751)¹

'If therefore it be thought proper to suppress this Vice, the Legislature must once more take the Matter into their Hands; and to this, perhaps, they will be the more inclined, when it comes to their Knowledge, that a new Kind of Drunkenness, unknown to our Ancestors, is lately sprung up amongst us, and which, if not put a stop to, will infallibly destroy a great Part of the inferiour People.'

(Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, &c. with some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil*, 1751)²

In 1751, what is now known as the Gin Epidemic was at its height. Estimates of gin consumption in Britain for this period range from 7,000,000 to 11,000,000 gallons in

¹Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times, Volume III*. (London: Yale University Press, 1971) p. 99

²Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings*, ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 88

the years 1750-1751; this for a population of around 6,000,000.³ Statistics of this kind can provide, at best, only a rough estimate of actual levels of consumption, and such figures are liable to be skewed by the fact that gin drinking was centred around London and other urban centres. However, what is not in doubt is that the consumption of gin was an issue of serious concern to the opinion-formers and policy makers of England in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The range of legislation enacted, repealed, modified and reinforced between 1729 and 1759 testifies to the concerns that the apparent explosion in gin drinking engendered in at least those sectors of society able both to articulate those concerns and have them acted upon. Parliamentary Acts aimed at restricting the sale and consumption of gin were passed in 1729, 1736, 1743 (this Act was further moderated in 1747), and 1751. In 1752 a related Act was passed aimed at regulating 'Disorderly Houses' and in 1758 domestic distilling was banned for two years. One of the primary causes of this spectacular increase in gin drinking was that, due to an improvement in agricultural techniques and a run of exceptional harvests, corn production in England went up from 13.1 million to 14.7 million quarters between 1700 and 1760.⁴ Much of this glut of corn, which outstripped the domestic demand for the comestible product, was distilled into gin, which consequently became by far the cheapest and most potent alcoholic drink available. If, as Robin Room suggests, 'the association of drinking problems particularly with city life comes into focus with the first European metropolis, 18th-century London,'⁵ then this is in no small measure due to the emergence of cheap gin as the drink of choice among London's urban poor.

Gin, we are told, was invented around 1650 by Fransiscus Sylvius – a chemist at the University of Leyden. The story is uncertain as the flavouring of spirits with aromatics was not unheard-of at the time. However, it was Sylvius's juniper-flavoured raw spirit diuretic that was to become known as Geneva and go on to boost the burgeoning Dutch distillery business in the second half of the seventeenth

³ See Austin, *Alcohol from Antiquity to 1800*, p. 325; and T.G. Coffey, 'Beer Street: Gin Lane: Some Views of 18th-Century Drinking', *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 27 (1966), pp. 669-692, p. 673. Both Roy Porter (introduction to Thomas Trotter, *An Essay Medical, Philosophical and Chemical on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body* [1804; London: Routledge, 1988], p. x) and Andrew Barr, *Drink: An Informal Social History* [London: Bantam, 1995], p. 188) put the figure for the consumption of spirits between 1742 and 1748 as high as 19,000,000 gallons per annum.

⁴ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 203

⁵ Robin Room, 'Alcohol Problems and the City', *British Journal of Addiction*, Vol. 85 (1990), pp. 1395-1402 (p. 1395)

century.⁶ Gin came to be produced on a large scale in Britain partly because, being made from corn, it could be – unlike brandy which was immensely popular in the late seventeenth century. Importantly, however, gin was also popularised by the court of William of Orange following the revolution of 1688. Temporarily, gin drinking became the signifier of triumphant Protestantism; a short-lived incursion into the privileged role of ale as the signifying drink of English national identity. In 1689, when William deregulated the distilling industry, gin was able to make a bid to represent the same kind of economic and cultural bulwark against the insipid popularity of French brandy as beer had against effete, popish French wine in previous decades.⁷

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, gin had come to be perceived by many as the bane of the nation and as a very real threat to the social fabric and economic status quo. In producing the twin engravings *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* in 1751,⁸ William Hogarth added his weight to what had become a concerted attempt to put an end to the apparent mania for gin drinking; to arrest the apparently uncontrollable rise across a swathe of English society of what the preacher Thomas Wilson described as the ‘fatal Love of a slow but sure Poyson’.⁹ Part of Hogarth’s motivation in producing these prints was to aid his friend Henry Fielding in his ultimately successful bid to have a new Gin Act passed. Once again beer was depicted as the wholesome, lusty drink of the industrious English worker and merchant. An early version of *Beer Street* depicts a spindly, doubtless brandy drinking, Frenchman being hoisted off the street by the sturdy arm of one of the central figures – a Francophobe sideswipe that Hogarth uncharacteristically expunged from the final version of the print. It is crucial to note that the attack being made by Hogarth, Fielding and others around 1751 was not on alcohol generally, but solely and specifically gin. Drinking *per se* was acknowledged at the time as both an inherent feature of the English character and as a virtuous manifestation of natural liberty of free-born Englishmen.¹⁰ However, in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, the

⁶ Austin, p. 238

⁷ See Susan J. Owen, ‘The Politics of Drink in Restoration Drama’, in Nicholls and Owen, *A Babel of Bottles*, pp. 41-51

⁸ See figures 1 and 2

⁹ Thomas Wilson, *Distilled Spiritous Liquors the Bane of the Nation*, quoted in ed. Zirker, *An Enquiry into the Late Cause of Robbers*, p. lx

¹⁰ William Hogarth’s 1733 print *A Midnight Modern Conversation* presents a typically Hogarthian scene of ‘lusty English freedom’ (Jenny Uglow, *Hogarth* [London: Faber & Faber, 1997], p. 230) which both celebrates and satirises the excessive drunkenness of the London club scene. This image of semi-polite,

problem is not simply a question of one national tippie over another – for all the profound cultural differences this can signify. Rather, in Hogarth’s vision of urban prosperity and decay – what in many ways can be read as a representation of the simultaneous daydream and nightmare of English mercantile expansion – we see projected onto the buildings and the bodies a new set of anxieties articulated around a new fear: that of gin drinking as a ferocious and unprecedented threat to the health, prosperity and, ultimately, the fate of the nation.

To a large extent, the problematisation of gin drinking in the middle of the eighteenth century was a response to the idea that gin – cheap, powerful, capable of being mass-produced – was radically different to other alcoholic drinks; and gin drinking was different to any other kind of drinking. In the words of Josiah Tucker, again writing in 1751, gin produced ‘a Kind of instantaneous Drunkenness, where Man hath no time to recollect or think, whether he has had enough or no.’¹¹ In other words, gin drinking represented excess staggering into madness; not a gradual descent into inebriation but a sudden and violent loss of self-control. While the Gin Epidemic revealed a horror of the unknown effects of a ‘new kind of drunkenness’ – that is, an anxiety over a new and unfamiliar cognitive effect – it also importantly revealed an issue about intoxication and class. Gin was not simply about drunkenness, it was about the drunkenness of the ‘lower class of people’.¹² The anxieties expressed over this new drunkenness were not just about health or self-control, although these were certainly important, they were also about economics and social control. The

but undoubtedly excessive, inebriation would become by far Hogarth’s most popular and widely imitated picture, being reproduced in a ‘wide variety of media throughout Europe, including punchbowls produced in China and Holland, and Meissen ware for the Dresden court.’ (David Bindman, *Hogarth and his Times* [London: British Museum Press, 1997], p. 71). Edmund Burke wrote in 1757 that ‘opium is pleasing to Turks, on account of the agreeable delirium it produces. Tobacco is the delight of Dutchmen, as it diffuses torpor and pleasing stupefaction. Fermented Spirits please our common people, because they banish care, and all consideration of future or present evils.’ (Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988], p. 67). Peter Clark points out that the consumption of alcohol was a very real health issue to the extent that uncontaminated drinking water was far from easily accessible. Clark points out that up until at least the early nineteenth century ‘water drinking was still a luxury reserved for the middle and upper classes.’ (Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* [London: Longman, 1983], p. 296)

¹¹ Quoted in Austin, p. 323

¹² See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), esp. pp. 74-83. ‘For nearly a decade [the 1760s]’, writes Thompson, ‘London and the South seemed (in the words of one critic) to be ‘a great Bedlam under the dominion of a beggarly, idle and intoxicated mob without keepers, actuated solely by the word *Wilkes*.’ (p. 75). Thompson also quotes a Wesleyan minister’s journal in which he describes how a local Church of England parson, in trying to intimidate the Wesleyans, ‘got a man to go through the town, and went before the drum, and gathered all the rabble he could, giving them liquor to with him to fight for the church.’ (p. 74)

consumers of this cheap, potent and often deadly drink were, by and large, the poor; and the drunken poor were the dangerous poor, the violent poor, and the economically useless poor.

Henry Fielding's attack on gin drinking in his 'Enquiry into ... the Late Increase in Robbers' is rooted in his theory that crime was largely the result of the attempted emulation, by those who were incapable of affording it, of the lifestyles of the wealthy (this was an age when it was not considered improper that the prime minister's household should consume over 1,000 bottles of white Lisbon wine in a single year).¹³ While this attempted emulation could result in robbery for the purposes of acquiring necessary income, Fielding was more concerned with the fact that the increasingly luxurious and vicious habits that followed in the train of increased prosperity would be passed on to the lower classes. 'Bad habits,' Fielding argues, 'are as infectious by Example, as the Plague itself by contact.'¹⁴ In constructing this model of social behaviour, Fielding attacked the excessive and dangerously continental habits of the rich – throwing opera in with voluptuousness and 'every Kind of Dainty' as indicative of wealthy decadence. However, these habits, which are regrettable and effete in the wealthy, only become dangerous in their lower class manifestations. The hedonistic pleasures of the rich lead, by example, the poor into luxury, vice and crime; and 'when this Vice descends downward to the Tradesman, the Mechanic, and the Labourer, it is certain to engender many political Mischiefs.'¹⁵

Fielding's anxieties can be understood in a number of ways. Partly he expresses the idea that a drunken lower class will be incapable of producing necessary levels of wealth. Secondly, he reveals a fear of the 'political mischiefs' of the mob. However, in order to contextualise Fielding's particular concern with the emulation by the poor of the drinking habits of the rich, it is necessary to highlight the importance of drink to bourgeois social culture in Britain at the time. Jürgen Habermas, discussing the social and political culture of eighteenth century London, rightly acknowledges the centrality of the bourgeois social space – specifically the coffee house, but also the theatre and the concert hall – in the creation of the bourgeois public sphere; that is, that ideologically charged sphere of social intercourse

¹³ Porter, p. 217

¹⁴ Fielding, p. 77

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 78

and institutional development in which the rising bourgeoisie could not only make a bid for cultural and economic power but do so through the obfuscating identification of the bourgeois property owner with mankind at large.¹⁶ Central to Habermas' notion of the bourgeois public sphere is the idea that the coffee-shops of the mid-eighteenth century provided a site of *rational* intercourse. 'Public opinion, in terms of its very idea,' Habermas argues, 'can be formed only if a public that engages in rational discussion exists.'¹⁷ Habermas' coffee-houses are spaces, therefore, characterized by sobriety. However, evidence for the *actual* sobriety of the coffee-houses is questionable. Daniel Defoe pointed out the gap between image and reality as early as 1720, complaining that many coffee-house 'are but alehouses, only think that the name coffee house gives them a better air.'¹⁸ One of Hogarth's most popular prints – the scene of drunken excess entitled *Midnight Modern Conversation* – depicted the modern social scene in St John's Coffee House near Temple Bar.

I will discuss the importance of the coffee shops in eighteenth century London and the formation of a public sphere in some more detail below. For now, however, it is useful to use the notion of bourgeois public sphere as a way of understanding why Fielding should have had such a horror of emulatory lower class drinking. If, *pace* Habermas, the drunkenness of the average wine and port swilling clubbable man was a signifier of his sociability, his membership of the 'public', then the drunkenness of the urban poor appears as both a horrifying other and a grotesque double; the emulatory drunkenness of the poor serving both as a reminder of the poverty which capital creates and as the spectre of the great unwashed clawing at the doors of the club, turning the nascent public sphere of the coffee house into the democratic and anarchic sphere of the public house. The creation of a public sphere in which the consumption of alcohol remains a significant cultural practice risks producing the monstrous doppelganger of a gin-soaked underclass; a class which both undermines the implied moral superiority of the bourgeoisie, and threatens to pull the economic rug from beneath its feet.

For Fielding, the economic threat posed by gin drinking was paramount. His fear was of a lower class who would become incapable of producing the wealth

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (London: Polity Press, 1989), esp. pp. 30-56.

¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere', in ed. Stephen Seidman, *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 398-404 (p. 399)

¹⁸ Quoted in Austin, p. 302

necessary for the continued well-being of the national economy. The primary impetus behind an early legislative intervention – the self-defeatingly harsh Gin Act of 1736 – had been a report on the problem of gin consumption produced by the Middlesex Justices. Their report stated that

The drinking of Geneva and other distilled spiritous liquors hath for some years past greatly increased, especially among people of inferior rank ... This pernicious liquor is now sold, not only by distillers and Geneva shops but by many other persons of inferior trades, by which means journeymen, apprentices, and servants are drawn in to taste, and by degrees ... to ... immoderately drink thereof.¹⁹

The implications of this had been outlined by Daniel Defoe eight years earlier when he wrote in *Augusta Triumphans* that

Those who deny an inferior class of people to be necessary to a body politic, contradict reason and experience itself ... But now so far are the common people infatuated with Geneva, that half the work is not done now as formerly.²⁰

In observations such as these, ‘idleness’ among the poor is depicted as a profound threat to the health of the national economy, and consequently the social order as a whole. Furthermore, one of the primary causes of idleness were the temptations provided by both alcohol and the social spaces in which the poor took their drinks. Ironically, one of the perceived causes of increased drunkenness among the poor was the increase in disposable income among the lower classes. Jessica Warner argues that it was an increase in leisure time and wages in the seventeenth century which led to the increasing expenditure of relatively disposable incomes in the alehouse and tavern. She suggests that with early wage labour facilitating the acquisition of cash but a relative lack of market commodities obviating its expenditure, the possibility of leisure time increased while the monopolising attraction of the drinking place

¹⁹ Quoted in Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Liquor Licensing in England Principally from 1700 to 1830* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), pp. 22-3

²⁰ From Daniel Defoe, *Augusta Triumphans*, quoted in Austin, p. 300

intensified.²¹ Similarly as porter, and later Guinness, would become some of the first consumer goods to be produced and marketed on an industrial scale, so beer emerged as one of the first objects of concerted consumer spending in an age of high population wage labour. This relationship between wage earning capacity and the consumption of alcohol as a form of leisure activity was noted with concern at the time. In the 1760s, Dr George Fordyce wrote that ‘if a person get sufficient in four days, to support himself for seven days, he will keep holiday the other three, that is he will live in riot and debauchery.’²² Making a similar point Daniel Defoe called the English ‘the most lazy-diligent nation in the world,’²³ a nation who labourers worked harder for shorter hours than any other in order to spend longer disposing of the high wages their previous industriousness had afforded in the local alehouse. The expenditure of increased wages on ‘riot and debauchery’ seemed to reveal, much to the horror of the rising merchant and intellectual class, that the social manifestation of a cash economy was not necessarily a culture of thrift and speculation – or even the dangerous but essentially acquisitive gambling economy of Eighteenth century England – but could just as readily manifest itself as a culture of expenditure without accumulation and capital distilled into diuretics.

Gin drinking was the object of concern over both the economic wastefulness of alcohol consumption among the poor and the ‘political mischiefs’ to which drunkenness would lead. Beyond this, however, gin became the object of deep-seated anxieties over the physical health of the nation as a whole. Not only did drink diminish the strength of the labouring class, but, according to Defoe:

This accursed liquor is in itself so diuretic, it overstrains the parts of generation, and makes our common people incapable of getting such lusty children as they used to do. Add to this, that the women, by drinking it, spoilt the stomach and hinder digestion; so that in less than an age, we may expect a fine spindle-shanked generation.²⁴

²¹ This Warner argues, led to the moralising shift of focus from the medieval sin of avarice to the eighteenth century reigning sin of Idleness (Jessica Warner, ‘Good Help is Hard to Find: A Few Comments About Alcohol and Work in Preindustrial England’, *Addiction Research*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 259-69 [p. 262]). The argument that there was an increase in disposable income around the start of the eighteenth century is supported by Roy Porter (Porter, pp. 205-6).

²² Quoted in Porter, p. 90

²³ Quoted in Dorothy George, *England in Transition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 59

²⁴ Quoted in Austin, p. 300

In other words, gin drinking became the locus of fears that the essential backbone on British mercantile success – the ‘inferior class’ – was diminishing or wasting away.

Defoe’s fear of degenerating offspring reflects a crucial aspect of thinking that emerged in the Gin Epidemic; that aside from the mortality rates among drinkers, and aside from the crime and deprivation drinking may cause, lay the uniquely horrifying, and absolutely gender specific, fear of a distorted fertility among female drinkers. This discursive shift, which will resonate throughout the rest of this study, is not isolated to Defoe, but can be found in much of the writing associated with the Gin Epidemic. Henry Fielding asks in his ‘Enquiry’ ‘What must become of the Infant who is conceived in *Gin*? ... Are these wretched Infants ... to become our future sailors, and our future grenadiers? Is it by the labour of such as these, that all the Emoluments of peace are to be procured to us, and all the Dangers of war averted from us?’²⁵ In the report of the Middlesex Justices, we see Fielding’s pragmatic argument couched in the language of disease which was to become the dominant discursive mode associated with alcohol for the next two centuries: ‘With regard to the female sex, we find that the contagion has spread even among them ... children are born weak and sickly, and often look shriveld and old as though they had numbered many years.’²⁶ It is specifically the character of the perverse mother, the figure of disease and both social and economic transgression in the field of fertility itself, that Hogarth will use as the central figure in *Gin Lane*.

Two main areas of concern can be seen emerging at this point. Firstly, an economic focus in which drink is judged in terms of its relation to material production and social use value. Secondly, the beginnings of a pathologization of drunkenness. As H.G. Levine – whose essay on the ‘discovery of addiction’ will be discussed in the following chapter – argues, there is a qualitative difference between the language of vice and the language of disease. Although Levine places the shift towards a medicalized, disease-based understanding of excessive drinking in the last years of the eighteenth century, as far back as the Middlesex Justices’ report and Defoe’s degenerative argument, a problematic discourse had begun to emerge in which ideas of morality and pathology, vice and contagion, and alcohol as both pernicious liquor and deadly poison begin to create an unstable dialectic.

²⁵ Fielding, p. 90

²⁶ Quoted in Coffey, p. 671

These two areas of anxiety – drink as economic dysfunction and drink as pathology – emerge as different concerns when applied to either the social sphere or the sphere of the private individual. In this sense alcohol can be seen as a lesion on the body of the healthy bourgeois subject in both its trajectories: both as a functioning member of the public sphere, and as a rational, contented individual. The fear of economic dysfunctionality will be seen later in this study to shift its gaze from the workplace to the home. Throughout the nineteenth century, temperance discourse speaks less of the economic well-being of the nation as a whole, and more of the effects of drinking on the private economy of the domestic sphere. In a Victorian culture in which the family is positioned ideologically at the heart and foundation of the political realm, the domestic chaos generated by drink functions as a metonymy for the broader fears of economic decline articulated by Henry Fielding and Daniel Defoe.

As a pathology, drink appears in the social sphere in the figure of the degenerative child and the drunken mother. The ‘child conceived in gin’ is a pathological effect in the private sphere which immediately becomes a cause in the public. That is, the problem of infant mortality tends not to be discussed in terms of private effects in the domestic sphere, but rather as an illustration of the public effects on the nation of a weakened and diminished ‘stock’. The personal tragedy of infant mortality does not outweigh the social tragedy of inherited degeneration. To this extent, the moral responsibility placed on women to avoid succumbing to the pathology of drinking is onerous indeed. As will be seen, the structural association between drinking and distorted fertility retains its importance in the discourses of drink throughout the period under discussion here and remains one of the pivotal tropes through which drink functions in the core texts to be discussed later.

The fear of economic dysfunction in the private sphere appears as the trajectory towards poverty, gambling and prostitution. Depending on the axis, the trajectory of the nineteenth century temperance narrative would increasingly lead either towards penury in the home (economic dysfunctionality as ultimately social), or life on skid row (economic dysfunctionality as private disaster). The pathological, in the realm of the individual manifests itself as madness – more specifically in later temperance fiction as either delirium tremens, or as the madness of addiction. The sleep of enlightened reason – which is the stupefying effect of addiction – brings in its wake the monsters of the delirium, usually at the point of either death or miraculous recovery.

All this is not to suggest that morality would be written out of the equation as the ideas of pathology and economic dysfunction drifted towards centre stage: far from it. As will be seen in the next two chapters, the Gordian philosophical knot of resolving an understanding of excessive drinking as pathological and yet at the same time as morally wrong would remain resolutely tangled. However, it is precisely from this complex web of problematics that a modern discourse of drink and drunkenness emerges. This discourse is characterised by a shift from an understanding of drinking as a purely moral question to one employing disease-based models; a prioritising of the economic effects (and occasionally causes) of drinking; an association between drink and urban issues of crime and violence; a politicisation of drinking through both a fear of the drunken mob and the emergence of the drinking place as a possible site of political activity; and the structural association of drink and fertility specifically in the figure of the drunken mother. In the modern discourses of drink, there also emerges a semantic hierarchisation of drinks largely in response to the introduction of distillation. The creation of a vast range of new, dangerous and, perhaps a residual effect of their alchemical heritage, mysterious drinks added a whole new and rich semiotic layer to the extant symbolic bifurcation of vinous and fermented alcoholic beverages.²⁷

In Hogarth's *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, all of these tropes appear in a nascent phase. While *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* can be read as a pictorial representation of the bourgeois understanding of the Gin Epidemic, they can also be read as a problematic engagement with aesthetic questions concerning the relationship between art, intoxication, and economy. As will be seen in later chapters, this relationship takes on an increasing importance in modernist literature and criticism. Hogarth's adumbration of a particularly modernist concern in this area is not, I would suggest, merely fortuitous. Rather, it is of a piece with aspects of Hogarth's aesthetics which are themselves remarkably congruent with the ideas of later modernist thinkers. By way of illustrating this, I shall spend some time below looking not only at *Beer Street*

²⁷ Distillation was an alchemical technique through which the 'quintessence' was isolated. It appears to have continued as a purely experimental technique for quite some time before the idea was hit upon that the quintessence, or alcohol, (from, ironically, the Arabic *al kuhl*: meaning something burnt) could be made into a potable form – thereby radically opening up the availability of quick, accessible and potent intoxicants to vast numbers of people. It is notable that the various forms of distilled spirits very early acquired such names as 'aqua vitae' or 'uisgebeatha', that is, variations of the theme 'water of life'. This suggests a testament either to the immediate esteem in which these new drinks were held, or to an early example of clever marketing on the part of producers.

and *Gin Lane*, but also at Hogarth's broader artistic *oeuvre* in terms of how it impacts upon an understanding of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* as depicting a peculiarly modern problematic.

William Hogarth was born in London in 1699, he lived there for most of his life and died in Leicester Fields in October 1764. In his popular prints, perhaps especially the series *The Four Times of Day* (1738) and individual prints such as *The Enraged Musician* (1741) and *Southwark Fair* (1732), Hogarth sought to capture and represent the contemporary experiences of London life. In *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, Hogarth not only articulates one of the overriding anxieties associated with the London which he inhabited – excessive gin drinking, but he also projects those anxieties back onto the fabric of the re-imagined cityscape itself.

In a later celebration of these two prints, Charles Lamb observed that

Not only are the two prominent figures, the woman and the half-dead man, as terrible as anything Michael Angelo ever drew, but every thing else in the print contributes to bewilder and stupefy – the very houses, as I heard a friend of mine express it, tumbling about in all directions, seem drunk – seem absolutely reeling from the effect of that diabolical spirit of frenzy which goes forth over the whole composition.²⁸

Hogarth's 'fevered vision'²⁹ of the London district of St Giles' fuses the semiotics of drunkenness with the semiotics of urban waste and decay. Looked at one way, the collapsing and tottering buildings reflect the drunkenness of their inhabitants. Looked at another way, the madness of the populace reflects the chaos and brutal godlessness of the environment. Equally, in *Beer Street*, beer drinking can be understood as both, or either, the cause and effect of the convivial prosperity that the print depicts. While, ostensibly, the two prints purport to juxtapose the 'dreadfull consequences of gin drinking' with the 'thriveing Industry and Jollity' of beer,³⁰ they could equally, as

²⁸ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' (1811), in *The Prose Works Vol. 1* (London: Edward Moxon, 1838), pp. 182-217 (p. 190). The friend Lamb refers to is William Hazlitt who had earlier written that the houses of *Gin Lane* reel 'as if drunk and tumbling about the ears of the infatuated victims below.' (William Hazlitt, 'On the Works of William Hogarth'; 'Lectures on English Comic Writers VII' [1818], in Duncan Wu ed., *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt, Vol. 5* [London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998], pp. 121-35 [p. 129])

²⁹ William Gaunt, *The World of William Hogarth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), p. 93

³⁰ William Hogarth, 'Autobiographical Notes' in William Hogarth *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Joseph Burke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), p. 226

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commentators as wide ranging as Charles Dickens and the contemporary critic Ronald Paulson have suggested, depict the dreadful consequences of poverty and the thriving self-satisfaction and complacency of wealth. Dickens, concurring with Lamb but suggesting he does not read far enough into *Gin Lane*, writes that “the very houses seem absolutely reeling,’ it is true; but they quite as powerfully indicate some of the more prominent causes of intoxication among the neglected orders of society, as any of its effects.’³¹ Paulson goes further again, suggesting that *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* should be read as crypto-revolutionary images which were aimed specifically at the poor and which employed a semiotic vocabulary that they would uniquely understand. To the members of the urban underclass who saw *Gin Lane*, Paulson argues, ‘it would have been most evident that not gin drinking per se but the oppression of the governing class as a *cause* of gin drinking was the real subject of the prints.’³² While the specific moral and political position that Hogarth takes in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* is important in understanding how to read these images, it is also necessary to acknowledge the degree to which the two prints centrally place alcohol in the imagined cityscape of London. In *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* drink and drunkenness reflect *both* the utopian conception of the city as the convivial hub of social and commercial life, and the dystopian vision of it as the irrational sit of swarming humanity at its most excessive and degraded.

Addressing Paulson’s belief that Hogarth was engaged in a proto-revolutionary project of consciousness-raising on behalf of the oppressed poor of London requires a consideration of whether Hogarth’s pivotal role in the art world of his day was so inasmuch as he contributed to the formation of a revolutionarily bourgeois consciousness or because he stood radically outside of a middle-class world view. Hogarth stated in the publicity for *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* that ‘As the Subjects of these Prints are calculate to reform some reigning Vices peculiar to the lower Class of People, in hopes to render them of more extensive use, the Author has publish’d them in the cheapest Manner possible.’³³ To this extent the purpose of the prints and the object of their didactic message conformed fully with the discursive ideology of the Gin Epidemic as outlined above: the poor drank too much, and it was the job of the

³¹ Charles Dickens, ‘Cruikshank’s “The Drunkard’s Children”’ (1848), in *Miscellaneous Papers* (London: Chapman Hall, 1908), pp. 105-8 (p. 106)

³² Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth Volume III: Art and Politics, 1750-1764* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1993), p.

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³³ See note 1 above

writers, legislators, artists and magistrates to intervene in such a manner as to control this localised but dangerously destabilising tendency. Looked at superficially, *Gin Lane* presents a veritable compendium of clichéd images of drunkenness: the pawnbroker accepting the once wealth-producing tools of doomed gin slaves; sloth verging on torpor; violence; emaciation; death by accident; death by suicide. As Hogarth himself described it,

In gin lane every circumstance of [gin drinking's] horrid effects are brought into view, in terorem nothing but (Itleness) Poverty misery and ruin are to be seen Distress even to madness and death, and not a house in tolerable condition but the Pawnbroker's and the Gin shop.³⁴

In *Gin Lane*, St Giles' is a parish abandoned by both humanity and God. In the far distance, church and state hover detached and self-possessed; the church Hogarth chose to depict was St George's in Bloomsbury – the only spire in London not topped by a religious figure but by the first Hanoverian monarch, George I. Capping this, and employing the false perspectives that Hogarth was fond of using, is the secular – but no less real for that – crucifix of the pawnbroker's sign.

Thus far, the crude symbolism of *Gin Lane* matches the contrasting symbolism of *Beer Street*: the undertaker's coffin becomes on *Beer Street* a rotund beer barrel, the empty bottle of the dying balladeer in the bottom right of *Gin Lane* becomes the mighty ham swung by the portly workman of *Beer Street*, the violence of *Gin Lane* becomes the saucy conviviality of *Beer Street*. However, there is a bleak grandeur to *Gin Lane* that led Charles Lamb, writing at a time when Hogarth was broadly thought of as a humorous caricaturist well outwith the canon of great English artists such as Constable and Reynolds, to describe it as 'sublime'.³⁵ *Gin Lane* is a compound of religious iconography distorted, remodelled and reinterpreted. As Ronald Paulson points out, the central female figure in *Gin Lane* is a grotesque version of a Madonna and child. Behind her stalks Lucifer in the guise of a madman walking towards the viewer, an impaled child and bellows to hand. At the bottom right hand corner of the print is the wasted body of a dying ballad seller which Jenny Uglow points out has

³⁴ Hogarth, 'Autobiographical Notes', p. 226

³⁵ Lamb, p. 191

‘the skeletal face and limbs of a medieval *memento mori*.’³⁶ Further than this, however, the figure of the dying balladeer can be seen as firmly in the tradition of the pieta and renaissance paintings of the deposition of Christ. The emaciated, uncovered torso, the supine body and upturned head echo the genre in general but in particular Raphael’s 1507 painting of Christ’s entombment.³⁷ It is characteristic of Hogarth’s approach to canonical art that he should include such a forceful, and dangerously blasphemous, *homage* in a print designed to be sold to the poor at the lowest possible price.

The balladeer as dead Christ completes a trinity of grotesque religious images. At the top of the steps sits the Madonna – here both virgin *and* whore, given the evidence on the syphilitic scabs on her legs – carelessly dropping the would-be holy infant who reappears, completing the cycle of infernal inevitability, as the balladeer. The spatial relationship between the balladeer and the drunken woman can be seen as a discontinuous pieta; her physical posture grotesquely re-enacting that of the grieving Virgin, his only support in death a wooden balustrade and a bottle of gin.

Gin Lane provides an example of what I would suggest is Hogarth’s characteristically modern approach to the representation of everyday life. Although intentionally didactic and hallucinatory rather than ‘realistic’, *Gin Lane* allows Hogarth to blur the lines between high art and low art, both in terms of object and audience, in a manner which will be reflected in the work of such painters as Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet in Paris a century later. While the depiction of everyday life is not here raised to the status of contemporary history painting (as, it could be argued, it is Hogarth’s painting *The Gate of Calais* [1749], or in his portrait *Captain Thomas Coram* [1740]), the ‘low’ characters of *Gin Lane* are dignified by the association of them with the religious subjects of Classical art. Equally, Hogarth’s private sale of this ambivalent set of images at ‘the lowest possible price’ bypassed entirely the mediating authority of the contemporary art establishment.

Charles Lamb recognised the radical implications of Hogarth’s work for institutionalised beliefs about the proper objects of artistic representation. Comparing the contrasting reception of the horrors of *Gin Lane* and the horrors of Poussin’s *Plague at Athens* among the patrons of art galleries, Lamb wrote that:

³⁶ Uglow, p. 496

³⁷ See figure 3. Paulson suggests that Hogarth’s ‘career had been devoted to finding ways of using Raphael and to equal him in eighteenth-century England’ (Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times*, p. 422)

Disease and Death and bewildering Terror, in *Athenian garments* are endurable, and come, as the delicate critics express it, within the “limits of pleasurable sensation.” But the scenes of their own St Giles’s delineated by their own countryman, are too shocking to think of.³⁸

Hogarth was fully aware of both the originality and the radical nature of his artistic project of representing everyday life. In his ‘Autobiographical Notes’, he recalls his decision to abandon history painting and turn his thoughts ‘to a still more new way of proceeding, viz painting and Engraving modern moral Subject a Field unbroken up in any country or age.’³⁹ Anticipating Charles Baudelaire by over a century, Hogarth consciously saw his artistic goal as becoming the painter of modern life – although with a crucially different approach to the ‘moral’ of his modern subjects than Baudelaire would adopt. Hogarth was, furthermore, aware of the antagonism which this approach engendered among the gentlemen connoisseurs who acted at the time as the arbiters of acceptable aesthetic taste; speaking to a friend he once observed ‘the connoisseurs and I are at war, you know; and because I hate them, they think I hate Titian, and let them.’⁴⁰ To this extent, the radicalism of William Hogarth, at least in the field of aesthetic theory and practice, is not in doubt.

Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*, *Beer Street* have been compared to Pieter Brueghel’s engravings *The Fat Kitchen* and *The Thin Kitchen* (1563).⁴¹ Friedrich Antal, while acknowledging the parallel between these images, argues that ‘while Breughel shows up wealth in an antipathetic light, Hogarth, who specifically juxtaposes healthy beer drinkers and starving gin drinkers, comes down decidedly on the side of affluence, as one would expect of him ... Even the inn-sign on which the painter is engaged depicts a group of merry harvesters dancing around a hay-stack surmounted by a sturdy yokel, beer mug in hand.’⁴² This is consonant with Antal’s argument that Hogarth represents ‘the propagandist *par excellence* of bourgeois ideals.’⁴³ Whether one agrees with this assessment depends on one’s reading of *Beer Street*. A comparison

³⁸ Lamb, pp. 188-9

³⁹ Hogarth, ‘Autobiographical Notes’, p. 216

⁴⁰ Quoted in Friedrich Antal, *Hogarth and his Place in European Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 140

⁴¹ See figure 4

⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 164-5

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 57

with Brueghel's engravings is instructive because they provide a far more stark representation of the cruelty of wealth and the meekness of poverty than Hogarth does; they therefore provide a visual touchstone against which the relative ambivalence of Hogarth's political position can be judged.

The didactic moment in Brueghel's engravings consist in an expulsion and a welcome. In *The Fat Kitchen*, a thin and ragged musician is expelled by the corpulent guests gathered round the well-stocked table. By contrast, the dwellers of the thin kitchen obsequiously welcome the fat guest, despite the fact that he embodies that which creates their own penury. The gestures of the man and woman in *Gin Lane* handing the last of their work tools to the pawnbroker, the wealthy agent of their financial decline, echo those of the two welcoming figures at the door in *The Thin Kitchen*. Beyond this, Hogarth's prints contains numerous echoes and reflections of Breughel. The breast feeding woman in *The Fat Kitchen* and the drunken woman in *Gin Lane*; the emaciated mother in *The Thin Kitchen* and the woman feeding her baby gin on the far right of *Gin Lane*; the two children eating from the trough at the bottom of *The Fat Kitchen* and the child and dog sharing a bone in *Gin Lane*; the shape and posture of the two men at the table in *The Fat Kitchen* and the two workmen on the left of *Beer Street*. These and the numerous other structural parallels between the two works suggests that Friedrich Antal is closer to the truth in acknowledging the influence of Breughel than a critic such as David Bindman who suggests that Hogarth actively avoided the influence of Dutch art.⁴⁴

The question that the comparison with Breughel raises is whether Hogarth's representation of corpulent, well-fed, leisurely bodies in contrast to the emaciated and desperate lives of the poor reflected a political position in which the poor were represented as victims of the rich. Ronald Paulson suggests that, for Hogarth's poorer audience, his political message would be clear; that on *Beer Street* corpulence would not be understood as a signifier of financial success and security, but as self-satisfaction and greed.⁴⁵ Jenny Uglow, on the other hand, does not see *Beer Street* as either a celebration of wealth or as a condemnation of it, instead she suggests that it is less an idealization of the city and more 'the *accepted* satire of it, with hectic 'improvements', lazy rich and sweating workers, rotund, beer-swilling, meat-eating men and saucy, easy women.' The purpose of this gentle satire, Uglow argues, is so

⁴⁴ Bindman, pp. 27-8, 57

⁴⁵ Paulson, *Hogarth, Art and Politics*, p. 24

that ‘when people turned to *Gin Lane* the shock would be doubled – this was certainly *not* the London that ‘polite’ prints were supposed to show.’⁴⁶ In *Beer Street*, rather than referring darkly to damnation and transcendent suffering, Hogarth makes light political comments and aesthetic asides; a celebration of Palladianism in art is consigned to the pulping machine, workmen read a king’s speech on the advancement of commerce, while the fishsellers read a ballad on the economic virtues of the herring fisheries. Everyone here appears to be at happy rest; only the paviours, the beer seller and the sign painter actually continue to work in this idyllic scene.

It is a testament to the polysemic power of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* that the critical response to the political and social implications of the prints has been so varied. The ambivalence of the prints is not limited, however, to questions of social and economic relations. The two pictures, fundamentally, address themselves to the question of cultural practice; that is, in these pictures it is in the sphere of cultural practice that questions of social and economic relations are played out. Apart from the obvious cultural practice of drinking, *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* are littered with references to cultural activities: religion, poetry, politics, food, fashion and advertising. The one character actively engaged in a form of cultural production in the two prints, however, is the sign painter, and it is in this figure that not only a radical political reading of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* can find support, but in which Hogarth can be seen to broach the issue of the relationship between art, the artist, class, and intoxication.

The *Beer Street* sign painter is supposedly modelled on Hogarth’s friend, the painter Francis Hayman. While Friedrich Antal argues that this contented figure is engaged in depicting a scene of idyllic English beer drinking a pastoral merriment, a closer inspection reveals that the artist is not contemplating his impression of the ‘Health to the Barley Mow’ but, bizarrely, the rendition he has just completed of the gin bottle that hangs from the side of the sign. Rising above this scene of practical and mercantile good sense and well being – in which criticism is sent to the pulper and poetry is commandeered to the purposes of commerce – is the artist as sign painter, dressed in rags and painting, of all things, a bottle of gin. In one sense, this can be read as simply an in-joke suggesting that Hayman could only get work painting signs – and then can only just manage to paint bottles from life. However, the portrait

⁴⁶ Uglow, p. 495

of the sign painter, whatever its humorous intentions, does contain a specifically Hogarthian dignity and gravitas. This is because, of all the figures on *Beer Street*, he most clearly traces out the S-shaped 'line of beauty' which Hogarth believed was the highest expression of the beautiful in the visual arts.

Hogarth discusses the 'line of beauty' at length in the *Analysis of Beauty* (1753). Essentially a single helix (it is represented on the palette below the self portrait in Hogarth's *Painter with his Pug* [1749]) it would become the object of much derision among contemporary aestheticians and would also become one of the mocking signifiers of Hogarth's naïve arrogance in the numerous broadside cartoons made of him especially in his later years. Equally, it would be acknowledged by Edmund Burke as a seminal, if problematic, concept in the realm of aesthetics; while *The Analysis of Beauty* itself would achieve such status in Germany that Hogarth was elected a member of the Academy of Ausburg in 1757.⁴⁷ Whereas in *Beer Street* the line of beauty is inscribed on the body of the sign painter, in *Gin Lane* it emerges, in a stressed, angular, taught, but recognisable form on the body of the dying balladeer. As the two figures dignified by the appearance of the line of beauty, the sign painter and the dying balladeer can be seen as a point at which *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* meet. The artist's rags identify him as, if not a resident of Gin Lane, then a resident of street adjacent to it (his clothing is most similar to the woman at the door of the pawnbrokers on *Gin Lane*). Both the sign painter and the balladeer grasp a gin bottle; the artist with his gaze, the balladeer with his dying hand. Both, furthermore, sell their art on the marketplace, the balladeer hawking doggerel, the artist painting signboards.

Inasmuch as his rags and his gin signify his poverty, the painter is as much an excluded figure within *Beer Street* as the musician is in *The Fat Kitchen*. Paulson again argues for a politically radical reading of this figure, writing that a 'poor resident of Gin Lane, this English artist can only find employment painting signboards for the affluent beer drinkers of Beer Street.'⁴⁸ However, the fact that he is painting a sign should not necessarily suggest that Hogarth saw his work as being demeaned. For Hogarth sign painting was an important sphere of demotic and popular art. On more than one occasion Hogarth ironically, but seriously, contrasted the virtues of sign painting to those of classical art. In *The Analysis of Beauty*

⁴⁷ Burke, p. 149; Antal, p. 210

⁴⁸ Paulson, *Hogarth, His Life, Art and Times*, p. 345

Hogarth, while praising Corregio for his use of the line of beauty, suggests that ‘the proportions of his figures are sometimes such as might be corrected by a common sign painter.’⁴⁹ More importantly, Hogarth was central to the setting up of a Sign Painters Exhibition in Convent Garden in 1762. This exhibition was held simultaneously with, and as a challenge to, the first major exhibition of the Society of Arts and, in the event, proved to be a highly successful project. Essentially the exhibition was exactly what it claimed to be: a celebration of sign boards and the work of sign painters which was intended to challenge the snobbery and complacency of the Society of Arts and its slavish devotion to the principles of Palladianism and unshakeable belief in the inherent superiority of Italian renaissance painting to anything a contemporary native artist could produce. While the exhibition contained the work of a number of anonymous sign painters, it also contained eleven signs by an artist using the somewhat transparent pseudonym ‘Hagarty’. While the exhibition was, in many ways, a joke at the expense of the Society of Arts, it also carried a serious message. It can be seen, indeed, as a kind of playful *salon des refuses*, a vehicle through which the popular and ‘low’ art of the period could receive recognition as serious art. Bonnell Thornton, the main organiser of the event, wrote in David Garrick’s *St James Street Chronicle* that the exhibition was meant for those ‘who can enjoy the humour of a Hogarth, without thinking they do a Violence to their Taste for the Works of Raphael; and who can laugh at Garrick’s Abel Drugger without losing a relish for his Lear or Hamlet.’⁵⁰ In other words, contemporary ‘low’ art has a value parallel, but not necessarily in opposition to, canonical art.

This project of redefining the objects of artistic representation was one in which the novelists of the period took a leading role. The emergence of the novel is, in many respects, the emergence of everyday life into the field of literature just as modernism in painting can be seen as the emergence of everyday life into the sphere of the plastic arts. Returning again to Habermas’s theory of the emergence of the public sphere, we can see this attempt to represent the world of the emergent bourgeoisie as forming part of the project in which the world view of the middle classes bids, through its own self-reflexive representation, to become the natural and normalising world view of humanity. In Chapter Four, I discuss Baudelaire’s essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ (1863) as representing one of the seminal critical

⁴⁹ Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, p. ix

⁵⁰ Quoted in Uglow, p. 657

interventions which led to the shift in painting away from historical and religious subjects and onto the cafés and clubs of contemporary Paris. However, the class position of the artist that Baudelaire writes about is significantly different to that of Hogarth; the political idea of a dominant bourgeoisie after 1848 is clearly different to that of the emerging mercantile and intellectual classes of the mid-eighteenth century. The radical avant-garde desire to shock a now entrenched and triumphant bourgeoisie makes little sense in Hogarth's context. The establishment Hogarth set out to upset was the essentially aristocratic tradition of artistic connoisseurship. It was, for Hogarth, the bourgeoisie themselves who presented a challenge to the established seats of power and knowledge centred on the court and the academy.

In the mid-eighteenth century, this bourgeois challenge to courtly authority was mounted largely from the coffee-houses. The desire to create a new focus of knowledge and power networks in the relatively democratic institution of the coffee house is reflected in Joseph Addison's stated goals for his influential journal *The Spectator*:

It was said of *Socrates*, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and in Coffee-Houses⁵¹

The coffee house was undoubtedly a profoundly influential social institution in the eighteenth century – albeit one that, crucially, excluded women.⁵² There were over 2,000 coffee houses in London by the middle of the century including Lloyds, where a group of insurance underwriters used to meet; and Jonathan's, where stock-jobbers used to gather until it closed down and they were forced to form instead the stock exchange. Hogarth's father, in one of his periodic attempts to pull the family out of

⁵¹ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 10 (1710), in Addison and Steele, *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, ed. Robert J. Allen (London: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1970), p. 117

⁵² Although, as I have suggested above, the coffee-house was by no means a 'dry' institution, it is interesting that around this time the more ostensibly 'alcoholic' institution – the tavern – also emerged as a quasi utopian public space. According to Peter Clark, the alehouse was 'a medium by which upper-class attitudes and fashions were being diffused down the social scale' (Clark, p. 238). This tended, however, to be a more rural phenomenon; the alehouse serving as the place where the local squirearchy could mingle with the peasantry and maintain the important hegemonic image of a ruling class in touch, unlike the French aristocracy, with its people. In the cities, the association of the alehouse with the drinking habits of the urban poor was part of the reason for the increased popularity of the more refined coffee-house.

financial crisis, had offered Latin classes at ‘Hogarth’s Coffee House’ in 1704. Hogarth himself was an habitu  of Old Slaughter’s Coffee House, which would become the site of the founding of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824. Old Slaughter’s, in the mid-eighteenth century, had become a gathering place for young artists actively opposed to the rigid Palladianism of the contemporary art establishment. One commentator goes as far as to suggest that Old Slaughter’s provided a gathering place for young men ‘who all contributed to an anarchic, destructive and unbalanced movement in all the arts, almost an early form of Dada; they were intent on the destruction of the old dogmas and taboos, of stylisation and intellectualism, and on bringing in a new freedom and tolerance.’⁵³

The idea of William Hogarth as a previous incarnation of the young Marcel Duchamp is a somewhat overstated comparison. If nothing else, the Dada attack on art *as* an institution and the Hogarthian attack on a particular institution dominating the art world of his day are radically different (which is not to say that Hogarth’s challenge to the institutions of art were not in themselves radical). Nevertheless, the example of Old Slaughter’s illustrates the argument that the drinking place played a crucial role in the formation of a social sphere in which new ideas were discussed and radical groupings were formed. In Chapter Four, I will look at the comparable move in Parisian artistic circles away from the *salon* and towards the caf  and cabaret. While the perceived class relations between young artists and the art establishment may have been markedly different a century later in Paris, the pattern of a shift from sites of privilege and invitation to sites of putative democracy (which are also drinking places) is the same. While Habermas asserts that the Parisian *salon* was a public institution comparable to the coffee house, it could be argued that it is not until the rise of the artistic caf  that the exclusionary power of patronage and invitation was properly supplanted in French intellectual culture.⁵⁴

Understanding the emergence of the drinking place as a forum for social and intellectual intercourse which carries with it the potential to act as simultaneously marginal and formative in relation to dominant power structures is important for understanding the peculiarly important role it comes to assume in literary and artistic modernism. Similarly, in identifying in Hogarth a number of antecedent ‘modernist’ tendencies, we can create a perspectival frame which allows us to trace modernism’s

⁵³ David Coke, ‘Vauxhall Gardens’, *Rococo* 80; quoted in Uglow, pp. 260-2

⁵⁴ See Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 33

genealogy beyond the common starting point of Gustave Courbet's paintings or Charles Baudelaire's poetry.⁵⁵ More importantly for this study, however, are the specific relationships between drink, drunkenness and representation which Hogarth's *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* illustrate. Firstly they provide what is now perhaps the most memorable image we have of the Gin Epidemic; or, rather, the most memorable image of the *idea* of the Gin Epidemic as it emerged in the discourses that surrounded it. Secondly, they reflect the fact that drunkenness becomes in this period a specific problem addressing specific modern concerns. In a nascent class culture in which wealth, respectability, restraint and reason become identifying signifiers of an increasingly dominant bourgeoisie, the carnivalesque ambivalence of drink becomes bifurcated into the purely social and the purely destructive. In a sense, *Gin Lane* can be seen as the world of misrule and inversion, the 'exaggeration, hyperbolism [and] excessiveness ... of the grotesque'⁵⁶, stripped of its cultural function and status and left to implode in the forgotten corners of the modern city. In this sense, the radical bifurcation of drink in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* into its positive and negative aspects can be seen as reflecting the shift from an earlier understanding of the massed public manifestation of freedom as carnival, and the modern conception of it as leisure and rational recreation. In terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of carnival, the pot-bellied expansive bodies of the carnival have been transposed to the untransgressive world of *Beer Street* leaving only lenten paucity in the inverted world of *Gin Lane*. On *Gin Lane* drunkenness and misrule kill but do not recreate; this is the newly abortive journey of John Barleycorn, his mythic death and burial no longer yielding new life but a handful of dust and a barrel of bones. In the world of reason and accumulation, drink becomes refreshment, while its traditional ties with the Bacchic are stripped of meaning and generative power. At the same time, however, gin, becomes also a perverse form of pleasure for those whose lives cannot afford the fruits of abundance that adorn the middle class world of *Beer Street*.

And yet despite the overt and didactic message of restraint and respectability that the two prints carry, in *Beer Street* the artist as sign painter, inhabiting a nether world between *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, undermines the neat moral polarity the

⁵⁵ Raymond Williams, for example, acknowledges this orthodoxy, writing that one can 'say, conventionally, that Modernism begins in Baudelaire, or in the period of Baudelaire.' (Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, ed. Tom Pinkney [London: Verso, 1999], p. 60)

⁵⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iwolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 303

prints might otherwise have presented. It is as if Hogarth couldn't resist constructing a parallel between the artist – outwith, and yet economically in the thrall of, the everyday world of accumulation and Trade – and the Gin Lane drunk. In effect, Hogarth here posits a role for the artist as interloper in bourgeois society; a cultural shifter in whom the rags of the socially excluded can take a position of destabilising superiority; the *déclassé* artist casting his gaze across the world of commerce and consumption as he gives it the dreams and illusions it narcissistically desires. In this instance the signifier of the painter's outsider status, as reproduced on the very artwork he is creating, is a bottle of gin – the very drink that Beer Street exists to negate.

In the following chapters the emergence of drink as a specific problem will be further traced. Initially, the pathologization of drunkenness will be considered. Here again, a dark leaning towards a perverse transcendence in the experience of alcohol will be seen in such texts as Charles Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard' – a text that casts some light, incidentally, on Lamb's critical praise of *Gin Lane*. Subsequently, I will discuss the rise of the temperance movement and temperance fiction. Here, many of the tropes and imaginative associations discussed in this chapter will re-emerge in different forms; as will comparable issues of class representations, gender issues, and narrative form.⁵⁷ Finally, my discussion of the aesthetics of intoxication will, in a sense, follow the progress of Hogarth's *Beer Street* sign painter as his position as an outsider to bourgeois society becomes increasingly radicalised; and as the role of intoxication in this process becomes increasingly complex and significant. While the Gin Epidemic inaugurated a range of concerns over drink as a social problem, these concerns by no means remained static. It is the task of the following chapters to trace in what ways the idea of drink would change over the subsequent 150 years.

⁵⁷ George Cruikshank's series of temperance illustrations *The Bottle* and *The Drunkard's Children* are typical of a didactic narrative employed in much temperance propaganda. This form is clearly a close relative of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* (1735), *Rake's Progress* (1732) and *Marriage A-la-mode* (1745) series. Charles Dickens' protest against the simplistic didacticism of these illustrations is based on his argument that Cruikshank and similar temperance workers failed to acknowledge, as Hogarth does in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, the complexity of excessive alcohol consumption and its reciprocal – rather than causal – relationship to poverty.

Chapter 2

Constructing the Drinker as Problem: The Medicalization of Drunkenness and the Drinker's Confession

While *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* focus primarily on the economic destructiveness of gin drinking, the Gin Epidemic also saw the beginning of a construction of compulsive drunkenness as pathological. Certain social groups, particularly the urban poor, began to be associated with a mode of consumption in which habit takes the form of uncontrollable compulsion. This chapter will consider developments in the understanding of the habitual drunkard as the victim of a pathological condition in medical discourse around the turn of the eighteenth century. It will then look at the emergence of the compulsive drinker as a literary figure in the nascent genre of the drunkard's confessional narrative. While the following chapter will consider the construction of drinking within the temperance movement as a specifically social and institutional problematic – one centred around the cultures and economics of drink and drinking places – this chapter looks at the construction of the individual drinker in medical texts and literary narratives as a clinical and a philosophical problem. One of the central discursive shifts this chapter will document is a change from the understanding of excessive drunkenness as a vice to the understanding of it as a disease. This shift in the conceptualisation of excessive drinking represents a shift from positing drunkenness as a question of morality and censure to positing it as an issue of pathology and cure. While the following chapter will look at representations of alcohol consumption as primarily detrimental in its social effects, here I will consider the discursive processes through which drunkenness comes to be imagined as a disease located in the body of the individual drinker.

The construction of drunkenness as pathology follows two trajectories: the psychological and the social. Later it will become clear that the social relationship between drunkenness and transgressive behaviour in the public sphere informs the use of drink as a signifier of social and cultural dissent in modernist art and literature. Insofar as the idea of private addiction is relevant to my argument, on the other hand,

it is in the understanding of compulsive intoxication as questioning limits of human self-control and rationality, and in the problematisation of the relationship between responsibility and disease. While in Hogarth's *Gin Lane*, the private experience of intoxication moves outwards to dominate the physical and moral landscape, in the confessional narrative of the drinker intoxication and compulsion become metonymies in which the irrational, the chaotic, the deadly and the demonic become privatised in the experience of the individual. In the confessional narrative, intoxication and compulsion become experiences which forcefully testify to the horrifying proximity of the irrational and the uncontrolled in the mind of the drinker. The experience of compulsive intoxication described in confessional narratives not only threatens to undermine a faith in the triumphant power of reason, but also suggests a dangerous ease with which reason can be overthrown in the mind of the otherwise civilised and rational subject.

While the confessional narrative will be seen to problematise a complacent faith in the inherent rationality of civilised man, the fundamental problematic that the emerging medical and disease-centred concepts of excessive drinking created for themselves – a problematic that would remain unresolved throughout the nineteenth century – was how to negotiate between the construction of drunkenness as on the one hand a moral failing and yet on the other a pathological behaviour beyond the control of the individual. How, for example, could medicine claim a role in the control of alcoholic excess if it remained a question of morality and sinful choices? How, on the other hand, could religious authorities emphasise the sinfulness of drink if medicine had shown that the desire to indulge in drinking was something over which the drinker had no free will? As the epistemological authority of medicine grew, so explanations of the causes of destructive drinking behaviours would take on an increasingly clinical aspect. In the first part of this chapter, I will focus on the beginnings of this process, specifically on two works – Benjamin Rush's *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind* (1784) and Thomas Trotter's *An Essay Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical On Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body* (1804) – which between them represent the first extended and dedicated considerations of excessive drinking as a medical problem.

The Medicalization of Drunkenness and the Emergence of a Disease Concept

The history I will trace here is, to some extent, a well-rehearsed narrative. Both Benjamin Rush and Thomas Trotter, particularly the former, have been recognised as seminal figures in the emergence of a medicalized understanding of drunkenness since the temperance movement first began to write its own histories. E. M. Jellinek, in the introduction to his influential reformulation of the idea of drink as addictive, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism* (1960), acknowledges Trotter and Rush as the forefathers of the modern disease model of alcohol addiction.¹ As a counter-argument to the increasingly dominant hegemony of the disease concept, the sociologist Harry Gene Levine published an article in 1978 entitled ‘The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America’.² While not the only published work to challenge the disease model of alcoholism,³ this important article provided the first sustained attempt to look at the formulation of the idea of alcoholism as a set of discursive practices in the fields of medicine, philosophy, and legislation. While disagreeing fundamentally with Jellinek’s premise that alcoholism was a pre-existent disease which medical discourse discovered, rather than produced, Levine concurs with Jellinek in locating the source of the modern conception of alcohol addiction in the work of Benjamin Rush. While my thesis diverges from Levine in that it locates the emergence of modern conceptions of drink and drunkenness in the Gin Epidemic, it is nevertheless essential for my subsequent discussion that I briefly discuss the work of Rush and Trotter here.

Levine argues that prior to the publication of Benjamin Rush’s *Inquiry* the idea that drinking could be a compulsion or an illness was untenable, or at least Rush’s essay provided the first authoritative articulation of ideas about alcohol dependency that had only just begun to emerge when it was written. Levine writes that the ‘idea that alcoholism is a progressive disease – the chief symptom of which is loss of control over drinking behaviour, and whose only remedy is abstinence from all

¹ E. M. Jellinek, *The Disease Model of Alcoholism* (Brunswick, NJ: Hillhouse Press, 1960), p. 6

² Harry Gene Levine, ‘The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America’, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1978), pp. 143-174

³ A more recent, and more controversial, attack on the disease concept of alcoholism is Herbert Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Various other book length studies, such as Nick Heather & Ian Robertson, *Problem Drinking* (2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) also attempt to at least modify some of the premises of modern disease concept.

alcoholic beverages – is now about 175 or 200 years old, but no older.’⁴ Levine argues that, until the late eighteenth century, excessive drinking was understood entirely as a vice and, if a failing at all, then as a moral failing. In other words, prior to the formulation of a medical understanding of excessive drunkenness, ‘drinking was ultimately regarded as something over which the individual had final control. Drunkenness was a choice, albeit a sinful one, which some individuals made.’⁵

What is important here is twofold. Firstly, Levine points out that a medically classifiable addiction to alcohol is something that emerged, was debated over, contested and only slowly accepted as the paradigmatic model of excessive drinking that it became. Secondly, the issue of self-control is at the heart of this conception of addiction. The point for Levine is that the medicalization of drinking is part of a process in which a socially unacceptable behaviour is moved from the realm of choice to the realm of pathology. No longer is there the individual who chooses to drink excessively, but there is the alcoholic whose disease can be defined and for which there is a partial cure (the alcoholic is and always will be alcoholic in this paradigm) which is predicated on self-surveillance and the regulation of pleasure.

Levine’s theoretical and methodological position throughout this study is drawn fundamentally from Michel Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) and *Madness and Civilization* (1961). Levine argues that the medicalization of excessive drunkenness towards the end of the eighteenth century constituted the emergence of the medical gaze in the sphere of intoxication in the sense that through the delineation of excessive drinking as an identifiable disease, medicine extended its domain of authority into a sphere of cultural practice which, inasmuch as it was perceived as problematical, had previously been the concern of the church as the dominant moral authority. The medicalization of drinking in works such as those by Rush and Trotter can be seen as following the methodological trends identified by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Rush’s symptomatology of addiction draws addiction into the ‘suzerainty of the visible’⁶ by outlining its salient observable features while the proto-

⁴ Levine, p. 143.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 149. Jessica Warner, in her article “‘Resolv’d to Drink No More’: Addiction as a Preindustrial Construct”, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 55, No. 6 (November 1994), pp. 685-691, argues that an understanding of addiction in precisely those terms articulated by Rush and Trotter can be identified in a number of seventeenth century sermons. However, her argument is undermined by the fact that she anachronistically conflates the words ‘addict’ and ‘addiction’ in the texts with the contemporary understanding of these terms as inflected by the process of medicalization that Levine outlines.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perspectives*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (1963; London: Routledge, 1993), p. 166

psychological work of Thomas Trotter reflects what Foucault identifies as a move in medical discourse towards not only ‘that which is visible in the disease – but ... the patient who hides the visible element as he shows it.’⁷ Levine’s second argument is that the construction of addiction as a disease mirrors the relegation that Foucault identifies in *Madness and Civilization* of madness from an autonomous power to a subservient failure of triumphant reason.⁸ In arguing that drunkenness became constructed by temperance campaigners – using a model of drunkenness as a disease of the will – as a pathological failure of the self-control essential to the bourgeois ideology of thrift and accumulation, Levine suggests that the technique ‘developed for treating the mentally ill was extended to all who had failed to regulate themselves properly.’⁹ In making this case, Levine, like Foucault in his earlier work, emphasises the identifiable and repressive institutions through which social practices were regulated and controlled.¹⁰

My concern here is less with the concrete institutional responses to drunkenness than to the broad emergence of drunkenness as a discourse in a variety of fields throughout the nineteenth century, but specifically in the field of literary, and to some degree visual, representation. To this extent, I find the capillary model of discourse formation that Foucault outlines in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1976) more appropriate to my purposes. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault tries not so much to identify and trace the specific institutions in which pathological and deviant identities are defined and controlled, but instead to consider the multiple and intersecting positions from which sexuality is spoken about, produced as discourse, and thereby regulated. I am interested in the specific constructions of drunkenness as a pathology in medical discourse inasmuch as they inform subsequent representations of drunkenness in literary and visual texts. The two fundamental aspects of Rush and Trotter’s work which are important to my argument are the idea of the drinker producing the irrational through the intervention of an external agent, and the notion

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 9

⁸ C.f. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Confinement*, trans. Richard Howard (1961; London: Tavistock, 1967): ‘For this new reason which reigns in the asylum, madness does not represent the absolute form of contradiction, but instead a minority status, an aspect of itself that does not have the right to autonomy, and can live only grafted onto the world of reason.’ (p. 252)

⁹ Levine, p. 164

¹⁰ Foucault clarifies his rejection of the ‘repressive hypothesis’ of power in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, especially pages 92-100

that confession and regulatory observation are the proper forms of treatment for the pathological condition of compulsive drunkenness.

Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) studied medicine in Edinburgh, from where he graduated in 1768, and went on to become one of the most renowned surgeons of the early American republic. He acted as professor of chemistry at the University of Philadelphia, was for a time surgeon general to the Middle Department of the Continental Army during the War of Independence, and was a co-signatory to the Declaration of Independence. He was the first recognised and respected medical practitioner to publish a work dealing solely with the effects of alcohol. The *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind* was first published as a newspaper article in 1784. It achieved a degree of immediate success that grew with subsequent editions and some changes of title until, by 1850, more than 170,000 copies had been circulated.¹¹ According to Levine, ‘Rush’s contribution to a new model of habitual drunkenness was fourfold: First, he identified a causal agent – spirituous liquors; second, he clearly described the drunkard’s condition as a loss of control over drinking behaviour – as compulsive activity; third he declared the condition to be a disease; and fourth he prescribed total abstinence as the only way to cure the drunkard.’¹²

As a seminal contribution to the formation of a medicalized understanding of drunkenness, however, Rush’s contribution is highly problematical. Throughout his *Inquiry*, Rush struggles to find the language with which to construct a clinical symptomatology while not negating the evident moral opprobrium he feels inebriety deserves. Rush begins his study by systematically enumerating a series of symptoms by which the ‘odious disease’ of drunkenness can be identified.¹³ At this stage, Rush’s interest is in behavioural traits, rather than physical effects. His description of the event of drunkenness, consists of a list of eleven observable symptoms, including ‘unusual garrulity’, ‘profane swearing and cursing’, ‘a rude disposition to tell those persons in company, whom they know, their faults’, and ‘certain extravagant acts which indicate a temporary fit of madness.’ (IAS, pp. 324-5) However, while this

¹¹ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 40-41

¹² Levine, p. 152

¹³ Benjamin Rush, *An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind with an Account of the Means of Preventing and of the Remedies for Curing Them*, reprinted in *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 4 (1943-44), pp. 324-341 (p. 324). Further references to be given in text as IAS

A MORAL AND PHYSICAL THERMOMETER: OR, A SCALE of the Progress of TEMPERANCE and INTemperANCE.—LIQUORS, with their EFFECTS, in their usual Order.

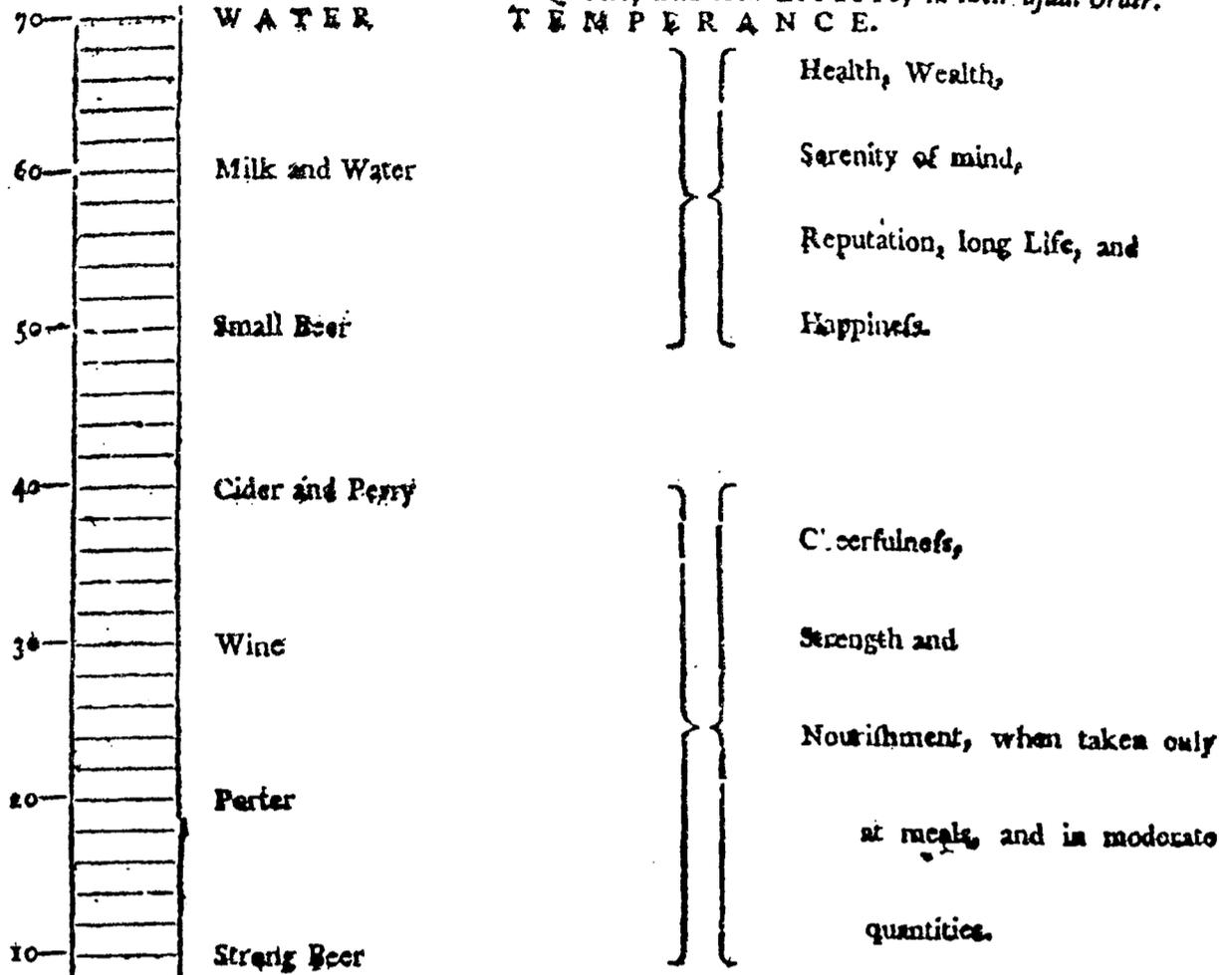


Fig 6: Benjamin Rush's Moral Thermometer

may appear to be evidence of early medical writing which has not yet achieved the critical distance of the 'clinical gaze', it also adumbrates a continuing issue in the diagnosis of addiction. Here drunkenness is on the one hand depicted as a pathology located in the realm of social relations, and on the other hand as a 'temporary fit of madness.' In other words, drunkenness represents a dual deviancy: a disregard of the basic rules of social interaction on which civilised society is predicated, and a breakdown of the rationality by which the civilised individual is defined.

In moving his analysis on from the description of drunkenness as a pathological event to a consideration of habitual drunkenness as a pathological condition, Rush balances the previous eleven behavioural symptoms with a further eleven somatic effects from 'frequent and disgusting belchings' to epilepsy and gout. (IAS, pp. 327-8) This reveals an ambivalence running throughout the *Inquiry* as to the appropriate mode of discourse for dealing with the subject matter. It also posits the possibility of a binary approach to habitual drunkenness in which moral condemnation is reserved for the specific paroxysm while a more distanced, clinical approach is reserved for the condition of addiction.

As well as being a disease with specific visible symptoms, drunkenness is depicted by Rush both in the language of moral censure and demonic possession. On the one hand, Rush writes that in the history of drunkenness 'paroxysms occur, like the paroxysms of many diseases' and that habitual drunkenness 'resembles certain hereditary, family and contagious diseases.' (IAS, p. 326) He also, however, describes drunkenness as 'an infernal spirit, generated by habits of intemperance.' (IAS, p. 328) Rush's juxtapositions of appropriated classical learning, lists of behavioural and somatic symptoms, moral opprobrium, and a world view which still owes something to the Renaissance concept of cosmological correspondences and analogies can be seen in the following extract:

Pythagoras, we are told, maintained that the souls of men after death expiated the crimes committed by them in this world by animating certain brute animals; and that the souls of those animals, in their turns, entered into men, and carried with them all their peculiar qualities and vices. This doctrine of one of the wisest and best of the Greek philosophers, was probably intended only to convey a lively idea of the changes which are introduced in the body and mind of man by a fit of drunkenness. In folly, it

causes him to resemble a calf – in stupidity, an ass – in roaring, a mad bull – in quarrelling and fighting, a dog – in cruelty, a tiger – in feter, a skunk – in filthiness, a hog – and in obscenity, a he goat.¹⁴ (IAS, p. 326)

Drunkenness, in other words, is dehumanising and bestial, stripping humanity of the rational faculties which alone place it above brute nature. To this extent it is both a sin against the biblical responsibility given to man over creation and a rejection of humanity's duty to its own superior reason.¹⁵ The false freedom of drunkenness proves itself to be mendacious on two fronts. Firstly, it is a freedom predicated on a renunciation of the very rationality upon which Enlightenment notions of freedom are founded. For the rational philosophy of the Enlightenment, not only is human freedom grounded in reason, but the abuse of reason acts as a brake on the possibilities of human progress. Jean-Jacques Rousseau clarifies this position in *The Social Contract*, writing that the 'boundaries of the possible in the moral realm are less narrow than we think; it is our weaknesses, our vices and our prejudices that limit them.'¹⁶ Secondly, if 'freedom, for humanism, means choices and the ability to make them',¹⁷ then the circumscription of choice inherent in an uncontrolled desire for alcohol – and the madness that this entails – functions, *a priori*, as a form of bondage.

The idea of compulsion as a form of unreason amounting to slavery is also crucial to Thomas Trotter's work on drunkenness. Trotter also identifies compulsive drunkenness as a disease of the mind which manifests itself as a disorder of the will. Thomas Trotter (1761-1832) studied, like Benjamin Rush, in the medical schools of Enlightenment Edinburgh. His doctoral thesis 'De ebrietate, ejusque effectibus in

¹⁴ The tradition of listing the progressive degradation and the bestial characteristics of the drunkard precedes Rush by some time. Earnshaw gives the example of Thomas Dekker *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608) in which Dekker describes four basic types of drunkard according to humour: ape-drunk (sanguine); 'lion-drunk' (choleric); 'swine-drunk' (melancholic); 'mutton-drunk' (phlegmatic) (Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature*, p. 37)

¹⁵ Genesis 1: 26: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' Michel de Montaigne, writing of drunkenness, states that 'The worst estate of man, is where he loseth the knowledge and government of himself.' ('On Drunkenness', in Michel de Montaigne, *Essays: Volume Two*, trans. John Florio (1588; London: Dent, 1965), pp. 15-26 [p. 16]). By the end of his essay, however, Montaigne has decided that, given its prevalence in classical literature, drinking is not a heinous vice. Rather it should only be avoided by 'those going about any expedition of warre', judges about to 'execute their charge [and] consult publick affaires', and men who 'intendeth to get children.' (p. 22)

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Michael Cranston (1762; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 136

¹⁷ See Paul A. Brienza, 'Humanism, Addiction, and Social Theory', *Addictions 1996: An International Research Journal* (http://www.vitanova.on.ca/Addictions_1996_Article_1.html) [6/99]

corpus humanum' was submitted to Edinburgh University in 1788. It was a version of this thesis that was eventually published as *An Essay, Medical, Philosophical and Chemical, on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body* in London in 1804. While being by no means as respected a medical authority as Benjamin Rush, Thomas Trotter had for many years acted as a surgeon in the Royal Navy and had published a book on naval diseases that recommended citrus fruit as a prophylactic against scurvy. Trotter's essay received a degree of success on its publication, being republished in 1807, 1810 and 1812 as well as being published in America in 1813 and being translated into Swedish.¹⁸ While presenting many similar arguments to Rush, Trotter also illustrates a shift away from descriptions of observable symptoms and the provision of a remedy, to a concern with the aetiology of illness and the particular condition of the patient. In his move away from a primary concern with the visible manifestations of disease to an interest in the causes of disease, Trotter provides what would be recognised as a discursive position which, as much as Rush looks back to the Renaissance philosophy of analogies and signatures in nature, looks forward to the psychoanalytic concerns of the late nineteenth century.¹⁹

Trotter, like Rush, asserts unequivocally that 'in medical language, I consider drunkenness, strictly speaking, to be a disease; produced by a remote cause, and giving birth to actions and movements in the living body, that disorder the functions of health.'²⁰ Further, Trotter asserts that 'drunkenness itself, is a temporary madness.' (ED, p. 127) In insisting that '*the habit of drunkenness is a disease of the mind*' (ED, p. 172) Trotter attempts to identify the causes of habitual drunkenness as much as the means of arresting its progress. Trotter, indeed, employs a kind of primitive psychoanalytic approach not apparent in Rush, looking into the environmental causes of the sufferer's drinking and then attempting to effect a psychological cure through 'rousing particular passions, such as the parent's love for children, the desire for fame, the pride of reputation, family pride &c.' (ED, p. 188) Trotter further identifies

¹⁸ Roy Porter, introduction to Thomas Trotter, *An Essay Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical On Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body*, ed. Roy Porter (1804; London: Routledge, 1988), p. xiv

¹⁹ While Trotter follows Rush in his concern with the visible aspects of drunkenness, Trotter's focus on psychological aetiology reflects what Foucault identifies as the modern desire to 'relate the visible to the invisible, to its deeper cause ... then to rise upwards once more from that hidden architecture towards the more obvious signs displayed on the surface of bodies.' (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 229)

²⁰ Trotter, *An Essay ... on Drunkenness*, p. 8. Further references to be given in text as ED. There is no indication in Trotter's essay that he had come across the work of Benjamin Rush; therefore any imputation of direct influence would be conjecture. For my purposes, the question of direct influence is less relevant than the identification of emerging discursive patterns in separate writers.

economic and social influences on patterns of alcohol consumption. He condemns the exploitative techniques of the rising corporate brewing industries, and is prepared to both recognise, and take a sympathetic attitude towards, hidden and domestic drinking among women. Perhaps most notably, he argues that alcohol dependency is not always socially debilitating – adumbrating the more recent concept of the ‘high functioning alcoholic’ in what he calls ‘sober drunkards’. (ED, p. 156)

Trotter follows Rush in locating the problem of excessive drinking in a pathological condition on the part of the individual drinker. However, his concern with addiction as a psychological condition leads him to argue forcefully that cure lies through acquiring a body of knowledge about the mind and history of the drinker rather than through simply recommending a radical behavioural change. In other words, in Trotter we see the emergence of the drinker not only as someone in whom specific pathological behaviours can be identified, but as a pathological *type* whose disease is not located in the external agent, but in his own psychology and history. To this extent, the construction of the inebriate in Trotter mirrors Foucault’s model of the construction of the homosexual in nineteenth century medicine and criminology as ‘a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood ... a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology.’²¹ In the increasing identification of the inebriate, and later the alcoholic, as a pathological type, his identity becomes increasingly predicated on his addiction. The effect of this on the subsequent emergence of the addict in literature is that compulsion becomes not simply a problematic behaviour pattern of lifestyle, but the signifier of a radical otherness from the secure rationality of ‘normal’ society.

While mirroring and intensifying Rush’s focus on the drinker as a problem, Trotter also follows Rush in specifically identifying distilled spirits as the source of problematic drinking. Unlike Rush, whose ‘moral thermometer’²² creates an ossified moral taxonomy of alcohols, Trotter acknowledges that economic and technological developments in the production and sale of different drinks can affect patterns of consumption and subsequent compulsion.²³ Like Rush, however, Trotter maintains an unshakeable belief in the virtues of wine, at one point enthusiastically referring to

²¹ Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, pp. 42-3

²² See figure 5

²³ Trotter identifies porter as one of the main culprits in causing medical problems associated with drinking. He ascribes this as much to the adulterations carried out by major brewers as to any innate quality of porter – his main charge is that they add opium during brewing (ED, pp. 38-9)

wine as ‘the milk of old age’. (ED, p. 152) Trotter’s privileging of wine, like Rush’s moral thermometer, illustrates the hierarchical understanding of alcohol that was characteristic of concerns over drinking at the time. Where the demonisation of gin half a century earlier had reflected primarily a social and economic concern over the availability of cheap, potent alcohol to the labouring classes, by the turn of the eighteenth century the locus of anxiety over inebriation had broadened to include all distilled, or ardent, spirits.

While the attack on the consumption of spirits was supported by a quasi-clinical discourse in which whisky, rum and gin were identified as uniquely debilitating and addictive, the emergence of organised anti-spirits societies in the 1820s in Britain and America clearly illustrated the class anxieties with which this early form of temperance campaigning was imbricated. The essentially evangelical anti-spirits movement spread from America, where the first recorded association was founded in Moreau, New York, in 1808, and led to the foundation of the first anti-spirits societies in Scotland and Ulster in 1829.²⁴ The anti-spirits movement, while not being openly elitist, has been accused of attempting to not only regulate the drinking patterns of the lower classes – spirits were easily the cheapest way to get drunk – but to construct a moral framework in which the consumption of wine remained as signifier of respectability and moral authority over those ill able to afford such a luxury. Elizabeth Malcolm, in a study of the history of temperance in Ireland, asserts her opinion that the ‘early temperance movement [in Ireland] was designed to reform and strengthen the Protestant ascendancy, while abandoning large numbers of their social inferiors to a drunkard’s grave.’²⁵ The short-lived anti-spirits movement was to be superseded in the 1830s by a teetotal movement that will be discussed in more detail below. The particular demonisation of spirits and their association with dangerous lower class drinking remained, however, a feature of temperance discourse which would inform the representation and celebration of drunkenness and the symbolic hierarchisation of drinks in modernist literature.

Trotter’s concern with the aetiology of alcohol dependency reveals a concern that was to become increasingly central to debates around drink and drinking. In locating the source of addiction in the drinker, rather than the drink, he writes that men and women become ‘addicted to ebriety’. (ED, p. 164) This formulation reflects

²⁴ Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 103

²⁵ Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 63

not only Trotter's insistence on a psychological grounding for addiction, but his sympathetic belief that drunkenness is generally the result of hardship – sometimes physical, as in the case of sailors – but more often spiritual. Indeed, Trotter openly ascribes one of the fundamental cause of inebriety to a kind of affective deficit, or spiritual lack, writing that 'young persons, distracted by other passions, are not much addicted to drinking; but when love, departing with youth, leaves a vacuum in the mind, if its place be not supplied by ambition or interest, a taste for gaming, or religious fervour, it generally falls prey to intoxication.' (ED, pp. 83-4) Not the least notable aspect of this observation is that love, ambition, gaming, religion and drunkenness are placed by Trotter in a comparable region of the psyche. More importantly, however, in attempting to construct an empirical aetiology of drunkenness, Trotter raises here another of the ideas that will re-emerge in various guises in many of the writers under discussion here: that drunkenness is a form of compensatory activity following, or closely related to, the death, or diseasing, of affect.

As I have previously argued, the core question that the emergence of a coherent body of medical thought around the problem of drunkenness posed for later temperance thought was whether drunkenness was to be understood as a vice or a disease. It was a question that would remain unsolved within the temperance movement throughout the nineteenth century. E. M. Jellinek has argued that the problem of whether to pity the drunkard as victim or condemn him as sinner was crucial to the debate between the early teetotal and temperance movements as to whether the appropriate means by which to reclaim or save the drinker was through 'moral suasion' or legislative intervention. While early teetotal movements such as the Washingtonians accepted the symptomatology of the disease model, their belief that apparently hopeless drinkers could be reclaimed through their own reawakened will power was predicated on the belief that, fundamentally, drunkenness remained a moral failing.²⁶ However, Levine disputes this position and argues instead that the teetotal argument for 'moral suasion' and the reclamation of drunkards through confession and self-regulation was itself predicated on a sympathetic attitude towards drunkard's which saw them as the victims of a disease, rather than the perpetrators of

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6. See also Gerry Johnstone, 'From Vice to Disease?: The Concepts of Dipsomania and Inebriety, 1860-1900', *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol. 5., No. 1 (March, 1996), pp. 37-56

a vice.²⁷ Joseph Gusfield discusses at length the strategic shift in temperance campaigning in the mid-nineteenth century away from a belief in reclamation on an individual level to a campaign for the closure of saloons and the outlawing of the drinks trade. He argues that this represented a strategic, rather than a theoretical, move; a move from ‘assimilative reform’ to ‘coercive reform’ as a bid for hegemonic power on the part of the established elites of the old colonial states.²⁸ While the shift in temperance agitation towards a call for prohibition can be seen as a strategic shift in a bid for social power by middle class elites, it was one predicated on the argument that drunkenness was a chronic and epidemic disease that could only be realistically stopped through prevention; that is, through the outlawing of alcohol. The move from ‘moral suasion’ to legislative intervention represented, according to Brian Harrison, an increasing belief that a diseased will was incapable of resisting addiction.²⁹ What the tactical shift in temperance campaigning from ‘moral suasion’ to legislative reform importantly reveals is the intimate relationship between strategies of power and both medical and philosophical constructions of individual identity. In a regime of governance ‘that makes the exercise of liberal autonomy contingent on the possession of “rationality,”’³⁰ the question of defining why some people drink excessively, what this excessive and potentially destructive behaviour means, what role legislation should play in this process, and how these issues relate to questions of reason, selfhood and self-control becomes imperative.

Levine sees the temperance concern with drinking as a disease of the will as part of the broader shift towards the regulation of social and individual behaviour through self-control, arguing that ‘the conditions of a “free society”, meaning individual freedom to pursue one’s own interests, required shifting social control to the individual level.’³¹ An early example of this conflation of the notion of individual liberty with that of self-control as exemplified in sobriety is the Quaker Anthony Benezet’s pamphlet *The Potent Enemies of America* (1772). Discussing this work, in

²⁷ John B. Gough, the most famous teetotaler of his time, expressed something of the ambiguity towards the definition of drunkenness among the proponents of moral suasion, arguing that he considered ‘drunkenness a sin, but I consider it also a disease. It is a physical as well as moral evil.’ (Quoted in Levine, p. 156)

²⁸ Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and American Temperance Literature* (2nd ed.; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 70.

²⁹ Harrison, p. 212

³⁰ Mariana Valverde, “‘Slavery from within’: the invention of alcoholism and the question of free will’, *Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (October 1997), pp. 251-268, p. 251

³¹ Levine, p. 163

which Benezet argues that true liberty can only be achieved if Americans rid themselves of the twin evils of slavery and drunkenness, E. J. Rorabaugh suggest that here ‘for the first time we see liberty viewed ... not as man’s freedom to drink unlimited quantities of alcohol but as man’s freedom to be his own master, with the attendant responsibility to exercise self-control, moderation, and reason.’³² Denise Herd points out that one of the most potent problematics of drink in the nineteenth century was that it was understood, paradoxically, as both enslaver and, simultaneously, disinhibitor.³³ In nineteenth century Ireland, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, alcohol came to represent both bondage (as both individual addiction and the self-destructiveness of an indigenous culture of heavy drinking), and a dangerous and uncontrolled irrationality (as both individual intoxication and as the possible spur to rebellion). Sobriety, as a metonymy of the self-regulating exercise of reason upon which freedom and civilisation are predicated, becomes in this sense a metonymy of free and rational society itself. In these constructions of the meanings of drink, addiction is not only a metonymy of slavery, but the manifestation of addiction as paroxysms of intoxication and irrationality also threaten the security and foundations of free and rational society itself.

If the function of the medical treatise was to define clinically the symptoms of compulsive drinking and to propose curative procedures from a position of rational detachment and clinical knowledge, then the literary confessional narrative served to balance this epistemological position with one which graphically depicted the experience of addiction from within. The long process of constructing a coherent picture of the aetiology, symptomatology, and rehabilitation of the drinker was as much a literary process as a medical one. The narrativisation of the drinker’s experience would achieve a mass popularity in the 1830s and 1840s in the wake of the teetotal movement in Britain and the Washingtonian Movement in America. I will discuss the confessional narratives associated with the teetotal movement below. However, I will begin by looking at an early and self-consciously literary confessional

³² Rorabaugh, p, 37

³³ Denise Herd, ‘The Paradox of Temperance: Blacks and the Alcohol Question in Nineteenth-Century America’, in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room eds., *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History* ((Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 354-375. John Crowley quotes Abraham Lincoln as follows: ‘And when the victory shall be complete – when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth – how proud the title of that *Land*, which may truly claim to be the birth place and cradle of those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory.’ (Abraham Lincoln, *An Address*, in John W. Crowley, ‘Slaves to the Bottle: Gough’s *Autobiography* and Douglass’s *Narrative*’, in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, pp. 115-35 (p. 123)

narrative which both illustrates important philosophical issues that play a role in the construction of the drinker as other to the sober citizen, and which reveals the confessional construction of the drinker to be an identifiably literary project.

Charles Lamb and the emergence of the drunken confession

Charles Lamb's essay 'Confessions of a Drunkard' was first published in the *Philanthropist* in 1813. It was included in Basil Montagu's *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Fermented Liquors* in 1814 and finally reprinted as an Elia essay in the *London Magazine* in 1822. In it Lamb presents the nominally fictional account of a man who, initially through social drinking, falls into a 'bondage' which 'in spite of protesting friends, a weeping wife, and a reprobating world, chains down many a poor fellow, of no original indisposition to goodness, to his pipe and his pot.'³⁴ At its time of writing it was an original twist on the confessional narrative, predating De Quincey's more famous *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822) by nine years. Lamb's confession differs from the later confessional accounts associated with the teetotal movements in Britain and America not only in that it purported to be fictional, but in that its author wrote from the position of an acknowledged member of the intelligentsia. Teetotal confession narratives were characteristically the 'authentic' accounts of common and conspicuously uneducated men. It should be pointed out that Lamb inserted a quite strongly worded caveat at the end of the essay when it was published in 1822. In this he claimed, possibly to the incredulity of those who knew him, that the entire work was the 'imagined experience of a Great Drinker' in which, while 'a portion of his own experiences might have passed into the picture' was, on the whole, 'heightened' and 'exaggerated.' (CD, pp. 92-3)

What I will discuss here is the confessional narrative as a literary project. That is, I will aim to identify the salient features of this nascent narrative form in order to elucidate both its relation to and influence on the philosophical questions that the idea of compulsive drinking posed, and by way of considering the emergence of a textual discourse in which an identifiable, and identifiably literary, character and plot begins to emerge: the character being the inebriate, the plot being the descent into

³⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Confessions of a Drunkard', in *Charles Lamb and Elia*, ed. J. E. Morpugo (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), p. 88. Further references to be given in text as CD

compulsion, the attendant social decline, the experience of psychic trauma, and the embarkation on a road to recovery. In discussing Lamb's narrative, I will also briefly discuss the most famous confessional narrative of the Romantic period, Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, which, although a very different project in that it deals with the relatively new and exotic phenomenon of opium consumption, contains a number of relevant arguments about the function and status of what could anachronistically be termed the addiction narrative.

Anya Taylor, in her study of drink and its influence on Romantic literature, suggests that the increasing concern over drink and drinking in the second half of the eighteenth century was less due to visible increases in alcohol consumption or associations between drink, poverty and crime than with the changing ideas of consciousness in the wake of empiricism and Kantian epistemology. Taylor writes that the drinker in the late eighteenth century:

tests the boundaries of the human person at a time when scepticism, secularism and psychology were calling into doubt assumptions about personal integrity; the drinker becomes either a less than human figure or a more than human one. Seen as less than human, the drinker verges on the savage or the animal; seen as more, the drinker seems like a god, inspired and boundless. The drinker is under observation as a test case: does his consciousness expand or does it contract? Is he free or bound? Does he choose intoxication or can he not help himself?³⁵

In other words, the drinker problematised ideas of free will, rational choice, and enlightened self-interest in a period when both the contingency and instability of the self was being scrutinised and when an optimistic belief in the ability of man to make ethical choices through the application of correct reasoning was being advanced as a philosophical possibility. Taylor's argument also suggests that the imperative to reclaim the drunkard is not simply as social one, but a philosophical one in which the drunkard as both self-destructive and periodically uncontrolled becomes an affront to an ideally rational humanity.

³⁵ Taylor, *Bacchus in Romantic England*, p. 5

When the relationship between consciousness, reason and ethics is the object of philosophical enquiry, drink represents a twofold problematic. On the one hand, drink as intoxication raises an ontological problem. If the self, as empiricism argues, is essentially the sum of one's perceptions, then drink suggests that the self can be altered, or at least modified, by an external agent or a remote source. This poses the question: is the drunkard a drunken version of his sober self, or is he somebody else? Alternatively, working from the Kantian proposition that the world cannot be known in itself, but only through sense-perceptions and understanding, drink as intoxication posits the question: what are the epistemological implications of a remote agent that distorts both the senses and, apparently, the understanding? Is drunken consciousness an alternative truth or simply fallacious? Kant suggests that there is an ontological gap between the sober and the drunken self:

There is also the question whether the temperament or the character of a person can be investigated when the person gets drunk. I do not think so. A new fluid has been mixed with the fluid which flows in his veins; the nerves are stimulated in a different manner so that the natural temperature is no longer clearly revealed, but is replaced by another.³⁶

On the other hand, drink as addiction raises a problem of free will and rationality. The rise of the 'drink question' follows the emergence of an ethical paradigm in which the Good is no longer the manifestation of, or adherence to, the will of God, but where the Good becomes located in the well being of humanity; that is, a paradigm in which capricious fortune and suffering lose their transcendental meaning. The idea that the goal of ethical behaviour is happiness, and that it is through the application and cultivation of reason that the knowledge of how to achieve this happiness is gained is, crudely stated, the common theoretical position from Hume through to Utilitarianism. The problem addiction poses for rational philosophy is to understand how, through the influence of an outside agent, an individual can act in

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell, ed. Hans H. Rudnick (London: Feffer and Simons, 1978), p. 61. Kant is clear about the juridical implications of this view of drunkenness, asserting that 'what a person has done in a state of drunkenness may well not be imputed; but he can be held accountable for having got drunk.' (Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Peter Heath, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Scheewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 83) That is, the legally responsible individual is the person who chose freely to drink, not the person whose reason and freedom of choice has been degraded by alcohol.

such a way as to bring suffering evidently and actively upon himself. It raises the difficult problem of explaining how compulsion can lead someone to such a lack of self-knowledge that they will destroy themselves for the sake of an apparently limited reimbursement of pleasure. In other words, addiction asks how 'a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will, - to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself.' (CD, p. 89)

Two consequences of this problematic are evident in Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard'. Firstly, the essay functions, fundamentally, as a contradiction of the idea that the problem of addiction lies entirely in the addictive substance; that is the argument that the cure for compulsive drinking is simply to abstain from drink. 'Abstain,' Lamb writes, paraphrasing the common belief, 'No force can oblige a man to raise a glass to his head against his will. 'Tis as easy as not to steal, not to tell lies.' (CD, p. 84) However, Lamb continues:

But what if the beginning be dreadful, the first steps not like climbing a mountain but going through fire? what if the whole system must undergo a change violent as that which we conceive of the mutation of form in some insects? what if a process comparable to flaying alive is to be gone through? is the weakness that sinks under such struggles to be confounded with the pertinacity which clings to other vices, which have induced no constitutional necessity, no engage of the whole victim, body and soul?' (CD, p. 84)

In other words, the central argument of Lamb's testimony is the dangerous discovery that the Will will not only not always be ruled by reason, but that it can, inadvertently and accidentally, become absolutely enslaved to an irrational and superhuman agent such as alcohol. Furthermore, it is not that the body becomes addicted to alcohol, but that the mind becomes addicted to alcohol's cognitive effects.

A second consequence of alcohol dependency is the desire to find its cause and originary moment. Both Charles Lamb and Thomas De Quincey begin their confessions with a description of how they came to encounter the drug that would become their master. As with Thomas Trotter, there is the search for the cause of the addiction; however, here there is also a dwelling upon the traumatic or seminal moment – the first drink, the first taste of opium – as a consequence of which the

narrators' existential being was irrevocably changed. This suggestion that a seminal event somewhere in youth – although in these confessions this moment is clearly located in late youth – could set in chain a progression of subsequently inexorable psychological and behavioural processes of which only a return to the source can provide an understanding and a cure, clearly adumbrates later psychoanalytic theory and practice – although, of course, with the difference that the narrator is here both analysand *and* analyst.

In her discussion of Charles Lamb's essay, Anya Taylor argues that it reveals the close association between the confessional form and Romanticism in general. 'In its complex analyses,' she writes, 'it also illuminates Romanticism for its self-consciousness, its confessional outpourings even when ringed with irony, its turbulence and passion, its recognition of the nearness of 'despondency and madness'.³⁷ While the formal roots of the written confession can be traced back at least as far as St Augustine, Taylor sees the Romantic confession as relevant to the specific period in which it emerged. She sees Lamb's essay as part of the same concern for autobiographical analysis that informed Wordsworth's *Prelude* and the same interest in the limits of experience that informs, for example, Coleridge's visionary poems.

The confessional narrative of the kind produced by Lamb and De Quincey can be seen as an early narration of the unconscious and the irrational. The literary confessional narrative provides the irrational world view of the drunkard with an ontological status denied to the world view of the insane or the drunkard as mediated through the expert observer or medical practitioner. The status of the author as a member of the intelligentsia positions the irrational less as a deficiency of reason than as an existential condition in conflict with reason; albeit one the aetiology of which is rooted in a remote source.³⁸ While clearly having a precedent in Rousseau's *Confessions*, the concern of the drinker's confession is fundamentally different. Rousseau's stated project was to 'display to my kind a portrait in every way true to

³⁷ Taylor, p. 91

³⁸ While Foucault argues in *Madness and Civilization* (1961; London: Tavistock, 1967) that unreason became, in the nineteenth century, established as a deficiency of reason; it could be suggested that, in the idea of inebriety, an older idea of madness – as other, as demonic, as ontologically autonomous – was sustained in popular discourse.

nature' whose subject 'will be myself.'³⁹ This biographical imperative – to delve with apparent honesty and detail into the life and soul of the author – is drawn towards the desire to comprehend what makes a man what he is. The confession of the drinker, on the other hand, is drawn towards understanding what can make a man what he is not. Where the subject of the autobiography is the author, the subject of the confession or recovery narrative is the drug and its influence on the life and consciousness of the narrator. The drinker's confessional narrative, then, is not about the long road to human freedom, but the short path to subjection.

Again, Foucault's analysis is useful here. In *A History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault argues that the technique of confession has become central to Western notions of truth. He identifies the roots of this tendency in the Catholic confession, arguing that it 'was here, perhaps, that the injunction, so peculiar to the West, was laid down for the first time in the form of a general constraint ... the nearly infinite task of telling.'⁴⁰ He goes on to argue that 'the confession has become one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth. We have become a singularly confessing society.'⁴¹ Foucault's argument is predicated on his assertion that the confession initially functioned as a means by which pleasure was transformed into discourse and became, through the pathologization of those pleasures, the means by which the self is identified as fundamentally perverse and therefore in need of constant regulation. However, while the sexual confession remained a relatively furtive discursive mode – limited primarily to that sphere of medical discourse Foucault identifies as the *scientia sexualis* – the drinker's confession would become an immensely popular and influential narrative form. Where Foucault identifies the privileged relationship of confession to truth as emerging on a trajectory of sexual identification, I would suggest that the importance of the drinker's confession should not be understated in the degree to which it provided not only a secular form of the conversion narrative, but also allied that conversion process to pathology as compulsive intoxication.⁴² In other words, if Foucault argues that the persistence of confession amounted to the transformation of sexual desire into sexual pathology,

³⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (1781; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 17. Rousseau briefly mentions a spree during which he took to stealing wine; but assures us 'I have never been intemperate or over-indulgent, nor was I ever drunk in my life.' (p. 255)

⁴⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 20

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 59

⁴² Brian Harrison argues that the teetotal meeting amounted to a 'secularisation of the conversion experience.' (Harrison, p. 130)

then I would suggest that it also, in the drunkard's confession, represented the materialisation of evil (as the uncontrolled, the violent, the destructive) into alcohol. In effect, this both positioned alcohol consumption as the necessary site of particularly vehement regulation, but also, conversely, imbued alcohol with a quasi-transcendent power. It requires only an inversion of values, not of philosophical or theological world-view, for the 'demonic' to become the godlike.

'Confessions of a Drunkard' presents itself, like most confession narratives, as a cautionary tale. The justification of engaging in such an account of oneself and one's own obsessions and psychological disturbances is that the ends – that is, the protection of at least some potential drinkers from falling into the abyss – justify the somewhat sensational means. This is something in which De Quincey's account of his opium obsession differs from Lamb's drunkard's confession. De Quincey, in the introduction to his narrative, suggests that his aim is to provide a counterweight to the prurient tendency among the English to shy away from reading into the dark inner world of their fellow human beings. His motivations are not fundamentally cautionary but, he suggests, journalistic and literary. Hinting that one of the functions of the confessional narrative is to undermine a complacent and intentionally negligent faith in rational humanity, De Quincey writes that:

Nothing, indeed, is more revolting to English feelings, than the spectacle of a human being obtruding on our notice his moral ulcers or scars ... which time, or indulgence to human frailty, may have drawn over them: accordingly, the greater part of *our* confessions (that is, spontaneous and extra-judicial confessions) proceed from demireps, adventurers, or swindlers.⁴³

Charles Lamb makes no such literary claims for his confession; although, as Anya Taylor points out, it is a mass of literary allusions. While De Quincey is explicit in his desire to turn the depiction of intoxication and addiction into a literary genre, Lamb, without announcing his intentions as clearly as De Quincey, also turns the addiction process into a literary event. The following excerpt is packed with clever reversals, paradoxes and oxymorons, and expansive language, and is rounded off with

⁴³ De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, pp. 1-2

a triumphant Miltonic paraphrase. Describing how the drinker will recognise his loss of control, Lamb writes:

He will come to know it, whenever he shall arrive in that state in which, paradoxical as it may appear, *reason shall only visit him through intoxication*; for it is a fearful truth, that the intellectual faculties by repeated acts of intemperance may be driven from their orderly sphere of action, their clear day-light ministries, until they shall be brought at last to depend, for the faint manifestation of their departing energies, upon the returning periods of the fatal madness to which they owe their devastation. The drinking man is never less himself than during his sober intervals. Evil is so far his good.⁴⁴

While Lamb uses Milton here to construct addiction as a satanic reversal of ethical and epistemological hierarchies, Milton himself depicts the Fall of mankind in the language of intoxication:

As with new wine intoxicated both,
They swim in mirth, and fancy that they feel
Divinity within them breeding wings
Wherewith to scorn the earth.⁴⁵

Here Milton allies the false freedom, and the delusive knowledge, of drunkenness to the profane usurpation by humanity of the moral position of the godhead. There is, however, a profound ambivalence in this analogy. On the one hand, it compares intoxication to that profane knowledge which, while being the cause of the Fall, is also what makes us fundamentally human. At the same time, Milton constructs something of a parallel between this and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Where Adam and Eve's experience of a treacherously heightened consciousness is described by analogy to drunkenness and 'new wine', so the incomprehensible glossolalia of the apostles at Pentecost is mistaken by the bemused people of

⁴⁴ Lamb, p. 90. 'Evil, be thou my good' is from *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, line 110

⁴⁵ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Book 9, ll. 108-111), in M. H. Abrams ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 1* (London: Norton, 1993), p. 1589

Jerusalem as the effects of the ‘new wine’.⁴⁶ In one, intoxication is mistaken for transcendence, in the other transcendence is mistaken for drunkenness. In both, intoxication provides a means by which either false or real transcendence can be expressed in language. It is perhaps the potential that intoxication affords for the articulation of versions of transcendence – as much as the real or false nature of actual drunken transcendence – that makes it such a potent literary device and such an integral element in the texts under discussion in this study.

The previous quotation from Lamb illustrates how his essay directly addresses the problem of consciousness and the rational, knowable subject in terms of drunkenness. Just as Milton’s Satan, through his erroneous choice and his subsequent pride, embodies an inversion of the sacred ethical order, and just as Milton’s Adam mistakes intoxication for truth, so the drinker, through obstinacy following on from an initial error inverts the epistemological hierarchy of post-enlightenment thought to the extent that intoxication is so far his reason. This paradox seriously undermines the philosophical claim for the sovereignty of reason and the security of sobriety. Implicit in it is the possibility that sobriety – and therefore rational social intercourse, and possibly even reason itself – is merely a mask or a performance. For if man, through the intercession of a mere *thing* – alcohol – can become such that he can only be himself when drunk, what faith can one have in either the moral or epistemological powers of human reason? In the very act of acknowledging the demonic power of alcohol, the narrator of the confessional narrative deconstructs the certainties of the sober world he espouses. If the evil of drink is manifest in an inversion of the eternal hierarchy of reason over madness, just how eternal, how stable, can that hierarchy be? De Quincey again articulates this problematic explicitly writing that it is ‘most absurdly said, in popular language, of any man, that he is *disguised* in liquor: for, on the contrary, most men are disguised by sobriety.’⁴⁷ Intoxication, as an aporia in rational philosophy, becomes for De Quincey, that which inverts rationalism itself. It is also, however, an inversion which manifests itself in the performances of the self that occur specifically in social interaction.

One of the first, and most notable, suggestions which Lamb raises in his confession is that the acquisition of a drink habit and the processes of male socialisation are inextricably linked. Exactly one hundred years later, Jack London –

⁴⁶ Acts: 2: 13

⁴⁷ De Quincey, p. 96

in his own confessional narrative *John Barleycorn* – would make, at length and in great detail, almost exactly the same suggestion.⁴⁸ Unlike De Quincey, whose introduction to opium was an essentially solitary event, mediated through the appearance of a beatific ‘immortal druggist’,⁴⁹ Lamb’s introduction to alcohol, while giving the appearance of a transcendent moment at the time, appears in his retrospective account to have been nothing more than a banal gathering of friends. The young, shy, stuttering Lamb, we are told, discovered that he could be witty and sociable when drunk. Indeed it is through this desire for camaraderie, for entry into a male social world, that Lamb is seduced by alcohol. To this extent, Lamb presents a mirror image of the similar claims Jack London would later make in *John Barleycorn*. Jack London describes the origins of his addiction as being located in his youthful desire, as a masculine, worldly young male to enter the ‘full-blooded ... lusty, breedy, chesty’ fraternity of the saloons that ran along the Oakland waterfront.⁵⁰ For Lamb, by contrast, it is specifically *not* those with ‘robust heads and iron insides’ to whom he addresses his words, but rather ‘to the weak – the nervous; to those who feel the want of some artificial aid to raise their spirits in society to what is no more than the ordinary pitch of those around them without it.’ (CD, p. 85) For London, the rituals of the saloon will confirm his status as a full-blooded male, for Lamb, on the other hand, drinking will facilitate a belated and uncertain entry into a world of fraternal bonding. In both cases, however, the acquisition of an addiction to alcohol is explicitly located in the rituals of male socialisation. Drink, then, is about the relationship of the artificial to the real, but also of the self to society; inasmuch as it is a problem, it is located in the spiritual desires of the drinker, but equally in the prosaic fact of a social culture steeped in alcohol.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Jack London: *John Barleycorn: Alcoholic Memoirs* (1913; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). The central, prohibitionist, argument of *John Barleycorn* is that the desire for alcohol, unlike other drugs, ‘is a matter of mental training and growth, and ... is cultivated in social soil.’ (p. 205).

⁴⁹ De Quincey, p. 88

⁵⁰ London, p.95. In one of his more vivid analogies, London describes the saloon as ‘a place of congregation. Men gathered to it as primitive men gathered about the fire of the squatting place or the fire at the mouth of a cave.’ (p. 3)

⁵¹ The relationship of alcohol addiction to male, urban socialisation can be further related to the idea which Foucault discusses of madness as a malaise of civilisation – of urban life, over-education and an excess of freedom (*Madness and Civilisation*, p. 217) The idea that the book and the bottle are not so far removed in the development of a particularly modern form of madness can be seen in the work of, among others, Jack London. Howard I. Kushner discusses the prevalence of anxieties over madness and suicide in nineteenth century social and medical thought, arguing that ‘At bottom, however, both religious and secular assertions that modernity led to suicide were founded on the shared belief that humans were unable to negotiate the variety of choice that urban life offered’ (‘Suicide, Gender, and the Fear of

It is, to a large extent, the perceived pathological trajectory on which a masculine culture formed around the rituals of drinking led otherwise talented, sociable and socially useful young men which the teetotal movement of the 1830s and 1840s systematically attempted to confront. Furthermore, it attempted to arrest this socialising process by constructing an alternative social culture in which the individual confession narrative played a pivotal role. Before discussing the literary form of teetotal confessional narratives, however, I will provide a broad outline of the emergence of teetotalism at the start of the nineteenth century.

Confession of the Common Man: Teetotalism and the Recovery Narrative

Nicholas O. Warner, discussing the increase in alcohol consumption in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century American society, argues that it was a direct consequence of the individuating and competitive tendencies of an emerging free-market capitalist society. His argument is that drinking, as a manifestation of anxiety, inevitably increases in cultures based on self-reliance and individual responsibility. Drinking, in Warner's argument, signifies a failure to achieve the self-reliance necessary to ascend to the status of successful bourgeois individual, while simultaneously providing a mode of undermining that very definition of the ethical individual:

The great irony ... is that intoxicant abuse departs from and even violates those values of self-reliance and individual responsibility that early became enshrined in American culture. By another stroke of irony, to become intoxicated is to defy standards of sober conduct by making oneself incapable of satisfying those standards. In a sense, the "drunk" invalidates the game of achievement by becoming incapable of even playing it. Thus drunkenness can simultaneously represent the failure to measure up to sacrosanct American standards of individual responsibility and the rebellious rejection of those standards.⁵²

Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Medical and Social Thought, *Social History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 [1993], pp. 461-90)

⁵² Warner, *Spirits of America*, p. 9

The idea that the drinker failed not so much as a religious subject but specifically as a bourgeois subject is a crucial difference between Lamb's confessional narrative and the confessional narratives of the teetotal movements. Indeed it is in the adoption of total abstinence as a symbolic cultural practice – one in which an upward class mobility was assumed – that the teetotal movement rearticulated the crucial relationship between consumption and class.

Total abstinence from alcohol emerged initially as a curative response to habitual drunkenness. Benjamin Rush advocated it as the only possible cure for inebriety, concluding his *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind* by stating that 'my observations authorise me to say, that persons who have been addicted to [spirits], should abstain from them *suddenly* and *entirely*.' (IAS, p.341) As is clear from Charles Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard', the doctrine of total abstention for habitual drinkers had become a relative commonplace by 1813.⁵³ However, in the early years of the nineteenth century the only organised temperance organisations were the anti-spirit societies for whom it was only the consumption of the new and cheap distilled liquors that was considered problematic. Abstention then functioned, indirectly, as the sign of a *lack* of respectability; the acknowledgement of a failing. Where anti-spirits societies could be seen as protecting the already spared, the emerging total abstinence movement was, initially, engaged in the more radical project of reclaiming and redeeming – albeit in a dangerously secular fashion – the fallen.

For Brian Harrison, the rise of teetotalism marks the moment at which the attack on drunkenness truly became a means of accessing social status. Where Joseph Gusfield focuses on the use of temperance by the middle classes to reassert their cultural authority, Harrison dwells on the fact that early teetotalism was a bastion of the radical, and respectable, working class in England. For Harrison, teetotalism became a way in which working class elites – skilled craftsmen and artisans – both distinguished themselves from the lumpenproletariat, but also provided a symbolic process by which respectability could be assumed. As Harrison puts it, the 'teetotal conversion bridged the gap between the respectable and unrespectable poor.'⁵⁴

⁵³ Lamb, p. 84

⁵⁴ Harrison, p. 132; Ian Tyrell argues that this process was, *pace* Gusfield, a modernising rather than reactionary phenomenon. Tyrell points to such basic industrial requirements as the need for a sober

Unlike the early anti-spirits movement, teetotalism first took root in urban centres and quickly became associated with a secular utopianism. As Gerald Olsen, discussing teetotalism in England, points out, ‘unlike moderationists ... the early teetotallers seemed to challenge prevalent Anglican religious and social attitudes by promising that an earthly utopia would result from the elimination of drink and by entrusting the working class themselves the task of achieving this end.’⁵⁵ As a politically radical project, teetotalism located the source of the drink problem not in the potentially dangerous urban working class, but in the tacit hypocrisy of middle class moderationists.⁵⁶ The teetotal wing of radical groups such as the Chartists and the Owenites saw drinking as economically destructive and politically paralysing, but also, in common with other anti-drink campaigners, saw the rituals and excesses of drink as feudal and regressive. The secretary of the Socialist London District Board, arguing for sobriety in 1841, stated that ‘Excess, intoxication and noisy revelry, have too often attended the banquetings of the “old world.”’⁵⁷

Despite, or perhaps because of, its radical associations, teetotalism achieved increasing popularity in the 1830s and 1840s in both Britain and America. In America between 1840 and 1845, the Washingtonian movement gained both a mass

workforce when operating heavy machinery – as well as to the fact that the temperance movement relied heavily on modern modes on propaganda production and distribution – to argue that the temperance movement was ‘a critical episode in the emergence of an industrial society.’ Ian R. Tyrell, ‘Temperance and Economic Change in the Antebellum North’, in Jack S. Blocker ed., *The Liquor Issue in Social Context* (London: Greenwood, 1979), pp. 42-89 (p. 63)

⁵⁵ Gerald Wayne Olsen, ‘From Parish to Palace: Working-Class Influences on Anglican Temperance Movements, 1835-1914’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (April, 1989), pp. 239-252 (p. 242)

⁵⁶ An opposing view of the function of secularisation in temperance can be found in James S. Rohrer, ‘The Origins of the Temperance Movement: a Reinterpretation’, *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (August, 1990), pp. 228-235, and Laura A. Schmidt, “‘A Battle Not Man’s But God’s’”: Origins of the American Temperance Crusade in the Struggle for Religious Authority’, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 56 (January, 1995), pp. 110-121. Both argue that the foundational role of nonconformist preachers and theologians has been overlooked in recent history. Rohrer looks at evidence of religious total abstinence societies in the rural west of America between 1810 and 1820, while Schmidt sees temperance as a response a ‘crisis of contested authority’ in American Calvinism; i.e. a need to find a new role for Calvinism following the secularisation of the language of nonconformist utopianism in the language of Jeffersonian republicanism.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1991), p. 228. Teetotalism was, however, seen by many radicals as representing an unacceptable aspirational drive towards bourgeois respectability. Some working class reformers, such as Francis Place, continued to assert the liberatory, and politically confrontational, potential of working class drinking culture. Equally there was a strong tradition, recorded by James Epstein, of the use of political toasts at radical and Chartist gatherings (James A. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Politics, Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], p. 159). Epstein further traces the history of toasts to the popular politics of eighteenth century England, arguing that, since at least the middle of the seventeenth century, ‘the toasts to which one was prepared to stand were crucial indicators of political allegiance, signs of dissidence or loyalty.’ (p. 151)

popular appeal and visible support from sections of the political establishment. While in Britain, the leadership of the teetotal movement remained largely outside established political circles, in America the Washingtonians claimed the membership of such respected, and sober, politicians as the then rising star of the Illinois legislature, Abraham Lincoln.

The Washingtonians proved, however, to be a spectacular, but short-lived phenomenon. On the one hand, their secular tendencies and lack of either religious piety or social deference alienated both the churches and sections of the upper and middle class. On the other hand, the inevitably high level of backsliding among the thousands who had taken the pledge called into question the efficacy of Washingtonian methods. By the 1850s the Washingtonian movement had all but collapsed and the focus of American temperance campaigning had switched from the reclamation of drunkards to the institution of legislative prohibition. The famous Maine Law – the first occasion on which a state prohibited the sale and traffic of alcohol within its own borders – was passed in 1851 and became the model for subsequent campaigns. In Britain, both the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies adopted teetotalism as a valid, even a valued, goal. At the same time, inspired by the Maine Law, the prohibitionist United Kingdom Alliance was formed in 1852. The United Kingdom Alliance became, like the Prohibition Party some years later in America, one of the first pressure groups to employ modern, single-issue tactics and lobbying techniques.⁵⁸ The passing of the Eighteenth Amendment, which relied heavily on the threat to individual representatives and senators posed by determined sections of their electorate who would vote on the single issue of drink legislation, would later show just how effective these tactics could be.

David S. Reynolds, looking at the influence of the Washingtonian movement on the production of temperance fiction, argues that its lasting literary legacy was what he calls the mode of ‘dark-temperance’ literature. He identifies the source of this narrative type in the confessional speeches of the teetotal gathering. These theatrical narratives of debauchery and degradation would trace the history of the drunkard from first drink to reform, emphasising the sordid, the violent and the salacious by way of praising the redemption found in sobriety. Unsurprisingly their popularity soon spread beyond the doors of the teetotal meeting house, and went on to

⁵⁸ Harrison, p. 224

spawn the highly successful travelling lecture careers of reformed, or almost reformed, drinkers such as John B. Gough.⁵⁹ Reynolds argues that the evident attractions of this narrative genre meant that it did not remain limited to temperance tracts or published versions of the speeches of famous teetotallers like Gough, but spread out into wider areas of literature: 'Canny publishers, grasping the opportunity to peddle blood and violence under the guise of morality, issued a series of temperance novels and story collections in which didacticism was muted and sensationalism was exaggerated. This dark-temperance mode placed new emphasis on the pathological behaviour and diseased psychology associated with temperance.'⁶⁰ Reynolds wider argument is that all the major writers of the American Renaissance were influenced by temperance literature, and dark-temperance literature in particular.

John B. Gough's *Autobiography* was easily the biggest selling confessional narrative to come out of the Washingtonian movement, going through twelve printings between its initial publication in 1845 and 1853.⁶¹ A brief discussion of its narrative features will serve to outline the broad generic tendencies of the Washingtonian confessional narrative. The trajectory of Gough's narrative echoes, at far greater length, that of Lamb; the difference being that the economic disasters of drinking are central to Gough's story. Where Lamb describes addiction primarily as a demonic possession whose manifestations are experienced as ethical and philosophical, Gough describes it as a possession whose manifestations, while fundamentally immoral, are experienced and measured in the sphere of economy.

Stated briefly, Gough describes his childhood in England and America, his first drink, the progressive decline of his social standing, his increasing thirst, the death of his wife and child, his further decline, and his reclamation by the Washingtonians. While he describes his childhood as difficult and lonely, Gough clearly identifies the 'foundation of [his] future sorrows' in the fact that his 'tolerably good voice' and 'faculty of imitation' led him to be 'introduced into the society of thoughtless and dissipated young men, to whom [his] talents made [him] welcome.'⁶² That is, it is a combination of Gough's 'longing for society' (A, p. 135) and his

⁵⁹ The discovery of drunken Gough in a Manhattan brothel in 1845 cast some doubt on his teetotal integrity. He claimed someone had drugged his cherry soda.

⁶⁰ Reynolds, 'Black Cats and Delirium Tremens', p. 23

⁶¹ John W. Crowley, *The Drunkard's Progress: Narratives of Addiction, Despair and Recovery* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 111

⁶² John B. Gough, *An Autobiography* (1845) in Crowley, *Drunkard's Progress*, pp. 111-72 (p. 132). Further references to be given in text as A.

sociability that lead him into addiction. Once again, then, addiction is associated with male socialisation. Added to this, a feature common to many confessional narratives is the idea that not only does a culture of drink draw young men into addiction, but it is precisely the most talented young men that are seduced by this process; that a combination of imagination and ability leads both to a dangerous bar-room popularity, but is also instrumental in creating the desire for performance and expression that drink facilitates. For Lamb, drink both feeds and compensates for his cerebration; for Gough, a skill at dramatic performance makes him a popular figure in the local saloons; for Jack London, addiction is partly the effect of his horror at the gulf between the stultifying world of manual labour and the intellectual freedom of the saloon. An earlier and less famous confessional narrative than Gough's, *The Narrative of Charles T. Woodman, A Reformed Inebriate* (1843), dwells at length on the narrator's precocious imagination as a child. Woodman, while again locating the first drink in social companionship of the bar, argues that the 'expanding mind of the natural genius, cramped by the narrow, stilted views of the cool calculating bigot ... seeks relief in the convivial glass, which sweeps him on to the vortex of ruin.'⁶³ This relationship between male socialisation and the superior imagination of the particular drinker will reappear in Chapter Four where it will be seen in a positive light in George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), and in a negative light in Jack London's *John Barleycorn* (1913).

While Gough marks his decline out through stages of decreasing employment, increasing poverty, and collapsing social standing – finally losing the friendship of even his original drinking friends, he also dramatizes it in terms of a battle for possession of his own will. Having become 'addicted to the use of infernal draughts' (A, p. 138), he realises that 'such was the dominion which rum had over me, that I was led captive by it, as at will. It had impaired every energy and almost destroyed the desire to be better than I was.' (A, p. 141) The process of reclamation from this state of possession, in which Gough suffers not only self-destructive social decline but also the psychic horrors of what would become a pivotal element of the confession narrative – delirium tremens – introduces into the drinker's narrative the idea of an

⁶³ Charles T. Woodman, *The Narrative of Charles T. Woodman, A Reformed Inebriate* (1843), in *ibid.*, pp. 80-96 (p. 85)

alternative fraternity and mode of socialisation.⁶⁴ The redemptive moment of the Washingtonian confessional was commonly the moment at which a stranger encounters the drinker at his lowest ebb, recognises his humanity, and invites him to sign the temperance pledge. For Gough this was a moment at which a ‘chord had been touched which vibrated to the tone of love.’ (A, p. 156) His introduction to the Washingtonians is an introduction to a kind, respectable, and true fraternity as opposed to the mendacious, disgraceful, and false fellowship of the saloon. It is, furthermore, a fellowship in which the moment of entry is not characterised by the bawdy performances of the bar, but by the sober and detailed confession of the temperance meeting. In other words, the truth of individual identity is located not in performance and verbal exchange but in a revelatory articulation in which the drinker subjects himself to the silent judgement and forgiveness of his sober peers. At the heart of this process is the idea that rationality is not a given in the Cartesian sense – that is, it is not autonomous and always potentially self aware – but is reliant on a structure of collective regulation and reaffirmation. Gough’s ultimate goal in writing his autobiography is that of ‘convincing the many who have flung away the maddening draught, that they need a strength, not their own, to enable them to adhere to the vows they make.’ (A, p. 165) In a sense, the drunken consciousness figures here as the metonymy of modern consciousness as a false and misguided individualism – the nightmare of rational philosophy – while sobriety promises a return to a more properly collective and interdependent process of identity formation.

Looked at from a Foucauldian position, this move towards the culture of sobriety can be seen not only as a drift towards a valorisation of the self as subject of surveillance, but also as an effect at the level of cultural practice of the shift posited by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* which saw, throughout the nineteenth century, ‘political power ... assign ... itself with the task of administering life.’⁶⁵ Foucault sees this as part of a process in which society is regulated through the injunction to normalisation rather than through the threat of spectacular and intermittent punishment. To an extent, this argument can be applied to the pathologization of drinking. Where previously drunkenness would lead to

⁶⁴ Gough’s depiction of delirium tremens is typical: ‘Hideous faces appeared on the walls and on the ceiling, and on the floors; foul things crept along the bed clothes, and glaring eyes peered into mine. I was at one time surrounded by millions of monstrous spiders ... I was falling – falling swift as an arrow far down into some terrible abyss ... where mocking, jibing, mowing, fiendlike forms were perched’ etc. (A, p. 145)

⁶⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, p. 139

punishment only on the grounds of specific acts carried out while under the influence, from the early nineteenth century onwards the problem of drinking becomes located in the drinker as a pathological type. The drinker is identified as deviant and subjects himself to a cure which operates not upon specific acts, but upon his soul. He is not threatened with more or less lethal punishment, but given the promise of life and health; a health that is physical, social and economic.

However, while the teetotal movement and the medical concern with the disease of drink located the problem of drunkenness in the individual and deviant drinker, and located the cure in the self-regulating techniques of confession and voluntary surveillance, the strategic shift that occurred in the temperance movement in the middle of the nineteenth century was away from the moral reclamation of the individual drinker and towards direct and coercive legislation in the sphere of trade and cultural practice. While the teetotal confession narrative located the cause of drinking in male socialisation, and measured the decline of the drinker in terms of social effects, it identified reclamation in the sphere of personal practice. The temperance ideology that I will discuss in the following chapter is one in which both cause and cure are located fundamentally in the institutions and practices of drink; the cause is the saloon and the drink trade, the cure is prohibition. What remains of the confessional narrative are the characteristics of the individual drinker, but what is emphasised is the pathological disjunction not between the private consciousness and the public world, but the moral and economic spheres of private domesticity and public socialisation. To this extent, the masculinity of the drinking place remains, but the idealised and curative femininity of the domestic is foregrounded. As I will discuss, an effect of this is to reclarify the gendered construction of drink and drinking culture. In idealising domestic femininity, however, temperance narratives also reintroduce the possibility of a pathologised femininity; thereby revealing a familial connection between the angelic, suffering daughters of temperance and the grotesque whore of *Gin Lane*. Throughout this chapter, we have seen the emergence of the idea of a pathology rooted in male socialisation; it is to the specific problematisation of these masculine social practises that I will now turn.

Chapter 3

Temperance and the Institutions of Drinking

This chapter follows the previous chapter to the extent that it considers the relationship of the rational individual to the rational society in temperance literature. The previous chapter considered the confessional narrative – an adaptation of an extant narrative form which, when constructed around the life narrative of the drinker, took on a number of particular characteristics. The type of narrative I will consider here is the cautionary temperance tale. This, unlike the first person confessional narrative, has largely disappeared from contemporary fiction. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, it was a popular, and highly formulaic, literary genre. It was also part of a concerted attempt on the part of temperance organisations to disseminate propaganda in the sphere of popular literature. The American Temperance Union voted to endorse the use of temperance literature as early as 1836 and an essay in the temperance publication *The Union Signal* from 1900 reaffirms the continuing temperance belief in the ideological power of the popular press, stating that temperance ‘will control public opinion in about the same measure that we control the production of the people’s chosen literature.’¹ Temperance propaganda was not limited to fiction but also included medical pamphlets, sermons, speeches, essays and illustrations.² I will limit my discussion to temperance fiction, and in doing so will look at what has been described as ‘the classic of the genre,’³ and what was certainly the ‘most popular temperance novel ever published in America’⁴ – selling over four hundred thousand copies – T. S. Arthur’s 1854 novel *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, and What I Saw There*.

¹ Quoted in Alison M. Parker, “‘Hearts Uplifted and Minds Refreshed’: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Movement and the Production of Pure Culture in the United States, 1880-1930”, *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), pp. 135-158 (p. 141)

² According to Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, p. 196, the American Tract Society could claim in 1851 to have distributed nearly five million temperance pamphlets of one form or another.

³ Mark Edward Lender and Karen R. Karnchanapee, “‘Temperance Tales’: Antiliquor Fiction and American Attitudes Towards Alcoholics in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries”, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 38, No. 7 (1977), pp. 1347-1370, p. 1362

⁴ Reynolds, ‘Black Cats and Delirium Tremens’, in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, p.

Inasmuch as temperance tales such as *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* engage with what David Reynolds calls 'dark-temperance' tropes, they show the influence of the teetotal confessional narrative. On the other hand, however, they also fulfil a number of very different narrative functions. The confessional narrative provides an essentially solitary account of the effects of drink on a particular consciousness; the limits of its social concern tend to be reflexive: the detrimental social effects of drinking are detrimental inasmuch as they reflect back on the inner turmoil of the drinker. For example, the effects on family life are detrimental to the extent that they increase the solitude of the drinker; the effects of economic mismanagement are detrimental to the extent that they increase the narrator's poverty. The temperance tale, while sharing much with the confessional narrative, relocates the focus of anxiety over drinking in its social effects. Rather than each drink functioning as a step on a very personal journey of descent, each drink functions as a metonym of the social institutions of drinking. Rather than each character functioning as a measure of the single drinker's social integration, each character functions as a social stereotype: the helpless sot, the naïve young social drinker, the suffering wife, the angelic daughter, the corrupt politician, the heartless pusher. If the confessional narrative helped construct the inner landscape within which drunkenness would be understood and represented, then the temperance tale positions drink as a force at work in the world at large; as an issue of social relations, public space, and economic well being.

The narrative shift which I will identify in this chapter accompanies a shift in anti-drink campaigning away from the always potentially radical working class focus of the teetotal movements to the emergence of the temperance movement as a broad based, highly influential and 'eminently mainstream middle-class' movement.⁵ While Joseph Gusfield argues that in America temperance moved from the *noblesse oblige* of the anti-spirits movement to respectability via the embourgeoisment of the teetotal movement, Brian Harrison argues that, in Britain at least, the adoption of temperance by the respectable middle-classes was essentially a bid to reappropriate the dangerous moral high ground that radical teetotalism has captured for the working class.⁶ After the retreat of radical teetotalism, the temperance movement would become, according to one historian, was 'the most popular, influential and long-lived social reform

⁵ Levine, 'Discovery of Addiction', p. 165.

⁶ See Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, pp. 43-4; Harrison's *Drink and the Victorians* essentially traces the processes by which 'By the 1870s the public procession of reformed drunkards had become a rarity ... The temperance movement was, in short, once again becoming respectable.' (p. 191)

movement of the Western world in the century after 1830.’⁷ Arguably, this bold claim fails adequately to acknowledge the influence of abolitionism, the trade union movement, campaigns for the extension of the franchise, Chartism, the promotion of rational recreation, the RSPCA, the Olympic movement and the whole host of Victorian social reform movements and organisations – from societies for the suppression of vice to travel agents – which were to exert such a profound influence on the way people’s lives were organised and experienced both in private and in public. Furthermore, the statistical evidence for the influence of the temperance movement is difficult to assess. Figures show a sharp and sustained increase in spirit consumption in Britain from about 1820, and increase in beer consumption from 1830, and an increase in wine consumption from 1860.⁸ In America, absolute alcohol consumption per capita increased from 1 gallon a year in 1844-5 to 1.5 gallons in 1901-5.⁹ These statistics, however, reflect as much changes in duties on alcohol (and, therefore, a change in sales from illegal to legal channels), and changes in licensing (such as the opening up of the British beer trade following the Beer Act of 1830) as an increase in drunkenness across society. However, according to Brian Harrison, ‘in so far as the statistical evidence proves anything, it casts doubt on the notion that the temperance movement by the 1870s had made any appreciable impact on drink consumption and drunkenness.’¹⁰ Furthermore, numerous commentators have pointed out that any perceived decline in consumption levels of alcohol towards the turn of the century – or, rather, any perceived increase in the consumption of non-alcoholic drinks – was in all probability due as much to the activities of municipal sanitation companies and the activities of coffee and tea importers, than the work of the numerous temperance organisations that existed across this period.¹¹ The one spectacular political success that temperance agitation managed to achieve proved, finally, to be one of the most humiliating episodes in American legislative history.

⁷ Jed Dannenbaum, ‘The Social history of Alcohol’, *Drinking and Drug Practices Surveyor*, Vol. 19 (1984), pp. 7-11 (p. 11). Levine describes temperance as ‘the largest enduring mass movement in 19th-century America’ (Levine, p. 165)

⁸ Harrison, p. 66; Josephine A. Spring and David H. Buss, ‘Three Centuries of Alcohol in Britain’, in David Robinson ed. *Alcohol Problems: Reviews, Research and Recommendations* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 22-30 (p. 23)

⁹ Rorabaugh, p. 239

¹⁰ Harrison, pp. 315-316

¹¹ See Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 298. Brian Harrison argues that ‘Four distinct influences prepared the ground for the temperance pioneers: doctors, coffee traders, evangelicals and industrialists.’ (p. 92). Harrison later argues that ‘the railway probably did more for temperance in the nineteenth century ... than either the temperance movement or the Vice Society.’ (Harrison, p. 336)

The debacle that was Prohibition, rather than being remembered as a period of increased sobriety, health and social harmony is instead memorialised in the iconic figures of the mobster, the speakeasy, and drunken hedonism of the 'roaring twenties'.¹²

In the last third of the nineteenth century, temperance in Britain became broadly adopted by the Anglican church while in America it became dominated by the rural middle-class and organised around such fraternal organisations as The Society of Good Templars.¹³ Indeed, at the heart of the idea of temperance is the suggestion, as made by the prominent temperance reformer F. W. Newman, that drink prevented people from becoming 'little capitalists.'¹⁴ In discussing the representation of sobriety in the teetotal confession narrative, I have suggested that it becomes a signifier of respectability and status, rather than of pathology; that abstention moves from acting as a means of recovery to acting as a signifier of bourgeois, mercantile values: thrift, accumulation, responsibility, hard work, and self-control. As such, the temperance movement was not limited exclusively to narrow sections of the conservative establishment. Indeed, temperance was not so much a 'movement' as a conceptual umbrella; a social ideal that was not only shared by an impressive array of social reformers, but informed and often provided the initial impetus for a swathe of nineteenth century political and quasi-political groupings. Writing specifically about the rational recreation movement, Peter Bailey affirms this state of affairs:

The one 'persona non grata' to all reformers was the publican ... Whatever the rivalries over its direction, the general strategy of rational recreation was clear: new amenities would divert the workingman from the pub and provide the proper environment for his exposure to the superior example, whose values would ultimately be internalised.¹⁵

¹² I will return in a subsequent chapter to the semantics of the various names given to the 1920s.

¹³ The Good Templars had a membership of around 300,000 for much of their existence (Levine, p. 160 n. 15).

¹⁴ Quoted in Harrison, p. 221.

¹⁵ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 41. One example of the intersection between temperance concern and social reform illustrated in this book is that of the campaign for municipal parks which, while the first were not built until the 1850s, were recommended in the report of a parliamentary select committee on drunkenness as early as 1834 (p. 38).

The elimination of drunkenness was a goal shared by both radical Chartists and Catholic bishops;¹⁶ in America the Women's Christian Temperance Movement had the pro-suffrage campaigner Frances Willard as its president, while the Church of England Temperance Society had Queen Victoria as its patron; in Ireland temperance became closely associated with the movement for Repeal; while the appearance of both morally didactic and titillatingly salacious temperance tales in popular publications were matched by the penning of temperance novels by such luminaries as Walt Whitman and attacks on drunkenness by such unexpected commentators as Samuel Taylor Coleridge.¹⁷ Temperance organisations could count among their members such diverse persons as Keir Hardie in Scotland and, for the final year of his life, Edgar Allen Poe in Baltimore. It could be argued, in fact, that one of the reasons for temperance's ultimate ineffectuality was nothing less than the sheer breadth of its appeal. With the exception of the drive for prohibition in America after 1900, temperance energies were, by and large, dissipated among the many more pressing, focussed, and realistic social reform movements of its time. Indeed, it could be said that temperance was not unlike the green movement of the last twenty years; that is, a broad locus of social anxiety and political action through which a wide range of concerns are articulated, and within which an often unlikely coalition of political groupings find common ground.

That the common ground shared by these various campaigners was the regulation – and in America the closure – of the drinking place is a testament to the dangerous ambivalence of the bar, saloon and pub as a social institution. The idea of the drinking place as an idealised, but always potentially dangerous, site of fraternal exchange is at the heart of the construction of the bar as deviant in temperance discourse. Looked at positively, the bar is constructed as a site of leisure and fraternal exchange; looked at negatively, it is constructed as a site of waste and dangerous political discourse.

¹⁶ See *ibid.* 388-389 for a teetotalism among chartist leaders; see, for example, Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free* for a discussion of the work of the Jesuit father James Cullen's Pioneer Temperance Movement.

¹⁷ Walt Whitman's temperance novel *Franklin Evans* was published in 1842 – Whitman would later refer to it as 'damned rot – rot of the worst sort.' (Reynolds, 'Black Cats and Delirium Tremens', p. 50) Coleridge, with no reference to his own notorious proclivities, wrote of alcohol in *The Courier* in 1811 'The quantity of stimulus, which taken by a man of education ... will hasten the decay of his powers ... renders an uneducated man, of undisciplined habits, a frantic wild beast.' Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Spirits' in David V. Erdman ed. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Essays on His Times in The Morning Post and The Courier II* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 174-176 (p. 175)

The role of the drinking place in colonial America illustrates this. Alexander Hamilton, who would go on to become one of the leading lights of the post-revolutionary government, enthusiastically described a tavern he visited in New England in 1744 as follows: ‘There were Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; there were Roman Catholics, Church men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen, Methodists, Seventh Day Men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew.’¹⁸ While the political associations of the drinking place began to dissolve in England in the eighteenth century, in America the tavern became intimately associated with the organisation of the revolutionary war against England.¹⁹ As in France, it was the taverns that would provide the intellectual and organisational centres of revolutionary thinkers, agitators and militias.²⁰ It is essential to keep this intimate association between the drinking place and political resistance in mind when striving to understand the subsequent meanings that come to be associated with the saloon, the pub and the cabaret. John Adams, speaking ironically, described the taverns of Massachusetts as the ‘nurseries of our legislators’; a more recent commentator has observed that whether or not ‘taverns were the “nurseries” of the legislatures, they were certainly the seed beds of the Revolution.’²¹

Not only were drinking places associated with a kind of revolutionary utopianism in America, but drink itself – specifically home produced whiskey – came to function as something of a signifier of American independence. Prior to the Revolution, Caribbean rum had been the most widely drunk spirit in America. Rum, in fact, became an important medium of financial exchange in the colonial economy. Being a relatively locally produced commodity easily shipped over from the West Indies to the expanding American market, it became less prey to the fluctuations of value in goods shipped back and forth across the Atlantic. At times it provided the primary currency in the buying and selling of slaves.²² Far from being considered a potential social problem at the time, rum, along with wine, beer and cider, was

¹⁸ Ed. Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), quoted in ‘Rum, Punch and Revolution’, paper delivered by Peter Taylor at the Annual Thanksgiving Lecture, Department of American Studies, Liverpool John Moores University, Nov. 1999

¹⁹ See, Clark, p. 152. For a discussion of the links between the tavern and the American revolution, see Rorabaugh. For a detail discussion of the tavern in colonial America see David S. Shields, ‘The Demonization of the Tavern’ in Reynolds and Rosenthal, pp. 10-21

²⁰ I will discuss the political associations of the drinking place in France in more detail in Chapter Four.

²¹ Rorabaugh, p. 22

²² Herbert Asbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1950), p. 3

famously looked upon as 'a good creature of God'. Added to the fear of water-borne diseases, was a sympathetic belief that the strength of alcohol, as compared to water, imparted itself to the drinker. It was, as a result, drunk freely among agricultural workers. Water was considered dangerous and weakening to the extent that an insurance company from the colonial period in America is recorded as increasing premiums for abstainers on the grounds that they were 'thin and watery, and ... mentally cranked, in that [they] repudiate the good creatures of God as found in alcoholic drinks.'²³ In this society, the abstainer was the deviant.

Joseph Gusfield argues that the rise of temperance in America represented two anxieties among the nascent bourgeoisie of the Republic. Firstly, it reflected the association of conspicuous drunkenness with backward feudalism and colonial subjection. Secondly, drunkenness – and specifically the 'pre-eminently urban institution' of the saloon²⁴ – became associated with the increasingly powerful cities of the east coast and the immigrant populations, particularly Germans and Irish, for whom the drinking place was not just a social space, but a place in which both radical politics could be discussed and in which the social cultures of an alien Catholicism could embed themselves into American society.²⁵ Gusfield's argument is that temperance, rather than being an attempt to impose middle class social mores on the rest of the population, began as a self-regulatory practice among the American middle and upper classes which served to reinforce their status and authority in the face of rising urbanisation and immigration. Temperance as a cultural practice allowed the middle-class to distance itself from the association of the drinking place with both radical politics and crime, and its association with the feudal institutions of festal excess. In other words, not only was sobriety a behavioural metonym for bourgeois

²³ John Kobler, *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), p.26. For the much repeated anecdotes of colonial alcoholic excess, see also Rorabaugh; Asbury; and J. C. Furnas, *The Life and Times of the Demon Rum* (London: W. H. Allen, 1965)

²⁴ Gusfield, p. 99.

²⁵ The beer trade in England – which was indigenous, economically powerful, and culturally symbolic – played a large part in the survival of the public house in the face of temperance agitation (John R. Greenaway, 'The "Improved" Public House, 1870-1950: The Key to Civilized Drinking or the Primrose Path to Drunkenness?', *Addiction*, Vol. 93, No. 2 [1998], pp. 171-181). In America, however, the brewing interests – which were largely foreign-owned and urban – emerged as a kind of folk devil, standing metonymically for the 'un-American, lawless and wet' large cities (Wayne B. Wheeler, head of the Anti-Saloon League; quoted in Furnas, p. 307-308).

values, but drunkenness was a dangerous avatar of the excesses of feudalism, Catholicism and arbitrary rule.²⁶

The emergence of the temperance movement proper can be seen as accompanying the crucial shift in focus from ‘moral suasion’ to the campaign for legislative prohibition. While the compulsive drinker remains pathologised in this ideological and strategic paradigm, it is the drinking place that becomes the locus of the wider anxieties that temperance expressed. Not only is drunkenness damaging to the person, but the drinking place becomes associated with economic mismanagement, with dangerous forms of socialisation, and with the inversion of proper social hierarchies. It is these shifts that will be identified in my discussion of T. S. Arthur’s temperance novel *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, and What I saw There*.

T. S. Arthur’s *Ten Nights in a Bar-room: Space and Gender in Temperance Ideology*

Ten Nights in a Bar-room, and What I Saw There was published in 1854. It was to mark the high point of the prolific writing career of Timothy Shay Arthur (1809-1885). Arthur, who lived in Baltimore – where he briefly shared membership of a literary club with Edgar Allen Poe – before moving to Philadelphia, was active both as a contributor to magazines such as Godey’s *Lady’s Book* and as the editor of his own publication *Arthur’s Home Gazette*. In the late 1840s, a reviewer in *Graham’s Magazine* could claim that ‘in the princely mansions of the Atlantic merchants, and in the rude log-cabins of the backwoodsmen, the name of Arthur is equally known and

²⁶ Discussing this latter aspect, Gusfield suggests that the ‘rowdiness with which Carnival is associated had become less and less a shared sacred quality of holidays, festivals and holy days. [Therefore] It gave to drunkenness and festival behaviour an added feature of social protest that made the emergence of rowdy behaviour even more fearful to those who sought to control it.’ (Joseph Gusfield, ‘Benevolent Repression: Popular Culture, Social Structure, and the Control of Drinking’, in Barrows and Room, *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History*, pp. 399-242 [p. 404]). Carnival is also, looking back to the discussion of intoxication and freedom in the previous chapter, a form of freedom *not* predicated on reason – indeed it is a freedom grounded in a celebration of the irrational and the chaotic. Any cultural practice that harks back to the carnivalesque is, therefore, antithetical to the rational principles upon which, as it would ideologically define itself, the civilised, bourgeois world order is founded. I will discuss intoxication as carnival, with reference to Bakhtin, in more detail in Chapters Five and Six.

cherished as the friend of virtue.’²⁷ Arthur’s first novel, *Six Nights With the Washingtonians: A Series of Original Temperance Tales* was published at the height of the Washingtonians’ popularity in 1842. However, it was with *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* that he achieved his most spectacular success. In terms of sales figures, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* was second only to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in America the 1850s, selling over four hundred thousand copies.²⁸ *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* continued to be performed as a stage play – with the inclusion of such popular temperance songs as ‘Father, come home’ – until the 1920s. Eight film versions were made of the story between 1897 and 1931 and it was chosen, perhaps unsurprisingly, as the favourite Hollywood movie of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in 1932.²⁹

The publication of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* came at the end of an active decade and a half of temperance campaigning in America. The tactical debate over the relative merits of ‘moral suasion’ over legislation is one of the central themes of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*. While on the one hand it presents the traditional picture of the horrors of drink, it does so by way of targeting the drink trade rather than the drinker and by concerning itself primarily with the disastrous social effects and economic effects of drinking on the local community. In this book, we begin to see the demonisation of the tavern and saloon that would become a central feature of temperance campaigning in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* is not a first-person confessional narrative – the narrator is a sober visitor who returns to the same tavern over a period of ten years – it reveals the influence of the Washingtonians both in its enthusiastic use of the dark-temperance tropes of delirium tremens, murder and insanity, but also in its location of much of the narrative standpoint, if not the actual voice, in the drinkers themselves.

The basic narrative structure of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* is one in which the narrator, for unspecified business purposes, returns to the Sickle and Sheaf tavern in the town of Cedarville over a period of ten years. There he witnesses the series of calamities that are visited upon both the owner and the patrons of the tavern over the period, and on the town at large. Framing the events is Joe Morgan, a once decent

²⁷ Quoted in Donald A. Koch, Introduction to T. S. Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, And What I Saw There* (1854; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. ix. Further references to be given in text as TNB.

²⁸ Reynolds, ‘Black Cats and Delirium Tremens’, p. 31

²⁹ See the Internet Movie Database (<http://us.imdb.com>) and Parker, p. 140

working man now in the grip of the demon drink whose daughter, engaged in the nightly ritual of leading him back home from the bar he is compelled to visit each day, is killed by a glass aimed at Joe by the owner of the tavern, Simon Slade. Other characters include the demonic moderate drinker Harvey Green; the sociable – and therefore doomed – young man Willy Hammond; the various wives and mothers who figure primarily at the doorways of the tavern, pleading with their husbands to come home; and Mary Morgan, Joe's angelic, tragic and heroic daughter. The temperance attack on the saloon, predicated on its belief that it is a dysfunctional site of masculine socialisation, relies on constructing the feminine social space as the normative other to the bar. By way of elucidating this dialectic, I will focus my reading of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* on two crucial figures: the tavern itself and Joe's daughter Mary.

Willy Hammond provides the cautionary figure in which the dangerous relationship between male socialisation and the culture of drink is exposed by Arthur. He is the pleasant son of the respectable town patriarch Judge Hammond. Unlike the narrator of Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard', Willy Hammond does not require drink in order to become sociable, rather it is his innate sociability that proves his downfall and eventual death. A minor character remembers him as possessing 'a dangerous gift – rare conversational powers, united with a great urbanity of manner.' (TNB, p. 155) While Willy Hammond dies at a gaming table upstairs at the Sickle and Sheaf, every other death in the novel is directly attributable to the presence of the tavern in the town. In *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, the tavern is not simply where the tragic effects of inebriation are facilitated, it is the root cause of drunkenness itself. Indeed, drinking is not depicted by Arthur as a solitary event, but precisely as a social phenomenon and malaise, the excision of which demands the outlawing of the drinking place. Like Lamb, Gough and London, Arthur dwells on the potentially tragic effects of the desire and talent for social intercourse in a society in which sociability is predicated masculine cultures and institutions of drinking.

It has been suggested that questions around the control of alcohol 'are seldom those of drinking per se but rather of the contexts and groups within which drink and drinking occur.'³⁰ It has further been asserted that there is 'no doubt that the nineteenth century temperance debate was really an argument about how leisure time

³⁰ Gusfield, 'Benevolent Repression', p. 403

should be spent.’³¹ Clearly, a crucial problem for temperance was to ask how it could persuade young men to indulge in worthwhile pursuits when, on every corner, stands a bar tempting them into a life of dissipation and poverty. The modern conception of drinking – as something that takes place at set times in set places, both of which are outside of the hours of work – is itself a result of the demarcation of discrete zones of work and leisure that accompanied industrialisation.³² The link between campaigns for rational recreation and temperance mentioned above are part of this dialectic; as are the issues of economic propriety to be discussed below. Indeed, looked at broadly, most of the issues raised in temperance discourse are, in some way, allied to the problem of what to do with leisure time. The social space at the eye of this storm is the bar; which, particularly in America, would be construed as a retrograde and unacceptable temptation away from the increasingly accessible and respectable social spaces of the theatre, the cinema, the art gallery and the sports stadium.

In the description of the Sickle and Sheaf tavern in *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, we begin to see the emergence of a semiotics of the American drinking place. On only his second visit to the Sickle and Sheaf tavern, the narrator sadly reports that the old gleaming signs and polished surfaces of what had previously been essentially a resting place for travellers – one that served alcohol only as a secondary function – have been replaced by an altogether different décor:

The bar-room had been extended, and now a polished brass rod or railing embellished the counter, and sundry ornamental attractions had been given to the shelving behind the bar – such as mirrors, gliding etc. Pictures, too, were hung upon the walls, or more accurately speaking, coarse coloured lithographs, the subjects of which, if not really obscene, were flashing, or vulgar. (TNB, p. 108)

³¹ Harrison, p. 32

³² For a detailed discussion of the relationship between new formations of leisure time and social drinking in the United States, see Roy Rosenzweig, ‘The Rise of the Saloon’, in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Scudson eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 131-148; and Joseph Gusfield, ‘Passage to Play: Rituals of Drinking Time in American Society’, in Douglas, *Constructive Drinking*, pp. 73-90

This is description of the tavern is consistent with descriptions of the ‘traditional’ American saloon.³³ Arthur’s depiction of the Sickle and Sheaf provides an early illustration of this hierarchical semiotics of the drinking place. In the gesture towards the bar-rail, the mirror and the saucy pictures, Arthur prepares the way for the entrance onto the stage of his cast of mysterious interlopers, corrupt politicians, violent barmen, gamblers, thieves and prostitutes.

The saloon, as depicted by Arthur, is a site of social inversion and moral perversion; one in which all the sacred structures of piety and familial responsibility are inverted. Mary, leading her father Joe home each night becomes his spiritual mother; meanwhile sons mock the authority of their fathers – one drinker observes ‘if my old man were to make a fool of himself in this way – sneaking around after me in bar-rooms – he’d get only his trouble for his pains. I’d like to see him try it, though!’ (TNB, pp. 47-48). The climactic event, as far as the future of the tavern is concerned, takes place when the bar owner, Simon Slade, is murdered by his own son. Clearly, for Arthur, the fitting end to the tragedy of the bar is parricide – the ultimate inversion of familial and social piety.

The bar here is figured as the infernal other to the idealised domestic scene. In the bar, money is dissipated, rather than saved; pleasure and sensual gratification replace responsibility and duty; social hierarchies are reversed; and men are left to their own worst instincts in a space which actively excludes the influence of women. The Sickle and Sheaf tavern is an early example of the systematic association of the saloon in literature with this specific set of anxieties. As such, it prefigures representations of the saloon that would become crucial to the temperance campaign as it moved towards a final push for prohibition at the end of the nineteenth century.

³³ The standard interior of these saloons would include swing doors, a long bar with a foot-rail, a sawdust floor, a mirror behind the bar, nude pictures, some tables and chairs and usually some pictures of sporting heroes and some hunting memorabilia (see Jim Hathaway, ‘A History of the American Drinking Place’, *Landscape*, Vol. 29, No. 1 [1980], pp. 1-9, pp. 2-3; Asbury, *The Great Illusion*, p. 116; John M. Kingsdale, ‘The “Poor Man’s Club: Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon’, *American Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, No. 4 [October, 1973], pp. 472-489 [pp. 474-475]). The saloon in itself, however, like the English pub, is something of an invention. In Britain, brewers responded to the rash of small beer shops which opened following the liberalisation of licensing restriction with the introduction of the Beer Act in 1830 by creating ever more elaborately ‘traditional’ interiors (Clarke, pp. 336-337). Charles Dickens complained of the mania among ‘publicans and keepers of wine vaults’ for the installation of endless ‘stone balustrades, rosewood fittings, immense lamps’ and other embellishments to their premises (Charles Dickens, ‘The Gin-shop’, in *Sketches by Boz* [1836; London: Chapman Hall, (undated)], pp. 134-138, p. 135). By the turn of the century in America, the intense competition among the brewers who tended to own the majority of saloons led to a similar creation of endless simulacra of a would-be traditional model – albeit one that unashamedly targeted the urban working class rather than, as was the case in Britain, attempted to create an air of respectability.

Before returning to my discussion of T. S. Arthur, I will briefly look again at Jack London's *John Barleycorn* in order to consider what aspects of this construction of the saloon persisted in the half-century that separates the two texts. Although a confessional narrative, *John Barleycorn* illustrates the degree to which the ideas associated with the saloon which Arthur draws upon continued to be central to the idea of the urban drinking place well into the twentieth century.

For Jack London the saloon is intimately tied up with the definition of masculinity. As a social space, it is the other to the domestic space of home and family, a space that leads men away from 'the narrowness of women's influence into the wide free world of men.' (JB, p. 3) The young Jack London, escaping his home for the Oakland waterfront and the romantic life of an oyster pirate along the shallows of the San Francisco bay area, discovers that 'the warp and woof of that man-world was entangled with alcohol' (JB, p. 27) and that the saloon is the nodal point in which the social and economic exchanges and rituals of male society at that time were played out.

At around the time that Jack London was ambivalently targeting the saloon as the fundamental cause of adult alcoholism, the national push for prohibition in America, headed since 1895 by the Anti-Saloon League, had taken the saloon and the beer trade as its prime targets. Nonetheless, London's nostalgic description of the saloon is still suffused with the air of a mannish utopianism. London appears not to object to the exclusive and flamboyant manliness of saloon culture *per se* but rather to the unfortunate fact that it led to the distinctly unmanly problem of addiction. Central to London's idealisation of the saloon is his depiction of it as an alternative social and economic world to the exploitative system of wage labour that existed beyond its swing doors.

Economic propriety was central to the temperance debate.³⁴ In *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, the decline of the drinker is metonymically captured in Joe Morgan's economic descent. The drinker's recovery is equally signified by the sober Joe Morgan's increasing prosperity and the fact that, as a sober citizen, he is referred to as 'Mr' Morgan. For temperance campaigners, the saloon functioned as a space in which thrift, through habit, was supplanted by dissipation and an alternative economy

³⁴ Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, p. 34 argues that the obsession in temperance literature with the drunkard's inability to provide for his family is a function of the ideological temperance position that familial provision represents the cornerstone of economic efficiency and the protestant work ethic.

of unbridled expenditure and waste. In *John Barleycorn*, however, the alternative economy of the saloon represents a resistant site of non-accumulative economics, independent credit schemes, labour exchanges, and non-commodified social relations. Luc Sante, in his history of the New York underworld, describes the typical turn of the century saloon as

a club and a home [where] Men could play cards or pool ... hold union or political meetings in the back room, or argue politics and labor, or horses and baseball in the front. They could trust the bartender, who would be their confessor, business advisor, political mentor, gossipmonger. And there was the free lunch, or, as an unwritten law had it, free after two nickel beers.³⁵

London, using a popular phrase, referred to the saloons as 'poor men's clubs'. (JB, p. 56) They were not, in this idealised conception, simply outlets for the procurement of alcohol, they represented an entire economic and social system that stood in opposition to the two economies to which the worker had ideologically acceptable access at the time: the workplace and home.³⁶

The fundamental mode of economic exchange within this structure was 'treating', which London describes as 'a social duty and a manhood rite' (JB, p. 58). While today this tradition survives in the common, but essentially optional custom buying of rounds, in the saloon culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was an unquestioned fact of the economy of drink. This was also true of British and Irish drinking cultures in the nineteenth century, but its more rigorous imposition appears to have survived longest in the American saloon. In essence, treating required each drinker in a group of drinkers to buy a round, and then to accept a drink from everyone else in the group. Therefore, in a group of twelve drinkers, twelve drinks would have to be drunk by each person. Jack London, having initially balked at the apparent wastefulness and expense of treating, discovers that to enter the alternative economy of the saloon is an ideological decision to take an oppositional stance against the sober economics of industrial capitalism, 'I had achieved a

³⁵ Luc Sante, *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York* (London: Granta, 1998), pp. 118-119

³⁶ Saloons also represented an social site of resistance to dominant political ideologies. The association between the taverns and revolutionary politics mentioned above no doubt informed the late nineteenth century association of the saloon with radical, particularly immigrant, politics. The fact that saloons tended to cater primarily to the urban working class meant that they inevitable provided meeting places for political groupings.

concept,' he wrote, recalling his first experience of treating, 'Money no longer counted. It was comradeship that counted.' (JB, p. 51) This quasi-utopian male economy of the saloon will later be seen to be crucial to Hemingway's depiction of the drinking place as a potentially ideal site of free discourse.

Roy Rosenzweig suggests that the economic systems that operated within saloons provided a means of 'preserving reciprocal modes of social interaction within the capitalist world.'³⁷ Equally, it has been argued that the 'communal values represented in "treating" were the opposite of the saving ethic that was so much the standard of middle-class advice on achieving mobility.'³⁸ It certainly is a tempting argument to see the economy of the saloon as keeping alive a communitarian, non-commodified economic culture in the heart of the modern city. However, the saloon economy could equally be seen as providing not so much a resistant economic system as a version of the most excessive form of conspicuous consumer capitalism in microcosm. The culture of treating was such that not only was social status rooted in the ability to engage in conspicuous expenditure, but access to saloon society demanded it. Failure to engage in the ritual of treating would lead to social ostracism. Meanwhile, the true economic winners in this structure were the brewers who, by the early twentieth century, had a monopoly of saloon ownership. Treating meant that the sale of alcohol increased exponentially depending on the number in the drinking group – each additional member was guaranteed to buy as many drinks as there were drinkers. Furthermore, the status hierarchy of the individual reflected, as in wider capitalist society, his ability to acquire credit – albeit with the barman rather than with a bank.³⁹

The male, public, social, independent culture and economy of the saloon functioned not only in opposition to the exchange economics of the market place but also, in a very real sense, to the detriment of the smooth functioning of the domestic economy. In an economic culture which excluded women from the means to financial independence, as well as from the doorways of the saloons, male social drinking was

³⁷ Rosenzweig, p. 136. Marian Adler argues that the pub 'assured a kind of free space where working-class popular culture could define itself in an environment at least somewhat buffered from the insistent hegemony of bourgeois culture.' (Mariana Adler, 'From Symbolic Exchange to Commodity Consumption: Anthropological Notes on Drinking as a Symbolic Practice', in Barrows and Room, pp. 376-98 [p. 390])

³⁸ Gusfield, 'Benevolent Repression', p. 415

³⁹ Jack London describes acquiring credit with the saloonkeeper as 'the final badge of manhood', JB, p. 51

liable to lead to financial neglect within the family – exacerbated by violence borne both of sheer drunkenness and of a drinking culture both violent in itself and structurally misogynistic. Given this, it is not surprising that it should have been the Women's Crusade of 1873-4 which both re-ignited the temperance movement in America and led to the formation of an inextricable link between temperance and women's rights.

The Women's Crusade was a short-lived but highly influential campaign of direct action during which women in towns and cities across America began demonstrating outside of, and even physically attacking, saloons. An estimated 25-30,000 saloons were closed down during the Crusade – most of which re-opened within a year.⁴⁰ It was, on the one hand, an assertion of the strength of women when organised, but also a furtherance, albeit a subversive one, of what has been called the 'Cult of True Womanhood.'⁴¹ Barbara Welter in her essay of this title discusses the cultural importance of a compulsory feminine virtuousness justified on the grounds that men were, and could not help being, sinners. It was, therefore, the responsibility of women to protect men from themselves and therefore maintain a healthy and functioning society. In this ideological construction of femininity, women had a moral obligation to be domestic, tolerant, unambitious, loyal and forbearing. Women would be angels in the home in order to obviate the danger of men seeking enjoyment in the dangerous and predominantly vicious pursuits of the outside world. Margaret Fuller, writing in 1844, complained that women were trained to believe that 'the least appearance of coldness or withdrawal, from whatever cause, in the wife is wicked, because liable to turn her husband's thoughts to illicit indulgence; for a man is so constituted that he must indulge his passions or die!'⁴² Women were, on the one hand, to be pitied for the suffering they endured at the hands of their drunken and abusive husbands; they were not, however, to resist such abuse through any means other than continued devotion, and the hope that their example alone would create a change in the husband's immoral ways. However, as Welter argues, 'the very perfection of True Womanhood ... carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. For if woman was so very little less than the angels, she should surely

⁴⁰ Asbury, p. 85

⁴¹ Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860', *America Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (1966), pp. 154-174

⁴² Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1844; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.

take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things.’⁴³ Thus, the circumscribed power of the domestic woman always carried with it the potential to break into the political arena.

The Women’s Crusade was, arguably one of the first and most spectacular examples of women *en masse* taking the ideology of feminine virtue into the active and confrontational sphere of public life and political action. As Joan D. Hendrick writes:

If drinking was a ritual of masculine identity, what better way to register one’s protest against patriarchy and one’s exclusion from public power than to attack the barrooms and ax the barrels of liquid that, when ingested by men, led in a more or less direct spiral to loss of family wages, disruption of homes, and the continued disenfranchisement of women? When women *prayed* in barrooms they were ritually reconsecrating that space to a different function, a different moral sphere, and a different sexual economy.⁴⁴

Women’s Crusader Mother Eliza Daniel Stewart recognised the social and political implications of the movement, saying that the women involved in the campaign of 1873-4 had ‘through a baptism of suffering, developed a new phase in the history of their sex.’⁴⁵ The implications of the sudden spread of visible, organised and influential groups of women demanding from men the behaviour men nominally demanded from themselves was not lost on non-crusading commentators at the time either. A local newspaper in Fredonia – one of the birthplaces of the Crusade – wrote that following the closure of numerous saloons, ‘not many women will say: ‘I have all the rights I want. Don’t ask me not to vote.’⁴⁶

The implication that women’s suffrage would be an inevitable element of successful temperance legislation has its roots in the early days of the shift from moral

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 174

⁴⁴ Joan D. Hendrick, ‘Drink and Disorder in the Classroom’, in Reynolds and Rosenthal, pp. 205-227 (pp. 209-210)

⁴⁵ Quoted in, Anon., ‘The Women’s Crusade in South Charleston, Clark County, Ohio’, <http://history.ohio-state.edu/projects/prohibition/clarke-co.htm> (5/98)

⁴⁶ Quoted in Furnas, p. 244. For evidence of the upper-class profile of the Women’s Crusade, and the subsequent effect of this on its influence, see Charles A. Issetts, ‘A Social Profile of the Women’s Temperance Crusade: Hillsboro, Ohio’, in Blocker *The Liquor Issue in Social Context*, pp. 101-109

suasion to legislative prohibition. Susan B. Anthony, a friend and colleague of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, recalled her first taste of political activism occurring in the wake of the Maine Law during which she sent out petitions demanding that women assert the 'right and duty to speak out against the [liquor] traffic ... and, since she cannot vote, to duly instruct her husband, son, father, brother how she would have him vote and, if he longer continue to misrepresent her, take the right to march to the ballot-box and deposit a vote indicative of her highest ideas of practical temperance.'⁴⁷ However, it was in the wake of the Women's Crusade, and the subsequent foundation of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, that the demand for women's suffrage, ostensibly as the only realistic means to the passing of temperance legislation – i.e. as a politicisation of the role of women as men's carers – acquired an organised and genuinely powerful voice.⁴⁸

The targeting of the saloon by temperance campaigners highlighted the conspicuous masculinity of the bar. The strategic shift which accompanied this shift in focus identified legislative reform as the only possible solution to the drink problem. To this extent, the attack on the saloon both highlighted the political disempowerment of women, but also opened the door to a bid by women for a real political voice. If women, as the guardians of the domestic, are the bulwark against male drunkenness, but the legislation necessary to curtail the drink trade is reliant on the democratic process, then women must be given the vote. If the drinking culture of the saloon excluded and oppressed women socially and economically, then temperance, perhaps inadvertently, empowered them politically.

The politicisation of the role of women as domestic carers in temperance ideology would not occur until twenty years after the publication of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*. In Arthur's novel, women are empowered only in their ability to suffer. That is, the angelic females of Arthur's novel provide, through their own selfless pain, the moral spur to the reclamation of the male drinker. The relationship between Joe Morgan and his ten year old daughter Mary is both the paradigmatic inverse

⁴⁷ Susan B. Anthony, 'Woman's Half-Century of Evolution', *North American Review*, Vol. 175 (December, 1902), pp. 800-810 (p. 806)

⁴⁸ The common argument that the WCTU argued for woman suffrage purely on instrumental grounds (i.e. on the grounds that only such a change in the electoral demographics could lead to temperance legislation), rather than on the grounds of the intrinsic justice of universal suffrage has been challenged by one of the leading historians of temperance in the United States, see Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Women's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 221

relationship in the book and the most revealing illustration of Arthur's view of the role of women in the struggle to defeat intemperance; that is, it shows women as crucial to the closure of the saloons, but as yet in a strictly non-political capacity. Mary is variously described by Joe as 'more like a guardian angel than a child' (TNB, p. 73), 'my angel child' (TNB, p. 91) and an 'angel of mercy' (TNB, p. 102). She not only acts as Joe's protector and guide, but also gives herself as a sacrifice to the cause of temperance, expending her last breaths imploring Joe to use her death to save himself from the evils of drink:

"You will only have mother left," [Mary] said – "only mother. And she cries so much when you are away."

"I won't leave her, Mary, only when I go to work," said Morgan, whispering back to the child. "And I'll never go out at night any more."

"Yes, you promised me that."

"And I'll promise more."

"What, father?"

"Never to go into a tavern again."

"Never!"

"No. never. And I'll promise still more."

"Father?"

"Never to drink a drop of liquor as long as I live."

"Oh, father! dear, dear father!" And with a cry of joy Mary started up and flung herself upon his breast. Morgan drew his arms tightly around her, and sat for a long time with his lips pressed to her cheek – while she lay against his bosom as still as death. As death? Yes; for, when the father unclasped his arms, the spirit of his child was with the angels of the resurrection! (TNB, p. 94)

This is the temperance pledge as last rites and sacrificial mantra. Mary, the name replete with all its implications of purity, sacrifice and suffering, gives up her life in order that her father, and by extension the errant menfolk of her nation, can live.

The narrative trope of the daughter rescuing her father from intemperance was a common one in literature at the time. One of the most famous of the Washingtonian conversion stories was that of John Hawkins who told of his daughter inspiring in him

a Pauline conversion with the words “Father, don’t send me after whiskey today!”⁴⁹ Karen Sánchez-Eppler discusses in detail the structures of what she refers to as ‘disciplinary intimacy’ through which the daughters of temperance narratives discipline their drunken fathers and lead them to sobriety. Sánchez-Eppler suggests that, on the one hand, the position of the daughter as both politically circumscribed and sexually regulated allows her an unthreatening position from which to affect the behaviour of the father. Her very request that the father stop drinking functions as an articulation of her helplessness – and is usually articulated from a position of eroticised submission.⁵⁰ On the one hand, this agrees with Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s argument that the ideological representation of women in nineteenth century literature constructed woman as the ‘angel in the house’ in such a way as to disempower, and to an extent dehumanise, women through their construction as the powerless aesthetic objects of a strictly male gaze.⁵¹ On the other hand, however, Sánchez-Eppler argues that given that the readers of temperance fiction were primarily women and non-drinking men, then these stories functioned not so much as conversion tools, but as ‘a story domesticity tells about itself to itself.’⁵² In other words, the temperance tale – while appearing to empower women, albeit in a highly limited way – actually served to reinforce oppressive domestic gender relations. Indeed, it functioned as part of a discourse of disempowerment located in the construction of women as silent, suffering and, ultimately, tragic angels of the domestic. This would appear to be the case in Arthur’s novel. Despite being geared towards arguing for the legislative control of alcohol, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* still hinges on an act moral suasion carried out within the domestic sphere.

In T. S. Arthur’s novel women, as in much temperance fiction, figure as secondary victims of drink: both as the bereaved mothers and abused daughters, but also as the sacrificial catalysts to redemption. In his review of nineteenth century temperance fiction, John Crowley finds only one temperance tale narrated from the position of a women; albeit it one authored by a man.⁵³ Representations of female

⁴⁹ A version of Hawkins’ story is quoted in Kobler, *Ardent Spirits*, p. 60-62

⁵⁰ Karen Sánchez-Eppler ‘Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth Century America’ in Reynolds and Rosenthal, pp. 60-92

⁵¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1984)

⁵² Sánchez-Eppler, p. 74

⁵³ ‘Confessions of a Female Inebriate’ (1842), by Isaac F. Shepard, in Crowley. *Drunkard’s Progress*, pp. 69-79

drinkers are rare both in temperance fiction and in the non-temperance literature of the nineteenth century. Sheila Shaw argues that where female inebriates do appear in nineteenth century fiction, they are usually depicted as solitary and domestic.⁵⁴ An example of this tendency from British fiction is George Eliot's 1858 novella 'Janet's Repentance.' In this story both Janet Dempster and her vicious husband drink excessively. However, while his drinking is inextricable from the pseudo-political pub culture with which he is obsessed, hers is a function of her isolation and empty domesticity; her drinking ceases as soon as she moves into a friend's house where she becomes both sociable and visible.⁵⁵

The tendency to represent women as either the potentially redemptive victims of male drinking, or as perverse drunken wives persists in much nineteenth century literature. One example of this is Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in which the sale of Susan Henchard by her drunken husband creates the brutal foundation upon which the entire narrative is built. On the other hand, however, women who themselves drink tend to be depicted as monstrous. As Lucia Zedner points out, the pathologization of women who drink is predicated on the association of the feminine with the domestic; if the Victorian woman was 'by being a model of chastity, altruism, and morality ... supposed to induce men to raise themselves to her level of virtue,' then the deviant woman was 'corrupted beyond repair.'⁵⁶ The wife of Stephen Blackpool in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* is a version of the drunken woman – hidden away, monstrous, an off-stage cross on the shoulders of a good man – that will reappear in the wife of Martin Cunningham in James Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*.

In Chapter One, I identified the locus of these anxieties around female deviancy and drunkenness in the figure of Hogarth's drunken mother. While the construction of the drinking mother as monstrous is undermined by George Eliot in 'Janet's Repentance', it is alluded to inasmuch as Janet remains childless. Similarly, her adoption of a child acts as a signifier of the sobriety her later years – thus

⁵⁴ Sheila Shaw, 'The Female Alcoholic in Victorian Fiction: George Eliot's Unpoetic Heroine', in Rhoda B. Nathan ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women Writers of the English-Speaking World* (London: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 171-179. Shaw argues that for a woman drunkard to appear in a nineteenth century novel she had to fulfil one or more of the following criteria: 'be 1) poor; 2) depraved; 3) comical; or 4) invisible.' (p. 172)

⁵⁵ George Eliot, 'Janet's Repentance', in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858; Oxford: Clarendon, 1985)

⁵⁶ Lucia Zedner, *Women, Crime and Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 17-18, 43

counterbalancing the negative artificial sterility of her drunken marriage with the positive artificial domesticity of her sober spinsterhood. In the construction of the sober woman as other and antidote to the drunken man, the drunken woman emerged not just as a figure of immorality, but of dangerous perversion. Women, in temperance ideology, were enclosed within a double wall of moral precepts. A woman who drank not only abandoned her role as the protector of men and the champion of the domestic, but she also risked debilitating her offspring from birth. She failed, that is, both as wife of the particular husband and mother of the collective race.

Thomas Trotter, who noticeably makes no comment about women's sexual propriety throughout his essay, finds an indubitable cause for concern in the effect of drink on the unborn child, writing that 'mankind has a stronger reason against intoxication, than has usually been urged by moral writers. That is the dread of transmitting *insanity* to their offspring,' (ED, p. 19n.). He further argued that 'if offspring should unfortunately be derived from such parentage, can we doubt, that it must be diseased and puny in its corporeal parts, and beneath the standard of a rational being in its intellectual faculties?' (ED, p. 132) A witness to Lord Balfour's 1904 commission investigating the physical condition of the British population argued that, while previous nations of drinkers had flourished, it was only when 'the mothers as well as the fathers are given to drink [that] the progeny will deteriorate in every way, and the future of the race will be imperilled.'⁵⁷ A 1917 governmental committee report on the effects of alcohol which is otherwise sceptical of claims that moderate alcohol consumption is detrimental to health, writes that its findings 'indicate that parental alcoholism may have a seriously detrimental influence on the stock; and if the results are confirmed by further investigation, it will be reasonable to conclude that this is probably one of the most important modes in which intemperance threatens the health and well-being of the community.'⁵⁸ For much of the nineteenth century, women's drinking was morally circumscribed by the combination of a ideological construction of women as the defenders of the domestic, and increasingly influential

⁵⁷ Quoted in David Wright and Cathy Chorniawry, 'Women and Drink in Edwardian England', *Historical Papers* (1985), pp. 117-131 (pp. 125-126)

⁵⁸ Lord D'Abernon et al., *Alcohol: Its Effects on the Human Body* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1917), pp. 103-4

medical and criminological theories of degeneration in which alcohol was seen as a primary cause of inherited disease and moral weakness.⁵⁹

In the representation of women in temperance fiction, we see that the idealisation of the feminine domestic is a profoundly ambivalently gesture. While it superficially celebrates femininity – albeit in a circumscribed and politically impotent form – it also implicitly constructs onerous moral injunctions against which women are expected to measure and judge themselves. The canonisation of the sober daughter and the demonisation of the drunken mother are two sides of the same coin. The woman in temperance fiction is angelic, but as a direct consequence, always potentially monstrous. Nineteenth century temperance ideology constructed the (sober) female body as both the site of compulsory motherhood, but also as the locus of patriotic duty; in doing so, it constructed the (drunk) female body as the site of uniquely transgressive deviance.

While the women in temperance fiction are ambivalent inasmuch as their valorisation always already produces their possible transgression, we have seen that the central male characters in temperance narratives are ambivalent inasmuch as they are simultaneously deviant and exceptional. The irony, for example, of the teetotal movement's insistence on the confessional narrative as a mode of conversion was that it made the speakers themselves into the stars of a performance circuit. The popularity of such speakers as John B. Gough on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-nineteenth century was not so much due to the virtuous life of sobriety that they advocated as to the compelling grotesquery of their ability to recreate the horrors of delirium tremens on stage.⁶⁰ The problem with the recovery narrative, of course, is that the recovery is the least interesting part. Charles Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard' isn't so much a recovery narrative – the narrator doesn't overcome his compulsive drinking – as a cautionary illustration of the horrors of drink. However, interweaving the picture of the drinker with intertextual references to Milton's Satan in many ways glamorises the drinker as social and moral outcast and wanderer, and at most raises his existential condition to pseudo-cosmic levels. In the following chapter

⁵⁹ Daniel Pick, in a lengthy investigation into of the influence of degeneration theory in late nineteenth century medicine points out that for Bénédict Morel – whose *Treatise on Degeneration* (1857) was the first comprehensive articulation of the idea – 'alcoholism was seen lie to lie deep amidst the roots of *dégénérescence*.' (Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c. 1848-1918* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], p. 87)

⁶⁰ John B. Gough was known as the 'poet of the d.t.'s' and the 'Demosthenes of total abstinence' (Crowley, *Drunkard's Progress*, p. 12)

I will discuss how the combined notions of intoxicated inspiration, social alienation, and economic abandon associated with the drinker in both the positive and negative aspects of his representation in temperance fiction, combined with the notion of the *déclassé* artist adumbrated in the figure of Hogarth's *Beer Street* signpainter, become bound up with the image of the modernist writer as outsider and *flâneur*.

Even T. S. Arthur struggles to avoid endowing Joe Morgan with extra-mundane qualities. At the start of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, while Joe is still nothing more than the town drunk, it is he who predicts the spiritual, if not the physical, death of tavern owner Simon Slade, claiming that 'in less than ten years if [Slade's heart] isn't as hard as one of his old millstones, Joe Morgan is no prophet.' (TNB, p. 22) The two voices of truth in *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* are also the two real heroes of the novel: the tragic daughter and the alcoholic father. This allocation of a privileged truth position to the drinker – something shared by Lamb, Arthur and London – implies more than the idea that the drinker suffers from an excess of masculine social skills. What is suggested instead is that just as to be drunk is to abstract oneself from the normal functions of reason, so to be a drunkard is to abstract oneself from the everyday run of humanity. The drinker is more sensitive, more compulsive, more thoughtful, more violent, more dangerous, in addiction falls further, in recovery raises himself higher than the invisible proletarian or the repressed bourgeois whose world he inhabits and undermines. Annette Frederico argues that rather than being merely ciphers for a tacit lesson in temperance, 'the fear of moral emptiness, the conviction of self-defeat' displayed by the many of the drinkers of Victorian fiction makes them appear 'the most modern personality in the Victorian novel.'⁶¹ My concern is the degree to which the modernity of the (male) drinker is the product of the construction of the drinker as a possible modern figure. That is, my concern is not whether drunken and alienated literary characters are so because they drink, but the degree to which the discursively constructed figure of the drinker provides a narrative position from which an author can bring into the text contradictions, aporias, uncertainties, and standpoints which would otherwise evade articulation. In other words, what I want to ask is: does the drinker as literary figure provide an identifiably modernist epistemological standpoint?

⁶¹ Annette Frederico, "'I must have drink": Addiction, Angst, and Victorian Realism', *Dionysos*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall, 1990), pp. 11-25 (p. 11)

Drink has, in all the texts studied so far, been represented as either a pathological agent, or the source of a dangerous social malaise. Simultaneously, however, drinking and intoxication have appeared, often inadvertently, as somehow allied to the transcendent. In the following chapter I will discuss the emergence of these figures as providing a valorised marginal standpoint on modernity. Seen in the light of the texts analysed so far, the celebration of the drinker as *flâneur*, the aesthetics of intoxication, and the emergence of the drinking place as a privileged site of modernist literary and artistic representation will be seen as fundamentally imbricated with temperance discourse. In the following chapters, then, I will show that the representation of drinking in modernist literature and art can be understood essentially as produced by, and reacting to, the construction of drink as a set of specific economic, moral, societal problems from the Gin Epidemic to the final drive to Prohibition.

Chapter 4

Drink, Modernism and the Aesthetics of Intoxication

Away! Away! For I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards
But on the viewless wings of poesy
(John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale')

To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution – this is the project about which Surrealism circles in all its books and enterprises.
(Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia')

These two quotations are separated by a distance of one hundred and ten years. It is the task of this chapter to consider how the meanings and functions of intoxication in art and literature changed and adapted over this period so that what appears to be rejected by John Keats as a false escapism can appear to be embraced a century later by Walter Benjamin as a potentially revolutionary gesture. One of the outcomes of this investigation will also be to identify what continuities there are between pre-modernist and modernist ideas of the relationship between drink and art. This chapter, then, will look at the idea of intoxication from two perspectives. Firstly in terms of its aesthetic functions; that is, the idea of intoxication as providing either a liberating artificiality conducive to artistic production or as providing access to a sphere of transcendent aesthetic truth. The second perspective will consider the role of drink as a mode of quasi-political signification in avant-garde art and literature. Here I will discuss how both the conspicuous consumption of drink and the representation of drink and drinking places provides a signifier for the kind of 'antagonistic' social aesthetic that the critic Renato Poggioli argues is characteristic of avant-garde movements.¹ While the previous chapters have traced the negative constructions of intoxication in literature, here I will look at how drink and

¹ Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 25-30

intoxication come to occupy a complex and often positive role in modernist aesthetics. This chapter, then, will not only foreground the oppositional transgression of conspicuous drunkenness in an age of increasing sobriety, but also map the emergence of a positive aesthetics of intoxication which subsequently informs the work of James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway and Jean Rhys.

So far, I have looked at the meanings associated with the drinking place in the context of Britain and America. Here, I will look more closely at the meanings the drinking place accrues as a site of intellectual exchange in late nineteenth century Paris. Parisian drinking culture is central to much of the work of Hemingway and Rhys, and it provides a looming off-stage presence in Joyce's *Ulysses*. While Paris provided a haven of permissiveness for writers distancing themselves from the puritanism of Prohibition America, so potentially did any number of European cities. Of course, Paris was, by the 1920s, associated with many of the leading lights of literary and artistic modernism: historically, Charles Baudelaire, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; contemporaneously, Pablo Picasso, Guillaume Apollinaire, Alfred Jarry, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and any other number of self-proclaimed avatars of avant-gardism. While these associations may help to explain the lure of Paris as a centre of experimental artistic activity, they do not alone explain why the avant-gardism of Paris should have been so closely associated with its drinking culture; why Hemingway should write both that Paris was a city where the drinks 'entered you like the Holy Spirit'², and where, thanks to the fame of its artistic café society, 'the scum of Greenwich village had been skimmed off and deposited' in such famous drinking dens as the Dôme and the Rotonde.³ It is the history of this relationship that will concern me in this chapter.

John Crowley has argued that 'if alcohol in its physical, psychological, and spiritual effects on so many writers was not solely responsible for The Modern Temper, it was certainly inseparable from the modernist ideology of despair.'⁴ This chapter will contradict Crowley's position on a number of levels. At a basic

² James R. Mellow, *Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1992), p. 145

³ *ibid.* p. 164. Carlos Baker (in *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* [London: Collins, 1969], pp. 313-314) recounts a possibly apocryphal story which illustrates neatly the self-perpetuating mythology of art and drunken excess which Paris came to represent in the 1920s. He describes how Hemingway one night had to carry a drunken James Joyce home bundled over his shoulder like a coal-sack. In a suspicious parallel to *Ulysses*, Hemingway claimed that Joyce had lost the keys to his flat, leaving Hemingway to kick the door in: a version of events which nicely constructs Hemingway as Leopold Bloom to Joyce's Dedalus.

⁴ Crowley, *The White Logic*, p. 41

conceptual level, I would question Crowley's notion of modernism as an 'ideology of despair'; a position which effaces the fundamental modernist project of confronting or overcoming spiritual and intellectual disintegration through art. Modernism may articulate despair, but its ideology (if such a term is not to reduce 'modernism' to a homogenous intellectual project) was one of overcoming that despair, if only through art. As Marshall Berman puts it, modernism speaks with 'a voice that knows pain and dread, but believes in the power to come through.'⁵ Crowley's assertion further implies that such despair as informed modernism was, at a fundamental level, ascribable to alcohol. This is to suggest firstly that only those who drank really felt despair, and secondly that the only effect of alcohol – both spiritually and aesthetically – is desperation. The first of the assumptions is unverifiable, ignores modernist writers such as Kafka who have no association with drunkenness, and is predicated on the retrospective diagnosis of particular writers as alcoholic. The second assumption – that alcohol is to be understood as always tending towards despair – is one which this chapter will substantially contradict.

While not suggesting that despair and alcohol consumption are never related, I would argue that the relationship between drink and modernist aesthetics is one which, broadly, tends not towards despair, but towards the idea of transcendence. That this transcendence is ironic, synthetic, and at times self-defeating is a central aspect of my argument. Whether it be depicted as causal, analogous or merely synonymous, I will be concerned here with tracing the various modes through which this relationship between intoxication and transcendence has been understood; from Coleridge's 'Bastard Bacchus' through Baudelaire's 'artificial paradise' to Walter Benjamin's idea of the 'profane illumination'. It is out of the relationship between the search for an artificial or secular mode of transcendence and the conspicuous rejection of bourgeois restraint and respectability facilitated by drinking that I suggest the modernist aesthetics of drink and intoxication emerge. While I have discussed the background to this process in terms of the problematisation of drink in the previous three chapters, I will briefly outline an important foundational figure for the aesthetics of intoxication before continuing here. The classical figure of Dionysus will be seen to be one which informs a range of ideas about intoxication and creativity discussed

⁵ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 23

here, from Keat's metaphorical notion of Bacchus and his pards, to Nietzsche's idea of the true and explosive meaning of transcendent art.

Drink, Transcendence and God of the Vine

A late figure in the Greek pantheon, Dionysus was, most famously, the god of the vine. He was also an agrarian deity representing the death and rebirth of the agricultural cycle and was, as such, the god of metamorphoses and transformations. As the wine deity, he was the god who presided over the fellowship of the bowl; the good cheer and fraternalism of alcohol. Equally, he was the god of frenzy and destruction; the god of the orgies of violence described in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. The figure of Dionysus looms over the arts and drama of Ancient Greece. It is this association between early Greek drama and the frenzied rituals of the bacchanalia that would interest Nietzsche in his study of Greek tragedy; and which would play an important part in his association of art with intoxication. Equally, Dionysus was the god of the Greek symposium. The symposium (from *syn*, together; and *posis*, drinking) was essentially a philosophical drinking party which provided a place in which the free men of the polis could gather together to get drunk and indulge in intellectual conversation. Wine was central to the symposium – Socrates shows himself, in Plato's *Symposium*, to be more than capable of holding his drink – facilitating not sexual or violent transgression, but the lifting of intellectual inhibitions, allowing the drinkers to move 'beyond pleasure and confidence to the height of freedom in speech.'⁶ The symposium was an exclusively male institution; unlike the bacchanalia which, as Pentheus' pathetic and finally tragic resort to cross-dressing in Euripides' tragedy shows, was not. As Christopher Faraone has pointed out, the worship of Dionysus 'was strangely conditioned by the gender of the worshiper – men exalted him by drinking wine in symposia, while women danced apart on the mountain.'⁷ Dionysus, the god of metamorphoses, was the god of both conversation and orgy. While in the symposium, wine freed reason and the intellect

⁶ Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium* (New Haven: Yale, 1968), p. 31

⁷ Christopher A. Faraone, 'Introduction', Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone eds., *Masks of Dionysus* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 1

in the cultivated heart of the city, in the bacchanalia madness, frenzy and violence were celebrated on the hinterlands of the state.

It is primarily the Dionysus of wild and intoxicated transcendence that has emerged in more recent European literature. Anya Taylor associates the re-emergence of the Dionysian as an aesthetic concept with the dawning of secularisation in Europe. She suggests that in 'the renaissance revival of paganism, Bacchus liberates: he encourages an explosive nature, a multiplying personal being, and an intense quest (because secular) for artistic expansion.'⁸ In this sense, the Dionysian is privatised to the extent that the historical event of the bacchanalia becomes sublimated in the idea of poetic rapture. However, echoes of the symposium are clearly evident in the male drinking cultures of James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway's fiction. The potentially dangerous ideal of men gathering over drinks to discuss art, politics and love is a persistent one in our culture. Indeed, it is the exclusion of women from the rich conversational world of the bar that informs Jean Rhys's depiction of drink as much as a bacchanalian notion of women as Dionysian. To this extent, the twin notions of the symposium and the bacchanalia can provide a means of mapping the representation of drunkenness in literature. Both are simultaneously communal and exclusionary – as are the cultures and rituals of drink described in all my core texts. The bacchanalia is violent and transgressive while the symposium fraternal and rational; however, while the bacchanalia can be regulated and formalised in both ritualised carnival practices (such as the bullfight in Hemingway) and in the idea of poetic inspiration, so the drunken conversation of the symposium can all too easily produce a dangerous excess of speech. Both bacchanalian and sympotic images in literature can tend towards both the transcendent and, often simultaneously, the bathetic. The would-be profound philosophical insight, for example, revealed from the distance of the narration as an absurd drunken declaration, or the combative protection of male honour and pride revealed as the ugly and undignified pub brawl. Joyce's sham symposium in the 'Oxen of the Sun' section of *Ulysses* and the sordid bacchanalia of Hemingway's *Fiesta* will later provide two examples of this bathetic trajectory.

Beyond the obvious mimetic parallels between red wine and blood, the role of wine in Christian symbolism can be understood in relation to the role of wine in the

⁸ Taylor, *Bacchus in Romantic England*, p. 9

various ancient agricultural and fertility rituals of which the Greek bacchanalia is an example. This, at least, was James Frazer's project in his highly influential study of ancient religious belief, *The Golden Bough*.⁹ Frazer attempted to show that behind both Dionysus and Christ stood the primitive figure of the 'dying king' – a figure representative of the cycle of death and rebirth, sowing and reaping, around which agricultural life is structured. At the highest point of its religious symbolism, this figure appears as a deity who dies and is reborn – the crucified Jesus resurrected, the dismembered Dionysus returned to life. The figure of the dying king also emerges metaphorically in the grape and the grain; the grape which is crushed only to re-emerge as wine, and John Barleycorn – buried, cut down, crushed and drowned, only to triumphantly return as beer.¹⁰ A full, or even comprehensively schematic, study of the anthropology of the ritual symbolism of alcohol is beyond the scope of this study. What is of relevance here is that although the majority of the uses and representations of wine to be considered in this chapter appeal to a secular transcendence – or at least a strictly Dionysian experience – they form part of an ancient tradition in which wine and beer provide the symbolic and actual metamorphosing elements through which the mundane and the metaphysical intersect.

⁹ This is discussed particularly in Book VI where Frazer traces the history of the scapegoat [*pharmakos*] in Ancient Greek rituals. The scapegoat, like the 'dying king', was ritually sacrificed by way of atonement and therefore as a means to the preservation of the life of the wider community (James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion Part VI: The Scapegoat*, 3rd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1933]). E. M. Jellinek, while arguing that the colour of wine was irrelevant to rituals in which it was equated with blood (E. M. Jellinek, 'The Symbolism of Drinking: A Culture-Historical Approach', *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 38 [1977], pp. 852-866 [p. 855]) points out that blood can symbolise both life and death simultaneously. In this sense of wine representing both life and death, it can be understood as a *pharmakon* in the sense proposed by Jacques Derrida in his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy'; that is, as simultaneously poison and cure, authenticity and simulation. This can further be applied to the notion of drunkenness as simultaneously transcendent and mundane. Derrida's argument that writing is constructed in Plato's *Phaedrus* as a *pharmakon* – essentially as an *aide memoire* and source of intoxicating illusions rather than medium of true knowledge – can shed some interesting light on the conflation of drink and literature as parallel forms of intoxication which will emerge later in this chapter. The *pharmakon* is related to the *pharmakos*; a 'supplementary' form of atonement as writing is a 'supplementary' form of truth (Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnston [London: Athlone Press, 1981]).

¹⁰ In the 'Ballad of John Barleycorn', the hero, having been buried, cut off at the knees, tied to a cart, and crushed between two stones, is 'Proved the stronger man at last / For the huntsman he can't hunt his fox / nor loudly blow his horn / And the tinker he can't mend kettles or pots / Without a little of Sir John Barleycorn.'

From Romantic to Modern: Drink as Synthetic Transcendence

Given the symbolic potency of alcohol as an agent of metamorphosis, its association with religious ritual, and its very real effect on perception and cognition, it is perhaps unsurprising that, for writers throughout history, the holy grail of creative genius has often been found to be full of wine. In this section, I will look in closer detail at how this symbolic relationship has been understood and how it has changed in different writers and at different times. My aim here is to see if, around the notion of transcendence and inspiration, a substantial shift can be identified from the Romantics to modern writers; and if this is the case, what it reveals about the understanding of the relationship between art, artificiality and transcendence in modernist literature.

A famous classical panegyric to the poetic inspiration afforded by alcohol comes from Horace's epistles:

If, my cultured Maecenas, old Cratinus was right,
poems written by water-drinkers will never enjoy
long life or acclaim. Since Bacchus enlisted frenzied
poets among his Satyrs and Fauns, the dulcet Muses
have usually smelt of drink in the morning.¹¹

Intoxication figures here as a means to poetic creativity, but also as the experience of the poetic. Here poets drink in order to produce literature of any worth because the individual experience of intoxication functions as a metonymy of the mystical and inherently poetic frenzy of the Dionysian. In other words, here the poetic inspiration is the orgy of the irrational in miniature. The figure of the frenzied, visionary poet is one that Samuel Taylor Coleridge calls up in the final lines of his oneiric fragment 'Kublai Khan':

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,

¹¹ Horace, *Book 1 Epistle 19*, trans. Niall Rudd, quoted in Rae, *The Faber Book of Drink, Drinkers and Drinking Places*, p. 242

For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.¹²

This Dionysian and demonic appearance signals both the culmination and the abrupt expenditure of Coleridge's poetic and visionary powers in this particular text. In the internal world of the poem, the Dionysian poet is indeed other-worldly, a dangerous visionary with direct access to the numinous. However, taken in the context of the poem as published, this transcendent figure fades into the mundane figure of the 'real' poet, Coleridge. The introduction to 'Kublai Khan' describes the poem as the product of an 'anodyne' administered to Coleridge in light of his ill health; furthermore, the poem as published consists of only the fragmentary recollections of the original vision. Coleridge writes of having been interrupted by the most mundane appearance of 'a person on business from Porlock' before he could commit to paper the two to three hundred lines of poetry he composed while under the influence. Hence, the poem acts almost as a confirmation of the fragility and ineffability of the intoxicated experience of the poetic. The question it poses is: is the visionary poetic more or less real if it can disappear into dust in the face of even momentary contact with the mundane? Is the Dionysian the truth, or the illusion of truth?

This is a question that Coleridge would return to in a notebook entry from 1808. Here Coleridge conceives of a 'delightful Poem' in which he would consider mankind as passing through three stages: the prelapsarian in which Man is 'possessed of the Heavenly Bacchus'; 'Man in a savage state as a water-drinker'; and finally the period in which 'the Bastard Bacchus comes to [Man's] relief.'¹³ Coleridge here suggests that mundane intoxication is a kind of divine counterfeit of the Edenic experience of oneness with God and creation. In allying intoxication with prelapsarian experience, Coleridge allies it to innocence and the immanent experience of the numinous. That is, the Fall is understood as the acquisition of knowledge; or, put another way, the acquisition of epistemological self-consciousness through which access to things as they are is always already mediated by consciousness. What Coleridge articulates here is the idea of two forms of transcendence which, put in Kantian terms, are located in either the phenomenon or the noumenon.

¹² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Select Poems*, ed. S. G. Dunn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 93-94

¹³ Coleridge, *Notebooks. Volume 3*, no. 3623

A shift from Romantic to modernist gestures of transcendence can be considered in these terms. A Kantian epistemology positions the knowing human subject as the grounding and source of all possible knowledge and experience by postulating that the world could only be known through the conceptual categories which organise perception.¹⁴ In other words, there is no outside of human consciousness – or if there is, there is no possible way of accessing it. The implications of this for an understanding of the relationship between intoxication and transcendence are twofold. Firstly, intoxication can be seen as either a shallow intimation of the transcendence of human perceptual categories – a possibly instructive counterfeit of the noumenon. Or, secondly, intoxication can be accepted as a necessarily ironic version of transcendence constructed and experienced entirely within the limits of self-consciousness; that is, not pointing to anything outside the tyranny of the mind but creating a place within thought which is synthetic and yet still other. Nicholas Warner observes that ‘the notion of “two wines” can lead to two quite different assessments of literal intoxicants; they can be denigrated as vulgar counterfeits of the true sublime or celebrated as humble yet nonetheless genuine avatars of intoxication on a higher plane.’¹⁵ However, a third position would be to see intoxication as a self-conscious, and in fact self-constructed, version of transcendence which ironically apes a ‘true’ transcendence while simultaneously denying its possibility. It is this idea of intoxication, as knowingly synthetic, interior and ironic, that distinguishes the modernist writers in my discussion from the Romantic writers considered by Nicholas Warner and Anya Taylor.

While Coleridge seems to lean towards a view of intoxication as a ‘genuine avatar of intoxication on a higher plane’, John Keats leans, in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ towards the view of it as a vulgar counterfeit – albeit a highly seductive one. In the section of the poem quoted at the start of this chapter, Keats rejects the false

¹⁴ ‘We have intended ... to say, that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena; that the things which we intuite, are not in themselves the same as our representations of them in intuition, nor are their relations in themselves so constituted as they appear to us; and that if we take away the subject, or even only the subjective constitution of our senses in general, then not only the nature and relations of objects in space and time, but even space and time themselves disappear; and that these, as phenomena, cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. We know nothing more than our own mode of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us, and which, though not of necessity pertaining to every animated being, is so to the human race. With this alone we have to do.’ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (1781; New York: Prometheus, 1990), p. 35

¹⁵ Warner, *Spirits of America*, pp. 18-19

transcendence of 'Bacchus and his pards' for the ironically more prosaic transcendence of poetry. As Anya Taylor points out however, it is a choice in which, while the 'blushful hippocrene' is associated with the sunlight and laughter of the Mediterranean, 'wingless poesy' finds its home in the damp and darkness of everyday English life. Taylor goes on to argue that the 'question about the value of illusion in Keats is central to the purpose of alcohol for him and his contemporaries. It engages ... the blurred line between artificial and natural pleasures ... Wine is a false pleasure to the extent that it has been heightened, but fermentation occurs in nature, as death and decay are part of the process.'¹⁶ This dialectic can only be overcome when the question of nature and authenticity is shifted in the equation; that is, when the artificiality of art *and* the artificiality of intoxication together function antithetically to illusory ideas of virtue in nature and truth in religion. Or, when wine – and art – cease to function as a metaphor of religious transcendence and function, instead, as metonymies of secular transcendence.

I will begin my discussion of this conceptual shift by looking at Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Cask of Amontillado'. Poe's tale presents an idiosyncratic image of drink that negates both Romantic idealisation and temperance demonology. What I am primarily concerned with in considering this narrative is a change in the understanding of drunkenness to which it points. This change amounts to an internalisation of the Dionysian in which intoxication no longer transports the drinker outside of himself, but leads instead further inwards into something like a bacchanalia of the psyche.¹⁷

It has been suggested that 'The Cask of Amontillado' amounts to an allegory of alcohol addiction, a tale 'about the lengths to which some men will go to get a drink.'¹⁸ According to Marty Roth, the descent of the victim Fortunato into the increasingly murky caverns of the narrator's wine cellar in pursuit of the elusive bottle of Amontillado he has been promised symbolises the irrational and desperate thirst of alcoholism and the desire for a drink at any price. I disagree with this

¹⁶ Taylor, p. 188

¹⁷ Nicholas Warner writes that 'With intoxication, as with so much else in Poe, the center of gravity is not the outside world but the inner universe of the individual mind.' (Warner, p.71). Here, I shall arrive at a different conclusion to Warner's assertion that Poe work shows a 'fascination with intoxication as an emblem or paradigm of the transition from the world of mundane rationality ... to a world beyond – be it hellish madness or a sublime, Edenic dream.' (Warner, p. 92).

¹⁸ Marty Roth, 'The Unquenchable Thirst of Edgar Allan Poe', *Dionysos*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Winter 1992), pp. 3-16 (p. 4)

assessment. While Poe does occasionally broach the question of alcohol as addictive (most notably in 'The Black Cat'), he also burlesques demonic representations of drunkenness in stories such as 'King-Pest'. In 'The Cask of Amontillado', drink serves primarily as the conceit around which a tale of revenge is spun. The acquisition of drink is not at issue in this story – indeed, the force of the story rests on the narrator's ability to draw Fortunato away from the 'supreme madness of the carnival'¹⁹ on the streets and into the silent, subterranean labyrinth of the cellars in which he is to be buried alive.

Rather than being a parable of addiction, 'The Cask of Amontillado' is a story about connoisseurship. In this story, there is nothing more profound in alcohol than the masks of artificiality it affords. Above ground, the carnival is no transport into bacchanalian excess, no dissolution of social boundaries, no site of Dionysian intersubjectivity; it is, instead, simply a party in which a rich man may put on a clown's motley.²⁰ Madness and excess pervade the story, but they are the madness and excess of human desires and pleasures; Fortunato's madness is his desire to prove his connoisseurship. His refrain throughout his descent into the narrator's cellars is that his rival Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry. In this story, wine does not provide the gateway to a transcendent truth beyond human consciousness, nor access to a simulation of this transcendence, nor an entry into the Dionysian utopia of the carnival. Instead, it leads into the heart of a madness that is predicated on civilisation, refinement and the over-cultivation of consciousness. The connoisseur strips from wine all that is Dionysian, frenzied, primitive, communal or instinctual. For the connoisseur, wine is commodity and *objet d'art*. On the one hand it is the signifier of expendable wealth, on the other hand it is the self-contained aesthetic object, providing visual, oral and intellectual stimulation while being, along with perfume, one of the few man-made objects privileging olfactory pleasure. In this

¹⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Cask of Amontillado' (1846), in Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (London: Everyman, 1977), pp. 207-213 (p. 207)

²⁰ Here, I am disagreeing with Bakhtin's reading of the same story. Bakhtin argues that 'at the heart of ['A Cask of Amontillado'] lies a very ancient and time-honored complex (matrix): death – the fool's mask – laughter – wine – the gaiety of the carnival – the grave (the catacombs). But the golden key to this complex has been lost: there is no all-encompassing whole of triumphant life, there remains only the denuded, sterile and, therefore, oppressive contrasts.' (Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' [1937-8; 1973], in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981], pp. 84-258 [p. 199]). While I concur with Bakhtin's argument that here – as in *Gin Lane* – any productive associations of the carnivalesque are stripped of semantic force, I would suggest that the primary meaning of wine here lies not in its association with the carnival, but its association with the very different idea of connoisseurship.

sense it is its artifice upon which wine's access to the transcendent is predicated; it leads to the sublime not through some mystical innate power, but through its position in a hierarchical economy of taste in which the connoisseur's nose is the privileged site of truth claims.

Poe's use of wine as the object of a connoisseur's morbid sensibility illustrates one of the functions drink performs in all his work. For all the access drink provides to the subterranea of the mind – materialised in the lime-caked corridors of the narrator's wine cellar in 'The Cask of Amontillado' – or to the projections of the imagination, or to the spirit of human perversity, it always points to the magnitude of the inner world of human consciousness, not beyond it to a world of transcendent spiritual truths. In other words, alcohol cannot be the comforting mirror of Coleridge's Edenic Dionysian, nor can it be the false and misleading seduction of Keats' Bacchus. Both these constructions point to a realm beyond mundane consciousness to which drink gives, or suggests, imperfect access. In Poe's stories, on the other hand, neither art nor drink transcend consciousness, rather they plunge the reader and the drinker deeper into the unconscious mind.

In its conflation of images of revenge, carnival, and the invitation to drink, 'The Cask of Amontillado' mirrors a story written three years later – 'Hop Frog' – in which, rather than revenge being exacted by drawing the victim away from a carnival scene through an invitation to drink, revenge for a humiliating injunction to drink is exacted by drawing the victims into a carnival scene. Hop Frog, having been forced to drink wine for the amusement of the king and his court, gains his revenge by persuading the king and his associates to dress as orang-utans for a masquerade ball before grotesquely and publicly incinerating them. Where Fortunato's achilles heel is his refinement, his connoisseurship, the weakness of the drunken king and his lieutenants in 'Hop Frog' is their desire to become beasts by masquerading as chained apes. Between the two stories then, Poe depicts both the madness of wine as the object of a fetishised desire, and the madness of inebriation as the desire to become bestial. Drink, depending on its context, can represent both an excess of civilisation and the abandonment of it. What both stories share, however, is the centrality of the artificial; Fortunato's acquired connoisseurship is a false mask of refinement as much as Hop Frog's master's ape costume is a false mask of the bestial.

Coleridge's lament at the lost vision from which 'Kublai Khan' was pieced together suggests a single and unique truth to which that vision provided access. The

‘anodyne’ that facilitated the vision, in other words, was a gateway to a unique glimpse of something beyond. Conversely, Baudelaire, in ‘Edgar Allan Poe, his Life and Works’ emphasises the very repeatability (and, hence, artificiality) of the intoxicated experience.²¹ Discussing Poe’s drinking habits (a biographical approach which Baudelaire sees as unavoidable partly because Poe’s drinking had been levelled at him as a criticism by numerous other commentators) Baudelaire suggests that Poe would drink in order to recollect the experiences of prior drinking bouts. Baudelaire suggests that Poe drank in two ways: both ‘as though he were accomplishing a homicidal act, as though he had something within him to kill,’²² and ‘as a mnemonic means [in which he] learnt to drink just as a careful man of letters applies himself to the exercise of note-taking.’²³ In other words, while drunkenness could at times be the manifestation of the spirits of perversity, excess or ennui (and this is the aetiological relationship Baudelaire insists on, not the reverse), it remains within the realms of self-consciousness to the extent that the same cognitive or spiritual experience could be returned to on ingestion of the same drug.

What Baudelaire suggests in this review of Poe’s life and work is similar to that which he suggests in *Artificial Paradises*. Here Baudelaire allies intoxication with an always doomed desire for transcendence, writing that ‘the vices of man ... contain the proof ... of his taste for the infinite.’²⁴ However, the desire for infinity is not in itself enough to facilitate access to it. Instead, for Baudelaire, consciousness can only capture the infinite by reconstructing it from the fragments of the ephemeral. Truth, like beauty, is a synthetic construction pieced together from the shrapnel of experience by the creative industry of the mind. Art is not like intoxication because both have access to the infinite, but because both are ways in which humanity constructs versions of the infinite – artificial paradises – which, through at least the partial fulfilment of the desire for infinity, give life meaning. It is in this conception

²¹ Here, again, we can refer to Derrida’s notion of the *pharmakon*. Derrida’s argument is that inauthenticity of truth in writing that Plato proposes was centred on the repeatability of written ideas. The truth of the *pharmakon* (as writing) is the illusory truth of *repetition* and *recollection*, rather than the wisdom and anamnestic knowledge inspired by oral dialectic discourse. In an interview entitled ‘The Rhetoric of Drugs’, Derrida applies this idea to drug taking, suggesting that ‘we do not object to the drug user’s pleasure per se, but to a pleasure taken in an experience without truth.’ (Jacques Derrida, ‘The Rhetoric of Drugs’, in *Points... Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995], p. 236). Derrida here only concerns himself with the mechanical repetition of ingestion without broaching the possible singularity of each discrete drug-induced experience.

²² Baudelaire, ‘Edgar Allan Poe, his Life and Works’, in *Selected Writings*, pp. 172-188 (p. 182)

²³ *ibid.* p. 184

²⁴ Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*, p. 32

of drink as allied neither to spiritual transcendence, nor to damnation, but rather to a mode of aesthetic, and synthetic, transcendence, one intimately related to art and literature on both counts, that a more properly modernist conception of alcohol and intoxication emerges.

Art and Intoxication: Charles Baudelaire and Friedrich Nietzsche

In 1863, Baudelaire published an essay on the art of Constantine Guys entitled 'The Painter of Modern Life'. In it Baudelaire exhorts artists to turn their attention towards the representation of the urban scene which they inhabited. As I have suggested above, this was an attempted shift of the artistic gaze which Hogarth had adumbrated in his own turn towards the 'modern moral subject'. In the course of this essay, Baudelaire argues against the Romantic idealisation of nature, writing that:

nature teaches us nothing or nearly nothing; in other words, it compels man to sleep, drink, eat and to protect himself as best he can against the inclemencies of the weather. It is nature too that drives man to kill his fellow-man, to eat him, to imprison him and torture him; for as soon as we move from the order of necessities to that of luxury and pleasures, we see that nature can do nothing but counsel crime. ... Review ... all the actions of absolutely natural man: you will find nothing that is not horrible. Everything that is beautiful and noble is the product of reason and calculation ... Virtue ... is *artificial*, super-natural ... Evil is done without effort, *naturally*, it is the working of fate; good is always the product of an art.²⁵

In other words, any appeal to an idealised conception of the 'natural' as a spur to either art or virtue misunderstands fundamentally humanity's position in the world. Nature, Baudelaire insists, is not only inaccessible, it is bad. On the other hand, the artificial is by definition the virtuous in that it is that which defines humanity in its

²⁵ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), in, *Selected Writings*, pp. 390-435 (p. 425)

proper role as other to blind nature.²⁶ A year later, in *La Figaro*, Baudelaire published the prose poem, entitled 'Enivrez-vous' which begins with the following lines:

You must always be drunk. That is the be-all and end-all, the only choice there is. To no longer feel the horrible burden of Time which racks your shoulders and bows you downwards to the earth, you must make yourself ceaselessly drunk.

But drunk on what? Wine, poetry, or virtue – whichever you prefer; only, get drunk.²⁷

What these two very different pieces of writing have in common is a rejection of the natural and an assertion of the artificial as the only possible grounding of virtue or truth. In 'Enivrez-vous' the artificiality praised in 'The Painter of Modern Life' is depicted as intoxication. It is not that the intoxication of wine is something akin to the intoxication of poetry or of virtue, a 'Bastard Bacchus' to the higher truth of poetic or religious inspiration. Rather, Baudelaire asserts that it is not what intoxication simulates but intoxication itself – intoxication as a rejection of nature – that is its own truth and justification. Equally, intoxication ceases to be a metaphor by which rarefied or intense experiences within life can be articulated; rather, profound emotional, moral and aesthetics experiences ('on virtue, on poetry, as you wish') themselves become metaphors for the 'drunkenness' of modern life.

This is not merely a glib glorification of drunkenness or, for that matter, simply a clever reversal of the Romantic nature / culture hierarchy. T. J. Clark sees Baudelaire as using intoxication as a means to aesthetic clarity where 'in the trance of wine ... nature is disclosed, in hints echoes and murmurs – and that only when artifice is brought to the pitch of perfection.'²⁸ Later in his essay on Guys, Baudelaire argues that the artist, to perceive truly, must perceive like a child: 'the child sees everything as novelty, the child is always 'drunk'. Nothing is more like inspiration than the joy a

²⁶ Baudelaire locates his argument in a Catholic and lapsarian understanding of human identity, complaining that 'Most wrong ideas about beauty derive from the false notion the eighteenth century had about ethics. In those days nature was taken as a basis, source and prototype of all possible forms of good and beauty. The rejection of original sin is in no small measure responsible for the general blindness of those days.', 'The Painter of Modern Life', p. 425

²⁷ Charles Baudelaire, 'Enivrez-vous' (1864), trans. Francis Scarfe, in Charles Baudelaire, *The Poems in Prose*, intr. and trans. Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil, 1989), p. 149

²⁸ T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 175

child feels in drinking in shape and colour.’²⁹ The achievement of this aesthetic clarity, this apparent innocence, is in truth predicated on novelty and cultivated play. In Baudelaire, drunkenness is not a transcendent withdrawal from culture, but – like the drinking of the connoisseur – an immersion in the cultural and the artificial. Intoxication, then, is not only analogous to aesthetic activity, it is the most real figure for the cognitive and epistemological standpoint of the modern artist.

Furthermore, in ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, intoxication moves from a privileged cognitive condition to an aesthetic principle. In discussing Guys’ use of swift, impressionistic and suggestive brush strokes as the most appropriate representational technique for capturing the fleeting visual stimuli of city life, Baudelaire wrote that, rather than obfuscating the world, Guys’ technique clarified it by engaging the reader in an active process of perception. In Guys’ sketches ‘the viewer becomes a translator of a translation, which is always clear and intoxicating.’³⁰ This use of the idea of intoxication is allied to Baudelaire’s assertion that the eternally beautiful could only be captured through the apprehension of the ephemeral. Where, for Coleridge, intoxication suggested truth because it provided an always already flawed glimpse into the eternal and transcendent; for Baudelaire intoxication suggests truth because it is the true epistemology of the ephemeral, the condition in and through which the fleeting can be transformed into art.

A different understanding of the relationship between art and intoxication is to be found in Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* (1872). As the first major work of a thinker who at times seemed to embody Baudelaire’s ‘right to contradict oneself’,³¹ *The Birth of Tragedy* is not the definitive statement of Nietzsche’s aesthetics. Not only was Wagner to slip in Nietzsche’s estimation from ‘my noble champion’³² to a degenerate whose ‘art is sick’,³³ but Nietzsche’s idea of the Dionysiac would later undergo a number of adaptations. However, while Nietzsche repeatedly refined and adapted the idea of the Dionysiac he never rejected it entirely – indeed, he came to identify increasingly with the figure of Dionysus (a figure which he was aware he had

²⁹ Baudelaire, *Selected Writings*, p. 398

³⁰ Baudelaire, *Selected Writings*, p. 407.

³¹ Baudelaire writes ‘Amongst the large numbers of *Rights of Man* which the nineteenth century, in its wisdom, so often enumerates with complacency, two quite important ones have been forgotten, namely our right to contradict ourselves, and our right to quit this life.’ (Baudelaire, *Selected Writings*, p. 174)

³² From the 1871 dedication of Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, ed. and intr. Michael Tanner (1872; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 13

³³ From *The Wagner Case* (1888), quoted in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 142

invented as much as resurrected), signing many of his later letters by that name.³⁴ Furthermore, throughout the mutations of the concept as an aesthetic category, it retained, more or less, a residue of metaphysical thought – an appeal to a transcendent, ideal reality – which Nietzsche could never shake off.³⁵

Nevertheless, Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysiac receives its fullest treatment in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Here Nietzsche analyses the emergence of classical Greek tragedy with reference to two, apparently dialectical, aesthetic drives which he names the Apolline and the Dionysiac.³⁶ Put simply, the Apolline is the drive towards order and harmony in art, while the Dionysiac is the unbounded, primal experience of undifferentiated humanity; that which Nietzsche associates with the satyr chorus and the Bacchantes of Greek literature. Put another way, the Apolline is the sphere of illusion and representation, while the Dionysiac is the sphere of will and instinct. These two principles emerge from two areas of non-rational thought and dominate different fields of artistic practice; Nietzsche suggests that to 'reach a better understanding of these two tendencies, [we must] conceive them as the separate art world of *dream* and *intoxication*.'³⁷ Dream is the sphere of Apollo, of the plastic arts and literature. The beauty of the Apolline is, to a large degree, due to the 'glimmering awareness that it is an *illusion*.'³⁸ The Apolline is individuating to the extent that it appeals to the individual consciousness and the private experiences of suffering and love. The emergence of the Dionysiac in the arts, on the other hand, effects an ecstatic experience of primal unity, 'the blissful ecstasy which, prompted by the ... fragmentation of the *principium individuationis*, rises up from man's innermost core, indeed from nature [through which] we are vouchsafed a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysiac*, most immediately understandable to us in the analogy of

³⁴ For a discussion of Nietzsche's reinvention of Dionysus, see Albert Heinrichs, "'He has a god in him': Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus", in Carpenter and Faraone, *Masks of Dionysus*, pp. 13-43. See also, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1887; New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 329: 'The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future (my term for this is, as is known, "Dionysian").'

³⁵ Paul Valadier describes Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysiac as essentially 'a religious attitude that escapes the critic's verdict of decadence.' Paul Valadier, 'Dionysus Versus the Crucified' in, David B. Allison ed., *The New Nietzsche* (London: MIT Press, 1986), p. 247

³⁶ Looking back on *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche would regretfully acknowledge its undeniable grounding in dialectic thinking, describing the book as smelling 'offensively Hegelian' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Introduction, p. xv)

³⁷ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 14

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 14-15

intoxication.’³⁹ Strictly speaking, the Dionysiac can only emerge through music since both the plastic arts and literature are mimetic, providing in effect the illusory representation of a world of illusions.⁴⁰

Nietzsche would later acknowledge some of the many flaws in this idealistic construction of both the history of consciousness and the freedom of art; recognising, for example, that music itself is a language prey to many of the same epistemological problems as speech and writing.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the idea that true art is always a form of intoxication persisted through to his last works. In *Twilight of the Idols*, for example, he writes that ‘For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: *intoxication*.’⁴² Unlike Baudelaire, whose praise of wine and admonitions to ‘get drunk’ specifically ally the act and facts of drink and drunkenness to his conception of the artificial, Nietzsche’s idea of Dionysiac intoxication is an appeal to a transcendent, indeed mythical, reality both beyond and behind culture. Nietzsche here uses the broader notion of intoxication of which drunkenness is only a subset. Indeed it is the principle of excess

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 17

⁴⁰ Here Nietzsche echoes Plato’s attack on literature and the plastic arts in Book X of *The Republic*. However, where Plato sees the illusion of mimesis as only ever seducing the reader or spectator *away* from the path of reason and knowledge, Nietzsche argues that the illusiveness of mimetic art makes transcendent the primal illusions of Being. That is, the Apolline is the transcendent realm of the *principium individuationis* rather than an illusionary distraction within it. Where Plato calls representational art ‘an inferior child [mimesis] of inferior parents [faulty reasoning]’ (Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975], p. 433), Nietzsche would perhaps call it the superior child of all too human parents. ‘Apollo’ Nietzsche writes, ‘I see as the transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis*, the sole path to redemption through illusion. While in the mystical triumphal cry of Dionysus the spell of individuation is broken and the path is opened to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost core of things.’ (*The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 76)

⁴¹ Just six years after *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche would write ‘In itself, no music is profound or significant, it does not speak of the ‘will’ or of the ‘thing in itself’ ... It was the intellect itself which first introduced this significance into sounds.’ (from *Human, All Too Human*, quoted in Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader*, p. 128)

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1889; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 71-72. The German word translated as *intoxication* here is *Rausch*. *Rausch* suggests a broader notion of excess and ecstasy than is contained in its English translation. In this same excerpt, Nietzsche writes of the *Rausch* of ‘feasting, of contest, of the brace deed, of victory ... of spring ... of narcotics.’ Where, therefore, for Baudelaire the ecstasy of poetry or virtue can be understood by analogy to drunkenness (*ivresse*), for Nietzsche drunkenness is understood as contiguous with *Rausch*. It should also be noted that seven years earlier Nietzsche used the idea of intoxication in its pejorative sense as narcosis and blundering drunkenness (as opposed to ecstatic excess) to dismiss virtually all European ‘high culture’; writing ‘Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica? – It is almost the history of “culture,” of our so-called higher culture.’ (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 142). However, that Nietzsche is alluding here to the misconception of intoxication as mere effulgent enthusiasm is made clear in an earlier address to ‘sober’ Realist artists in which Nietzsche suggests that ‘We are not nearly as different as you think, and perhaps our good will to transcend intoxication is as respectable as your faith that you are altogether incapable of intoxication.’ (*ibid.*, p. 121)

as much as the idea of perceptual distortion that drives Nietzsche's notion of the Dionysiac. As David Lenson writes:

Dionysian art attacks the Apollinian principle of *meden agan*, "nothing in excess." In the same way it attacks the principle, "know thyself." What Dionysian art demands is "forget thyself." For the art of intoxication dissolves the individual into the body of collective consciousness, where the self no longer has any meaning. And this state of intoxication cannot be attained by moderation, by avoiding excess. Quite the contrary.⁴³

Nietzsche's idea of the artist as a godlike creative force whose powers are realised through the profane transcendence of intoxication and excess constructs the artist in his moment of most extreme antipathy to bourgeois rationalism, as the superman of a brave new world. He therefore figures the artist as both antagonist to bourgeois society and the pseudo-divine agent of its secular cure. The potential danger in this is not only a misconception of the transformative power of art, but also a misconception of the meaning of intoxication. An example of the mistaken conflation of drunkenness with Nietzschean intoxication, and the tragic outcome of such an erroneous reading, can be seen in Jack London's *John Barleycorn*.⁴⁴

In the latter sections of *John Barleycorn*, Jack London succumbs to what he describes as the 'White Logic'; a self-destructive and debilitating depression that London overtly ascribes to a combination of alcoholic depression and too much Nietzsche: a condition in which he sees that 'God is bad, truth is cheat and life is a joke.'⁴⁵ This John W. Crowley refers to as 'the modernist writer as Nietzschean hero: Zarathustra in his cups.'⁴⁶ However, the story of *John Barleycorn* is the sad tale of London's desperate attempt to run away from the brutal realities to which Nietzschean thought

⁴³ David Lenson, *The Birth of Tragedy: A Commentary* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), p. 48

⁴⁴ As opposed to the pathos of *John Barleycorn*, Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1890) can be seen as an illustration of the latent bathos of the Dionysiac as drunkenness. Hedda Gabler's fantasy of Lövborg returning to her drunk and inspired 'with vineleaves in his hair' (Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler and Other Plays*, trans. Una Ellis-Fermor [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965], pp. 325, 331, 337) is drowned in the ugly reality of his sordid and pointless death during a scuffle in a brothel. Hedda Gabler is also something of a classic temperance tale of the madness and death which the backsliding alcoholic will inevitably face.

⁴⁵ London, *John Barleycorn*, p. 8. London uses the term the 'transvaluing of values' in this context by way of flagging up its Nietzschean provenance. He later uses the same term with reference to his engagement with the economy of the saloon (see previous chapter); suggesting an equally belated scepticism towards the utopian bar economy and Dionysian aesthetics.

⁴⁶ Crowley, *The White Logic*, p. 33

exposed him. London's rejection of Nietzsche shows him, in fact, to be the opposite of a Zarathustra, drunk or not. *John Barleycorn* is the tale of a broken retreat from modernity and all it implies – if anything, therefore, a picture of the writer as Dionysus on the wagon. London's response to the angst of the 'White Logic' – his decision to forego both excess and authentic, dangerous art – contradicts entirely the Nietzschean concept of the relationship between art and the Dionysiac experience. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche acknowledges the danger to which the nihilistic truth of the Dionysiac exposes the modern individual. However, the overcoming of this horror is only possible through the production of, not the escape from, Dionysian art. Nietzsche writes that while the Dionysiac exposes the absurdity of existence:

Here, in this supreme menace to the will, there approaches a redeeming, healing enchantress – *art*. She alone can turn these thoughts of repulsion at the horror and absurdity of existence into ideas compatible with life: these are the *sublime* – the taming of horror through art.⁴⁷

That is, the Dionysiac in Greek art – and, indeed, all true art – is that which both reveals the truth about life, but also creates within that truth the means to both accept and celebrate it. London, on the other hand, remains in the pre-aesthetic realm objecting to the 'damnation of intellectual pessimism' for destroying the 'vital lies' and 'healthy figments of man's mind' that make life bearable.⁴⁸ His response, far from using intoxication in its broadest sense as a means to work towards the creation of truly liberating and truth telling Dionysiac art, is to withdraw from intoxication in its narrowest and most literal sense (i.e. drunkenness) and pursue the creation of what he feels is mendaciously life-affirming fiction; 'stuff that is clean, alive, optimistic, and that makes towards life' while remaining hopelessly aware of 'how thoroughly [he is] deluded by these very illusions [he] exploit[s].'⁴⁹

What London rejects here is Nietzsche's assertion that it is 'only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*.'⁵⁰ For Nietzsche, the proper secular sphere for the expression of the transcendent is the

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 39-40

⁴⁸ London, p. 4, 98, 157

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 170

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 32

aesthetic; the ‘*compulsion* to transform into the perfect is – art.’⁵¹ It is the sphere of activity in which Man, not through the intervention of a divine consciousness but through the intoxication of his own mind, apprehends and overcomes absolute truth. Nietzsche’s affirmation of a transcendent – if bleak and hopeless – reality confirms that there is nothing *artificial* in his understanding of Dionysiac aesthetics. Where he acknowledges the contingency of what is taken for truth in the everyday world – truth as ‘a mobile army of metaphors, metonymics, anthropomorphisms ... illusions which one has forgotten *are* illusions’⁵² – he equally insists on the higher truth in which ‘the artistic power of the whole of nature reveals itself to the supreme gratification of the primal Oneness amidst the paroxysms of intoxication.’⁵³ As J. P. Stern argues, Nietzsche may have used ‘every occasion to attack the idea of such a [metaphysical] world as a Platonist-Christian-Idealist swindle, yet he never finally relinquishes it either’; indeed that ‘there is a numinous (though destructive) order of things ... was the metaphysical claim on which *The Birth of Tragedy* was founded.’⁵⁴

The writings of Baudelaire and Nietzsche with reference to art and intoxication represent two highly divergent, and yet often parallel, philosophical approaches. For both, art and intoxication are analogous; for Baudelaire because they both represent the artificial, for Nietzsche because they both represent what is beyond culture. For Baudelaire, art and intoxication are against nature, for Nietzsche they *are* nature. For the *flâneur*, intoxication is the cause and effect of plunging into the crowded, chaotic life of the city; for the *übermensch* it is the escape from the individuated crowd into a mythical oneness of an idealised super-humanity. For both, however, what art and intoxication largely oppose is the banal, unimaginative, accumulative world of bourgeois respectability. Once again, intoxication emerges as an aesthetic of transgression – of excess against restraint, expression against suppression, and profane transcendence against ritual piety. For different reasons and with different goals, Baudelaire and Nietzsche saw the idea of intoxication as a philosophical rejection of increasingly hegemonic bourgeois values. Both influenced later modernists; Baudelaire’s celebration of the artificiality of art and Nietzsche’s belief in the transforming power of the artist are both fundamental aspects of modernist aesthetics.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 72

⁵² From ‘On Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-Moral Sense’ (1873), quoted in Stern, p. 136

⁵³ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 18

⁵⁴ Stern, pp. 141-2

These notions – the profane synthesis of intoxication and the valorised function of the intoxicated artist – inform both positively and negatively the core texts in this study. In the framework of this study, the ideas of Baudelaire and Nietzsche are part of the trajectory in which intoxication is understood in terms of its – pathological or transcendent – effects on the individual drinker. However, the second trajectory I have identified is that in which the drinking place and the cultural practices of drink become imbricated in the semantic and axiological construction of drink within modernity. It is to this second trajectory that I will now turn. Having seen some of the ways in which the drinker – or his sublimated alter-ego the Dionysian artist – is constructed as the site of an identifiably modern epistemology, I will now look at how the drinking place (specifically the Parisian drinking place) comes to emerge as the privileged site of social and intellectual exchange in much of the English language modernist literature of the 1920s and 1930s. This requires a close consideration of the meanings the Parisian café acquired in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Drink and Modernity in Late Nineteenth Century Paris

In 1886, fourteen years after Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* and twenty three years after Baudelaire wrote ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, the Irish writer George Moore published an autobiographical book entitled *Confessions of a Young Man*. In it Moore describes how he found himself, a young, Irish, would-be artist and lover of the poetry of Shelley, realising that if he is to achieve anything of a note in the field of the arts ‘I should ... I must, go to France ... I would live there ... I would become as a Frenchman.’⁵⁵ The bulk of the rest of the book describes Moore’s adventures in the artistic and literary circles of Paris. It also serves as a platform for the author to both comment on the writers, painters and critics of his time and to both expound, and finally undermine, his version of aestheticism.

Much of Moore’s cultural confidence, and indeed arrogance, comes from his juxtaposition of the cultural milieux of France and England from the privileged position of someone who became fully integrated and accepted within the Parisian

⁵⁵ George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886; London, Heinemann, 1926), p. 7

social world he chose to enter. Forty years before the writers of the 'lost generation', Moore demonstrated that combination of exile status and insider status, the self-assured narration of a profound acceptance into a culturally richer society, that would be central to Hemingway's literary output between the first and second World Wars. He also became one of the first writers in English to highlight the centrality of the café in the intellectual life of Paris. By way of emphasising the otherness of the new Parisian intellectual culture to the established spheres of British intellectual exchange, Moore writes that during his stay in Paris:

I did not go to either Oxford or Cambridge, but I went to the 'Nouvelle Athènes'. What is the 'Nouvelle Athènes'? He who would know anything of my life must know something of the academy of fine arts. Not the official stupidity you read of in the daily papers, but the real French academy, the *café*.⁵⁶

Moore goes on to insist that 'though unacknowledged, though unknown, the influence of the 'Nouvelle Athènes' is inveterate in the artistic thought of the nineteenth century.'⁵⁷

Far from 'unacknowledged' or 'unknown', the role of the café in the intellectual life of Paris is now proverbial. Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* can clearly be seen as one of the formative antecedents of the mythology of Parisian café. However, in order to better understand why the café society of Paris should have so powerfully fired the imagination of Moore and the many writers and artists who subsequently made their home in the French capital, it is important to outline the particular nature of the relationship between drink and art that grew out of the particular social, political and aesthetic cultures of Paris in the nineteenth century.

Moore asserts in his *Confessions* that, by the second half of the nineteenth century the café had become the hub of intellectual activity in Paris. To this extent, it replaced the more traditional institution of the *salon* - the private and exclusive gatherings which had been the core of Parisian intellectual life until this point. Roger Shattuck, in his celebration of the Parisian artistic highlife around the turn of the century, writes that 'one of the principles of *la belle époque* was that the great

⁵⁶ Moore, p. 85

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p., 86

performers moved from the *salon* into the café. Here any man could enter and each man paid for his own beer.’⁵⁸ The move by young intellectuals from the *salon* to the café was both a necessity and a challenge. Artists and writers denied access to the rarefied world of the *salon* could, and therefore did, gather in the cabarets and bars.⁵⁹ To understand how this could become a transgressive gesture, and how the café could become the intellectual home of an avant-garde drive to break the power of the high priests of established intellectual taste, a brief history of the French drinking place is necessary.

The association of the drinking place – the tavern, cabaret and café – with urban culture has, in France as in many other Western countries, an ancient history. As far back as the 13th century, tavern life was depicted in French literature as ‘a meeting place of heterogeneous urban society viewed either as a *castellum diaboli* or, conversely, as the utopian centre of urban life.’⁶⁰ In the history of alcohol legislation in France the prime targets of legal intervention have not been the drinks or the drinkers themselves but the establishments in which drinking took place. Prior to 1880, and reflected in restrictive laws that date back at least as far as 1256, the tavern and the cabaret were the focus of legislative and social control.⁶¹ In a reverse of the American temperance movement – which, as I have discussed in Chapter Three, only came to target the drinking place consistently following the Women’s Crusade – ‘it was the tavern, a more complex phenomenon than mere drinking, that was seen as the cause of idleness and unwillingness to work.’⁶² In Old Regime France, taverns were thought of as places of waste and inactivity; during and after the Revolution, however, they acquired a compelling association with radical politics and conspiracy. Much as the taverns of New England had served as meeting places for the militias of the American revolution, so cabarets and taverns had acted as the meeting places for

⁵⁸ Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Arts in France 1885-1918* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 9. Shattuck goes on to assert that ‘The cabarets and cafés [of Montmartre] represented a new aesthetic’ (p. 21)

⁵⁹ Michael Easton, in *Artists and Writers in Paris: The Bohemian Ideal, 1805-1867* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), suggests that the increasing status of the arts in France, following the important role public art had played during the Revolution and under Napoleon, led to an explosion in the number of prospective artists migrating to Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century. The resulting combination of economic hardship and artistic ambition contributed, Easton argues, to the emergence of ‘bohemia’ – the grafting of a Romantic idea of the artist onto a social antagonism born of poverty.

⁶⁰ Austin, *Alcohol in Western Society from Antiquity to 1800*, p. 90

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 84

⁶² Thomas Brennan, ‘Social Drinking in Old Regime Paris’, in Barrows and Room, *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History*, pp. 61-86 (p. 71)

many of the instigators of the revolution of 1789, and continued to form the 'primary arena' for Republican activities until the 1870s.⁶³

Karl Marx noted an association between the drinking place and political conspiracy, writing of professional proletarian conspirators that 'their irregular life whose only fixed stations were the taverns of the wine dealers – the gathering places of the conspirators – and their inevitable acquaintanceship with all sorts of dubious people place them in that sphere of life which is in Paris called *la bohème*.'⁶⁴ Notably, Marx draws attention to a parallel between drinking places and a kind of ad hoc, loosely organised form of political resistance as opposed to well-organised, revolutionary proletarian formations. The relationship between the drinking place and forms of anarchist and politically non-specific dissidence will remain important throughout this chapter.

It should also be noted, however, that while the smaller, essentially working class drinking places such as the cabarets and the *debits de boisson* were the object of continued state regulation and surveillance,⁶⁵ the rebuilding of central Paris under Georges Eugène Haussmann, which had begun in 1852 and continued throughout the reign of Napoleon III, created the grand cafés-concerts which would become immortalised in the paintings of Edgar Degas and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Haussmann's designs not only instituted the boulevard as the arterial form with which to replace the mazy streets of old Paris, but they also instituted the street café as one of the focal social spaces of the modern city. In this sense, although the cafés were viewed as a low-alcohol, higher class alternative to the more disreputable cabarets, Haussmann had nonetheless incorporated the social, public drinking space into the fabric of the city.

Walter Benjamin sees in the rise of boulevard society a crucial element of what he refers to as the 'phantasmagoria' of capitalism; that is those technologies, activities, social spaces, texts and pastimes whose function is to disguise the alienating effects of modernity. In his analysis of Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century, Benjamin takes as an example of phantasmagoria the popular press. In the popular papers, and particularly their *feuilleton* sections, the

⁶³ Andrew Barr, *Drink: an Informal Social History* (London: Bantam, 1995), p. 6; Susanna Barrows, "'Parliaments of the People": The Political Culture of Cafés in the Early Third Republic' in Barrows and Room, pp. 87-97 (p. 88)

⁶⁴ Quoted in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973), p. 12

⁶⁵ For a detailed history of this, see Barrows, "'Parliaments of the People'"

competition, aggression, alienation and superficiality of modern urban existence was neutralised by being turned into gossip, theatrical intrigue and amusing caricature. In other words, the *feuilletons* attempted to represent people who 'knew one another as debtors, creditors, salesmen and customers' as in fact 'harmless oddballs.'⁶⁶ The rise of the popular press was, according to Benjamin, intimately linked to the rise of boulevard café society, he quotes a contemporary commentator as writing that 'the custom of taking an aperitif ... arose with boulevard press. When there were only the large, serious papers ... cocktail hours were unknown. The cocktail hour is the logical consequence of the "Paris timetable" and of city gossip.'⁶⁷

Benjamin saw one consequence of the rise of boulevard café society and the popular press as being the further establishment of the *flâneur* as the producer of a marketable commodity: the textual cartography of modern urban life – the physiologies and *feuilletons* which mapped the social and psychological life of the city. Ironically, then, the *flâneur*, for all his aloofness and postures of aristocratic indifference was both tour guide and salesman. Benjamin writes of Baudelaire that he 'knew what the true situation of the man of letters was: he goes to the marketplace as a *flâneur*, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer.'⁶⁸ T. J. Clark makes a similar point with reference to the depiction of the cafés-concerts in the work of Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec and Manet. Clark suggests that while these artists believed that they were depicting the liminality of modernity – the cafés-concerts as uniquely heterogeneous urban spaces – they in fact mistook the as yet unspecified class position of the *calicots* (the shopworkers and similar lower middle classes) who formed the majority of cafés-concerts patrons for 'mixture, transgression and ambiguity in the general conduct of life.'⁶⁹ He continues:

The perfect heroes of this myth of modernity were the petite bourgeoisie. They appeared in many ways to have no class to speak of, to be excluded from the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and yet to thrive on their lack of belonging. They were the *shifter* of class society, the connoisseurs of its edges and wastelands. And thus they became for a time the alter-egos of the

⁶⁶ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 39

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 28-29

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶⁹ T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), p. 258

avant-garde – ironically treated, of course, laughed at and condescended to, but depended on for a point of insertion into modern life.⁷⁰

While the cafés-concerts were thought of as more respectable than the working class cafés, they were not abstemious institutions. The structural relationship between the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere located in the cafés of Haussmann's Parisian boulevards and drink – particularly the aperitifs of the 'cocktail hour' – raises a second aspect of drinking in nineteenth century France which influenced the perception of Parisian café society. Throughout this study, the rise of serious temperance movements has been seen in all cases to follow the popularisation of spirit drinking – usually a specific form of spirit drinking which becomes the object of widespread moral and economic concerns. In Britain it was gin; in America rum and then whisky. In France the emergence of a moral panic around alcohol consumption (as opposed to sporadic concerns over activities associated with drinking places) followed the popularisation of absinthe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Just as beer had, for Hogarth, signified healthful, patriotic drinking, so wine signified the same in France. Even more so than beer, which had in Britain become the domain of monopolising large brewers, wine in France was crucial to the rural economy. So long as it was primarily wine that was drunk in the cabarets and cafés of France, the consumption of alcohol *per se* remained essentially unproblematic and the emergence of a temperance movement was obviated. As Susanna Barrows points out, as late as 1875 the *Grand Dictionnaire de XIXe siècle* was able to suggest that temperance movements in Britain, America and Germany served to “‘moderate the hereditary ardour of the Teutonic race and the Anglo-Saxon race for alcoholic spirits.’” Since,’ Barrows continues, ‘the French did not spring from that unfortunate tree, they had no need for temperance.’⁷¹ However, the very heredity which this viewpoint reveals such confidence in was already, by the time it was written, becoming subsumed by an increasingly widespread fear that absinthe consumption was a signifier and cause of the very opposite tendency in the French nation: an almost unstoppable process of hereditary degeneration and the imminent danger of race suicide.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 62

Absinthe had been produced in France since 1805 when Henri-Louis Pernod opened his first absinthe distillery; however, it was due to a particular combination of events that it became popularised in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, it had been rationed to French troops fighting in Algeria as a prophylactic against fever – developing in many of them a taste for the exotic new drink. At the same time, modern distilling methods – including the production of industrial alcohol which could then be doctored to taste like known aperitifs – opened the consumption of absinthe up to the working class. Of course, its main attraction was that it was incredibly potent, and in a manner unlike any other alcoholic drink due to the addition of wormwood (which contains thujone – a mildly hallucinogenic compound) during the distilling process. Doubtless another attraction was the ritual and suggestive metamorphoses associated with the drink. On dripping water through a sugarlump balanced on an intricately designed spoon, the emerald green liquid would transform into one cloudy and opaque. The suggestiveness of the drink's material form is testified to by, among others, Oscar Wilde who observed during his 1882 tour of America that 'A glass of absinthe is as poetical as anything in the world.'⁷² Here was a new and potent intoxicant, its garish colours suggesting the laboratories of modern, dangerous science; a secular alchemy in which the 'bastard Bacchus' was replaced by the 'green fairy', rural tradition by urban technology, and the natural virtues of the grape by the decadence of wormwood. The symbolic dialectic between absinthe as representing modernity and wine as representing a traditional conservatism was articulated succinctly in 1907 by the writer Léon Daudet when he stated that 'I am for wine and against absinthe, as I am for tradition against revolution.'⁷³

A final material influence of the spread of absinthe drinking was the devastating phylloxera virus that decimated European vines in the early 1870s. This disease, one of the ironic outcomes of which is that virtually all modern European vines are the result of grafts re-imported from America, led to spiralling wine prices and forced consumers to look elsewhere for a cheap drink. The resulting increase in sales is reflected in the consumption figures for the period. In 1854, the annual per

⁷² Quoted in Conrad, *Absinthe*, p. 36

⁷³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 122. It has been pointed out by a number of commentators that the temperance movement in France was closely associated with the wine industry, indeed that the rhetoric of temperance and the rhetoric of the wine industry were often synonymous. See Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, p. 67. See also Michael R. Marrus, 'Social Drinking in the Belle Époque,' *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1974), pp. 115-141 (pp. 119-120); Conrad, pp. 101-125; Lanier, *Absinthe, Cocaine of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 34

capita consumption of spirits in France was 1.68 litres; by the mid 1870s it was around three litres and by 1900 had reached four and a half litres.⁷⁴ By 1874, the estimated annual consumption of absinthe in France was 700,000 litres, a figure which would rise to a high point in 1910 of 36,000,000 litres.⁷⁵

It was against this backdrop that a temperance movement, or what was really an anti-absinthe movement, emerged which would in 1915 finally see its goal of the outlawing of absinthe achieved. While total abstinence never became established in France, French temperance ideology projected onto absinthe a range of broader social anxieties. Similarly to the association between gin and urban immorality in Britain and between whiskey and domestic turmoil in America, in France absinthe drinking and the alcoholism that was associated with it became a focus for social concerns which in the years following the humiliation of the Franco-Prussian War became centred on the idea of hereditary degeneration.

In France the explosion in absinthe drinking coincided with defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune. The anxieties that this brutal shock to the confidence of post-Napoleonic France created – anxieties around the fear of both an decreased martial strength and a population decrease, particularly in comparison to the increasing population of the emerging German nation – found expression in the widespread acceptance of theories of degeneration associated with the French scientist Bénédict Morel, whose *Treatise on Degeneration* had been originally published in 1857.

Morel, like the other fathers of degeneration theory Cesare Lombroso and Francis Galton, argued that the hereditary traits of insanity, hysteria, nervousness and antisocial behaviour were passed on through the generations creating in a degenerate family line a process which, unless arrested, would lead inevitably to criminality, sterility and, finally, extinction. As Daniel Pick describes it:

Morel's world was far removed from a dominant Lockean conception in the eighteenth century which had primarily defined madness in terms of intellectual disorder or 'mistaken reasoning'. Madness for Morel and his

⁷⁴ Marrus, 'Social Drinking in the Belle Époque' (p. 122)

⁷⁵ Conrad, p. 115

colleagues could not necessarily be seen or heard, but it lurked in the body, incubated by parents and visited on the children.⁷⁶

For Morel, the causes of degeneration were environmental; poisoning caused by noxious air, bad food, contaminated water, tobacco and alcohol led to a weakening of the individual which became immediately hereditary. In effect, degeneration theory articulated similar fears around the figure of the drunken mother that emerged in Britain during the Gin Epidemic. Furthermore, alcohol and hereditary alcoholism appeared to present a stark illustration of the accuracy of the degeneration model. Alcoholism appeared to re-emerge in subsequent generations of the same family, it led to physical deterioration in the drinker, and appeared to lead to weaknesses in the children of drinkers. Drunkenness itself was furthermore associated with a perceived increase in criminality and immorality.

Emile Zola, whose Rougon-Macquart novels are an attempted case study in the effects of degeneration, raises the spectre of alcoholism in *L'Assommoir* (1876). Here the sporadic drinking of previous generations reaches its fulcrum in the persons of Gervaise Macquart and her husband Coupeau whose increasingly drunken and therefore squalid and tragic lives create, in their daughter Nana, a morally degenerate legacy. As Coupeau lies dying in a characteristically extended bout of delirium tremens (an episode which mirrors both *Ten Nights in a Barroom* and 'Janet's Repentance'), the local doctor makes clear to both Gervaise and the reader that Coupeau's death is both the result, and certain cause, of alcoholic degeneration.

'Did this man's father drink?'

'Well, Sir, a bit, just like everybody else ... he lost his life in a fall from a roof when he was tight.'

'Did the mother drink?'

'Well, of course, Sir, just like everybody else, you know, a drop now and again ... Oh, but it's a very respectable family ... There was a brother who died very young of convulsions.'

The doctor looked at her with piercing eyes and went on brutally:

'And you drink too?'

⁷⁶ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 51

She floundered and protested, put her hand on her heart to pledge her sacred word.

‘You do! Well, watch out, you see where drink lands you. One of these days you’ll die the same way.’⁷⁷

Here drink is inserted into a perverse and self-replicating set of familial relationships in which it acts as both cause and effect. Similarly, alcohol is positioned as both the cause and effect of hereditary degeneration in the French nation.

Degeneration, decadence and the nexus of alcohol consumption became, in writers such as Zola, the object of their literary production. At the same time, however, it became a charge which was levelled against dangerously modern writers and artists. Max Nordau’s critical diatribe *Degeneration* was published in 1892 while Nordau was a well-known and respected cultural critic. Its publication would lead George Bernard Shaw to pen a refutation of Nordau in *The Sanity of Art* (1895, published 1908). *Degeneration* consists of a combination of textual analysis and biography, through which Nordau demonstrates that a range of modern and avant-garde artists can be shown to be specific degenerative types with specific pathological syndromes of which their artistic output are readable symptoms. While Nordau accepts Morel’s aetiology of degeneration as being ‘poisoning’ of various kinds, he also proposes a further cause of his own, the ‘nervous excitement’ caused by ‘residence in large towns.’⁷⁸ Nordau sees the desire for artistic experimentation as being, like alcoholism, a craving ‘for stimulus, for momentary, artificial invigoration, or an alleviation of ... painful excitability’ both being ‘the consequences of states of fatigue and exhaustion ... which are the effects of contemporary civilization, of the vertigo and whirl or our frenzied life.’⁷⁹ For Nordau, degeneration is a fundamental condition of urban modernity; not so much a response to specific material conditions as an effect of the psychic and emotional turmoil which modern urban life exacts on humanity.

Nordau argues that the popularity of degenerate artworks and novels is both a mark of the degeneration of society but also, more importantly, evidence of the very real danger posed by such forms of cultural production. Degenerate art is both

⁷⁷ Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir*, trans. Leonard Tancock (1876; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 413

⁷⁸ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, (1892; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p. 35

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 41-42

begotten by and begets degenerate culture, and for Nordau the application of this theory to the arts is part of an apocalyptic battle for the future of European civilisation. The book itself soon degenerates into a combination of the absurd (Impressionists paint the way they do because they suffer from hysterical nystagmus, or quivering of the eyeball) and the fanatical.⁸⁰ However, the book is interesting both as the major example of the cultural application of degeneration theory, and as an illustration of the broad range of ideological positions among which the idea of degeneration was adopted in the late nineteenth century (Nordau was one of the leading lights of the Zionist movement at the time). Overall, *Degeneration* encapsulates some of the battle lines that were being drawn at its time of writing between what was perceived as decadent avant-garde art and thought and cultural conservatives for whom aesthetic experimentation, a decadent lifestyle, and racial and cultural degeneration went hand in hand. Summing up his book, Nordau clarified the difference between ‘real’ moderns and the impostors who go by that name:

They wish for self-indulgence; we wish for work. They wish to drown consciousness in the unconscious; we wish to strengthen and enrich consciousness. They wish for evasive ideation and babble; we wish for attention, observation, and knowledge ... Whoever preaches absence of discipline is an enemy of progress; and whoever worships his ‘I’ is an enemy to society.⁸¹

George Moore’s assertion in his *Confessions of a Young Man* that ‘I am feminine, morbid, perverse ... above all perverse; almost everything perverse fascinates me,’⁸² is precisely the kind of decadent aesthetic that Nordau opposes with his ‘genuine’ modernity. Indeed, in Moore’s provocative valorisation of the perverse, we see perversity act as a weapon with which to attack bourgeois utilitarianism. Previously, Baudelaire had identified Poe as exemplifying this transgressive aesthetic which

⁸⁰ Various, Paul Verlaine is ‘a repulsive degenerate ... an impulsive vagabond’ (p. 119), Richard Wagner is ‘charged with a greater abundance of degeneration than all the degenerates put together’ (p.171), Walt Whitman is ‘a vagabond, a reprobate rake’ (p. 231), Maeterlinck a ‘pitiable mental cripple’ (p. 239), Ibsen a ‘malignant, anti-social simpleton’ (p. 407), Nietzsche ‘a madman’ (p. 416) and Zola ‘a sexual psychopath’ (p. 500).

⁸¹ Nordau, p. 560

⁸² Moore, p. 48.

reminds society of that ‘great forgotten truth – the primeval perversity of man.’⁸³ Baudelaire goes on to celebrate

How good it is that a few old-fashioned truths should thus explode in the faces of all those flatterers of humanity, of all those mollycoddlers and opiate-peddlers who never stop repeating, with every possible variation of tone, ‘I am born good, and you too, and all of us, we’re all born good!’, quite forgetting – no! pretending to forget, nonsensical egalitarians that they are – that we are all born branded with the mark of evil!⁸⁴

Drink can stand for the perverse both in its rejection of sober rationality, but also in its tendency towards self-destruction. That is, the self-immolation of the drinker becomes a conspicuous transgression of the ‘bio-power’ that Foucault identifies as ‘the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life’.⁸⁵ It would be hard to contradict the suggestion that, in the spirit of Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud, many of the writers for whom drink would become either debilitating or tragic acquired the habit of alcoholism in part as a gesture of defiance and negation; asserting their right to both distort their rational faculties in the name of greater literature and display a disregard for their personal well being in the name of perversity and the rejection of a dry utilitarianism.

As I have suggested, this transgression could take the form both of a bohemian abandonment of bourgeois restraints or a self-conscious adoption of the excessive cultivation of the connoisseur. Arthur Symons in ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ (1893) described decadent literature as ‘an oversubstantilizing refinement upon refinement, [and] a spiritual and moral perversity’, concluding that ‘this representative literature of to-day, interesting, beautiful, novel as it is, is really a new and beautiful and interesting disease.’⁸⁶

In many ways Symons here mirrors Nordau. However, for Nordau, solid bourgeois values are the antidote to degeneration, where for Symons they are anathema. Which is not to say that aestheticism was not ironic. *Confessions of a*

⁸³ Charles Baudelaire, ‘Further Notes on Edgar Poe’ in *Selected Writings*, pp. 188-208 (p. 192)

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, pp. 139-40

⁸⁶ Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, Eric Warner, and Graham Hough, eds. *Strangeness and Beauty: An Anthology of Aesthetic Criticism 1840-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 236

Young Man and Huysmans' *Against Nature* are two examples of 'decadent' texts which end by asserting the untenability of living a truly decadent lifestyle; Des Esseintes retreats into a penitential Christianity, while Moore concludes 'The feast is over for me, I have eaten and drunk. I yield my place, do you eat and drink as I have; do you be young as I was.'⁸⁷ Decadence, for Moore, is itself a synthetic pose; but no less valid for that. Which is to say that the fact that 'decadent' writers could see themselves ironically and their aesthetic project as perhaps fatally flawed would only necessarily lead to their rejection of it as a project on the very bourgeois instrumental and utilitarian grounds they set out to undermine.

In *Confessions of a Young Man*, Moore enters into a lengthy disquisition on the absolute incompatibility of bourgeois domestic respectability with art, a polarity he depicts as the opposition of the suburban villa and the tavern. His complaint begins with a consideration of the detrimental effects on the arts of the emergence of the respectable club:

Some seventy years ago the Club superseded the Tavern, and since then all literary intercourse has ceased in London. Literary clubs have been founded, and their leather arm-chairs have begotten Mr. Gosse; but the tavern gave the world Villon and Marlowe. Nor is this to be wondered at. What is wanted is enthusiasm and devil-may-careism; and the very aspect of a tavern is a snort of defiance at the hearth, but the leather arm-chairs are so many salaams to it.⁸⁸

It is this 'snort of defiance at the hearth' that Moore sees is alive and well in such places as the Nouvelle-Athènes. Imperfect, impermanent, artificial and even dangerous, drink and the drinking place nonetheless represent alternative cultural practices to those presented by sober bourgeois domesticity. To this extent, the faults attached to drinking are only evil in as much as they are necessary. The culture of the café is both dangerously popular (as Moore puts it 'no place is considered respectable where everyone can go')⁸⁹ and potentially esoteric – much of Moore's book could be

⁸⁷ Moore, p. 223

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 140

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 141

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said to amount to a bragging account of his acceptance into the exclusive intellectual society of the Nouvelle-Athènes.

In the representations of drink and drinking discussed in this chapter so far, intoxication appears as either a Dionysian leap out of the deadening mire of decadent Christian culture, or as a refined and ironic immersion in the syntheses of modernity. Furthermore in drink, particularly in absinthe, the recusant artist has access to something poised on the fulcrum of tradition and modernity, authenticity and artifice, popularity and the arcane, revolt and resignation. Finally, the drinking place has been seen – through both its ambient associations with proletarian culture but equally through its role in the formation of a new bourgeois public sphere which is the marketplace for the arts – to emerge as the privileged site of certain forms of intellectual and artistic exchange. What I will now move onto is a theorisation of the degree to which these relatively autonomous aspects of drink and drinking culture combine to produce a conceptual structure in which drink and / or the category of intoxication become imbricated in an avant-garde aesthetic of transgression.

A Revolutionary Intoxication? Drink, Politics and the Avant-Garde

Up to this point, drink and intoxication have been shown to represent a simulation of spiritual and aesthetic transcendence, a means of exploring the depths of the psyche, a self-conscious mode of synthetic transcendence, an analogy for secular transcendence, a cognitive condition analogous to the condition of modernity, and a ‘snort of defiance at the hearth’. The question that needs to be asked of the aesthetics of intoxication is whether it can become political. In other words, to what extent can an avant-garde ‘harness the energies of intoxication for the revolution’?⁹⁰

⁹⁰ While Renato Poggioli uses the term ‘avant-garde’ as an umbrella term, other theorists including Peter Bürger, Miklós Szabolsci and Andreas Huyssen use the term in specific reference to artistic formations largely centred around Dada (See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw [1974; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996]; Miklós Szabolsci, ‘Avant-garde, Neo-avant-garde, Modernism: Questions and Suggestions’, *New Literary History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 [Autumn 1977], pp. 49-70; Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* [London: Macmillan, 1986]). I am using the term here more broadly to refer to radical art and literature which presents an apolitical (in the sense of not being overtly didactic) intervention in the sphere of political relations through the medium of the aesthetic. This use of the term tallies, broadly, with Raymond Williams’ description of avant-garde artists seeing themselves ‘not as the bearers of a progress already repetitiously defined, but the militants of a creativity which would revive and liberate humanity.’ (Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, p. 51) This definition is, roughly speaking, the agreed territory

To begin, I will return again to the Paris of the early Second Empire and Eduoard Manet's 1858 painting *The Absinthe Drinker*.⁹¹ Manet is clearly a crucial figure in the history of modern painting, and *The Absinthe Drinker* signalled his revolutionary emergence on the Parisian art scene. This was Manet's first major painting and was immediately rejected by the Salon when entered for inclusion that year. Aside from the technical manner of its execution the subject of the painting challenged both the contemporary boundaries of generic definition and taste, and also appeared to be charged with dangerous political undertones. In England one hundred and eighteen years earlier, William Hogarth had shocked the art establishment by presenting a life-sized portrait of the sea captain Thomas Coram to the London Foundling Hospital, using conventions reserved for the painting of royalty, religious and mythic subjects to depict a mere, albeit highly benevolent, commoner.⁹² In Manet's *Absinthe Drinker* the kind of monumental scale of painting usually reserved for classical, mythical or aristocratic subjects is applied not only to a commoner, but to the lowest of the urban low – a ragpicker and *absintheur*. This is not to say that pictures of the poor or of drinkers were unknown at the time; genre paintings commonly depicted the outcasts of society and, in Honoré Daumier, this type of art had a radical practitioner. However, where Daumier's work was often overtly political – its representation of poverty being overtly didactic – Manet's *Absinthe*

upon which Georg Lukács and Theodor Adorno constructed opposing views of the relationship between art and politics. Where Lukács broadly saw avant-garde art as politically useless as it militated neither towards class solidarity nor the alleviation of false consciousness, Adorno saw the avant-garde aesthetics of withdrawal and negation as the only possible response to the ubiquitous commodification of the aesthetic effected by the culture industry. For an overview of the debate between Lukács, Adorno, Brecht, Benjamin and Ernst Bloch around this issue in the 1930s, see ed. and trans. Ronald Taylor, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1980) especially Bloch's repudiation of Lukács in 'Presentation I'. Benjamin states the pro-avant-garde position in his lecture 'The Author as Producer' arguing that artists should 'not adopt the aesthetically conservative position of presenting revolutionary content by means of traditional forms.' (Quoted in, Howard Caygill et al., *Walter Benjamin for Beginners* [Cambridge: Icon, 1998], p. 130) That is, realism and the apparent similitudes of perspective based art and the 'traditional' novel are fully ideological; therefore art can only be revolutionary if it rejects these aesthetic options as *a priori* media of capitalist ideology. Broadly, Williams' (and both Huyssen and Bürger's) argument is that while modernist aesthetics represented a retreat from political engagement, avant-garde movements strove to find a way to incorporate the political into art, usually, but not always, indirectly. I do not propose to draw a neat dividing line between the terms 'modernism' and 'avant-garde' further than broadly using the latter to mean a radical subset of the former. The arguments presented here about the relationship between avant-garde modernism and politics will bear upon later discussion of specific texts to the extent that they emerged from an intellectual milieu profoundly affected by and implicated with art movements more specifically referred to as avant-garde.

⁹¹ See figure 6

⁹² Jenny Uglow writes that 'it is hard to reconstruct how daring, and even shocking, this [portrait] would appear to Hogarth's peers.' Uglow, *Hogarth*, p. 333

Drinker depicted, in the words of one historian ‘simply a bum – unrepentantly plastered on absinthe.’⁹³

The Absinthe Drinker was presented to the Salon just eleven years after the uprisings of 1848 and just eight years after Louis Napoleon’s 1851 coup d’état. The fear of working class insurrection, the shadow of the June Days of 1848, still hung over the social and intellectual life of Paris. Eugène Haussmann was beginning to drive through the poor districts of Paris the boulevards which, it was erroneously hoped, would preclude any return of the barricades to the streets of the French capital. It has been suggested that *The Absinthe Drinker* ‘confirm[ed] the belief common among middle-class Salon-goers that slums were the strongholds of revolutionary resistance.’⁹⁴ It may be overstating the case, however, to use such positive terms as confirmation and revolution. Rather, *The Absinthe Drinker* carried dangerous overtones: the conflation of high art and culture with the urban low life embodied by the *chiffonier* or ragpicker; hints of drunken insubordination among the dangerous masses; the painterly commemoration of that antithesis of bourgeois restraint and respectability: the drinker who drinks to get drunk; drinking, for that matter, not the emblematic national drink but the dangerous new spirit, absinthe. It was, indeed, as if a cautionary grotesque had stepped out of Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* and demanded a space of his own in the portrait galleries of the Louvre.

The question a political reading of *The Absinthe Drinker* has to answer is why, if Manet had wished to make a political point, he did not paint a more overtly political image. An answer can be found by looking once again at Charles Baudelaire, who was a close friend of Manet and whose 1854 poem ‘Le Vin des Chiffoniers’ (The Ragpicker’s Wine) contains striking thematic parallels with Manet’s *The Absinthe Drinker*. Although Baudelaire’s ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ praised Constantine Guys for his representations of the Parisian high life, Baudelaire’s own writing commonly represents the marginalized figures of the urban scene; the drinker, the ragpicker, and the *flâneur*. T.J. Clark suggests that Baudelaire’s concern with the representation of the marginal was a response to the suppression of the uprisings of June 1848 and the coup of 1851. Having fought on the barricades in 1848, Baudelaire subsequently lost faith in political engagement. In letter from 1852, he stated that ‘the

⁹³ Conrad, p. 16

⁹⁴ Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, ‘Modernity and the Condition of Disguise: Manet’s “Absinthe Drinker”’. *Art Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1985), pp. 18-26 (p. 18)

2nd December [1851 – the date of Louis Napoleon’s coup] has physically depoliticised me.’⁹⁵ Clark argues that Baudelaire responded to the failure of art to successfully engage in revolutionary politics by looking to the city and its marginalized population to find a mode of transgressive poetic expression. Clark suggests that in associating the artist with the ragpicker and the drunk, both Baudelaire and Manet associate art with the margins of society and, while not necessarily making this point overtly, with the political threat posed by the socially excluded.⁹⁶

I would suggest that it is not merely fortuitous that one of the seminal paintings of early modernism took a drinker as its subject matter. While Andreas Huyssen insists on the ‘great divide’ between modernism and mass culture, I would suggest that the representations of drinking that I discuss in this study in most cases provide a bridge between the elite world of the intellectual and the popular culture of the drinking den. Drink and drinking places provide in many instances a shared cultural space and practice through which, particularly in the face of the increasing influence of temperance, both bohemian intellectuals and the working class could practically and conspicuously reject the drift towards a sober bourgeois hegemony. To use Renato Poggioli’s categories, conspicuous drinking can function as an ‘antagonistic’ avant-garde practice ‘perverting and wholly subverting conventional deportment.’⁹⁷ Equally, the heroisation of the artist as self-destructive drinker can be seen as confirming Poggioli’s idea of an ‘agonistic moment’ in avant-garde aesthetics, the ‘self-immolation of the isolated creative personality’⁹⁸ that confirms in the most extreme form the avant-garde attitude that the new must always be built and rebuilt on the ashes of the old.

More radically it could be argued that behind many of the representations of drinking that I discuss here lies the idea, and the bourgeois fear of, of the drunken mob. In as much as Manet’s *Absinthe Drinker* conjures up the image of the rebellious

⁹⁵ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 142

⁹⁶ See also Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 79-80. Benjamin earlier discusses the phenomenon of the urban poor of Paris returning conspicuously drunk from the taverns which were built beyond the city limits, and to which they turned following an increase on the taxation of wines sold within the city. According to Benjamin ‘the wine opened to the disinherited dreams of future revenge and glory.’ That is, conspicuous drunkenness acted as a marker of defiance; albeit one that, in the words of a contemporary, ‘saved the government from quite a few thrusts.’ (Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 17-18). See also Patricia Mainardi, ‘The Political Origins of Modernism’, *Art Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1985), pp. 11-16 in which Mainardi argues that the depoliticization of the artistic avant-garde was a response to the broad artistic scope of Napoleon III’s exposition of 1855.

⁹⁷ Poggioli, p. 31

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 68

poor, so Georg Moore's unacceptable taverns build a bridge between the artist and the proletariat. The outraged response of critics to the display of Edgar Degas' *L'Absinthe* at the Grafton Gallery, London in 1893 can be understood to the extent that the depiction of a woman, apparently drunk on absinthe and alone with a man in a public drinking place, conjures up fears of sexual deviancy among the poor, drunken mothers, degenerating offspring, and the fear of the collapse of the moral domestic sphere and the social chaos resultant upon this.⁹⁹

Susanna Barrows argues that the fear of degeneration in the late nineteenth century was allied to a fear of three manifestations of the irrational: alcoholism, women and the crowd. She further argues that any one of these could act as a synecdoche for all three. To crowd psychologists such as Gustave Le Bon, 'crowds loomed as violent, bestial, insane, capricious beings whose comportment resembled that of the mentally ill, women, alcoholics or savages', a 'violent assembly of the lower classes, whose slogans were ominous overtures to the great revolution, the great levelling of civilisation.'¹⁰⁰ The great mob was both akin to the drunkard, and often itself drunk. Barrows concludes that

Alcoholism was not merely an illness; it emerged as the nexus of France's social ills. Crowd psychologists soon exploited the associations to violence, insanity, and hereditary disability that reference to alcoholism entailed. The crowd ... was a ferocious and unpredictable being comparable with the wildest of French drunkards. Such a metaphor ... embodied for fin de siècle France a lengthy catalogue of national pathology, both social and psychological ... The crowd, like the drunkard and the woman, would destroy France.¹⁰¹

Once again, the nexus of irrationality, the urban mob, female sexuality (in the guise of hysteria and infertility), and drunkenness emerge as the *bêtes noir* of respectable, bourgeois, imperial civilisation. As such, they inevitably provide ammunition for writers and artists whose project is to destabilise bourgeois complacency. The

⁹⁹ See figure 7. In fact the painting two close friends of Degas', Marcellin Desboutin and the actress Ellen Andrée sitting in the Nouvelle-Athènes. For a discussion of the furore caused by the display of this painting in London, see Conrad, pp. 43-53

¹⁰⁰ Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors*, pp. 5, 24

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 72

representation of the promiscuously suggestive world of the café, and absinthe drinking particularly, took the artist out of the studio and the landscape and placed him in the most fluid and unpredictable dwelling places of the urban crowd. Paintings such as Manet's *Absinthe Drinker* and Degas' *L'Absinthe* – along with Toulouse-Lautrec's café scenes, Picasso's paintings of (often female) absinthe drinkers, and the numerous other pictorial representations of Parisian café culture – served both to place art in a new relation with the common practices of everyday life and to construct an abiding myth of the intellectual life of bohemian Paris. Paradoxically, the art of the café both celebrated the crowd, but also – remembering that it was usually the Nouvelle-Athènes, the Chat Noir, or the Folies-Bergere rather than some cheap *debit de boisson* that was depicted – celebrated the exclusive intellectual world that these bars had carved into the modern urban landscape.

It is in an ambivalent relationship to the crowd that Walter Benjamin locates Charles Baudelaire's relationship to modernism and modernity. According to Benjamin, for the *flâneur* the crowd is both the object of his gaze and the marketplace for his ideas. This is, no doubt, the crowd as the massed petit-bourgeoisie of the boulevards rather than the mob of the slums; that is, the apparently liminal class formation upon which, as has been suggested above, the artistic avant-garde depended for a point of insertion into modernity. Nonetheless, it is this simultaneously irrational and herd like monster to whom the modern artist holds a mirror – an act simultaneously narcissistic and horrifying. The irrational and the intoxicating reveal the hidden other to the order and restraint which keep the crowd from descending into anarchy. They also illuminate the soul of the urban crowd in another way; representing what Baudelaire describes as 'the bitter or heady flavour of the wine of life';¹⁰² the pleasurable narcosis that is the effect of the almost unreal world of fashion, entertainment and luxury. Benjamin sees this effect specifically in the allure of the commodity and the desire which is both aroused and deferred by the promise of possession; in Benjamin's terms, 'the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers.'¹⁰³ In other words, according to Benjamin, the commodity itself is a mode of intoxication; an intoxication that was both the object of artistic representation, and which it was one of the functions of art to reveal as illusory.

¹⁰² Baudelaire, *Selected Writings*, p. 435

¹⁰³ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 55

In identifying the means by which art can rupture the narcotic effects of the commodity, Benjamin appeals to a notion of intoxication which owes much to Nietzsche. On the one hand this is reflected in Benjamin's idea of Dionysian ecstasy. He argues that it is in the ecstatic trance 'alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest to us, and never of one without the other.'¹⁰⁴ For Benjamin, however, the moment of intoxication in art does not act as the gateway to a mystical Dionysian transcendence, but as the means to thinking the unthought. That is, the means by which the artist or critic can step outside of the ossifying logic of capitalist ideology to produce shocking juxtapositions of images which will, in the very dynamic of their dialectical structure, create the possibility of historical change.¹⁰⁵ Michael Jennings argues that it was for these reasons that Benjamin 'placed enormous faith in intoxication and reverie because of their power to transcend the limits of rational experience.'¹⁰⁶ Revolutionary aesthetics, Benjamin argues, demand

*a profane illumination, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration, to which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give an introductory lesson. (But a dangerous one; and the religious lesson is stricter.)*¹⁰⁷

This materialist illumination is, necessarily, artificial in the sense that it is the product of the critical consciousness rather than the goal of the religious

¹⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'One-Way Street' (1926), in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 45-104 (p. 103)

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin's parallel notions of the role of shock in art and the dialectical image in criticism have clear resonances with Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque. Both have the effect of clearing the intellectual and cultural ground for new modes of thought, and both can be understood either by analogy to intoxication or, as I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, as inseparable from it. Michel Foucault, particularly in *The Order of Things*, sees a similar role for philosophy. Foucault argues that 'Man', as we consider him the object of study since Socrates is, in fact, only the privileged object of study of this historicizing episteme – a figure less than two centuries old (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xxiii). Note how this periodization is resurrected by H. G. Levine in his assertion that the idea of the alcoholic is 'now about 175 or 200 years old, but no older' (Levine, *Discovery of Addiction*, p. 143). For Foucault, 'Man' is an 'empirico-transcendental doublet' (Foucault, p. 139); that is, both the Cartesian subject who states 'know thyself', and the Kantian subject who asks 'what is the I that can know?' For Foucault, the task of philosophy is to constantly confront the epistemological cul-de-sac this ontological paradigm presents by thinking the unthought; that is, thinking one's way outside of it. Foucault further suggests that this process of thinking the unthought emerges, inevitably, alongside the empirico-transcendental doublet that it confronts. 'Man and the unthought', Foucault states, 'are, at an archaeological level, contemporaries' (p. 326). So, if we synthesis Foucault and Levine, are 'Man' and 'the alcoholic'.

¹⁰⁶ Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (London: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 85

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

consciousness. To this extent it is analogous to the artificiality of intoxication. Like Keats and Coleridge, Benjamin sees intoxication as the bastard version of something else. Unlike Keats and Coleridge, however, that other consciousness is not religious, but political. Even in as much as Benjamin was concerned with the spiritual, that spiritual consciousness is not turned towards an idealised and intangible pre-lapsarian past, but towards a revolutionary and possible future.

The free celebration of the intoxicated and the irrational is, in Benjamin's view, mere anarchy. Equally, to see the intoxicated experience as transcendent or as a simulation of the transcendent effaces the dialectical relationship between the transcendent and the mundane, and therefore neutralises it of any genuine social significance. For Benjamin, revolutionary activity 'proceeds only from new and liberating forms of experience, forms of experience capable of penetrating the obfuscations of a commodified, apparently natural world.'¹⁰⁸ This is to say that to be revolutionary is to think the impossible – and it is here that the interface between intoxication and revolution exists.¹⁰⁹ If the goal of avant-garde art is to contest the means-ends rationality of capitalism, then it must address subject positions 'not yet penetrated by knowledge, that is, not yet decisively shaped by industrial capitalism and its characteristic use of rationality.'¹¹⁰

The avant-garde use of the unconscious and the intoxicated enables art to shock rationalising bourgeois sensibilities; and for Benjamin as for later theorists, shock was a crucial means by which art could transcend its function as an institutionalised transmitter of ideology and become a genuinely affective and effective aspect of lived experience. In Peter Bürger's terms, the 'refusal to provide meaning is experienced as shock by the recipient. And this is the intention of the avant-gardiste artist, who hopes that such withdrawal of meaning will direct the reader's attention to the fact that the conduct of one's life is questionable and it is

¹⁰⁸ Jennings, p. 86

¹⁰⁹ It is here that the ideas of Benjamin and the ideas of Bakhtin intersect in terms of an understanding of the possible political meanings of intoxication. Where for Benjamin private intoxication can lead to the revolutionary production of new forms of dialectical thought, for Bakhtin the carnivalesque clears the ground for new forms of thought. Indeed, in characterizing the carnivalesque cultures of the late middle ages, Bakhtin, once again revealing a deep distrust of intoxication, argues that the fruits of carnival were the clearing of the conceptual and philosophical ground for 'a new, free, and sober seriousness.' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky [1965; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984] p. 274)

¹¹⁰ Jennings., p. 85

necessary to change it.’¹¹¹ However, Benjamin argues that this reliance on shock is not only a structural tool of avant-garde art, but to an extent an inevitable result of modernity and its commodification of affect. For Benjamin, Baudelaire was again the first to come to terms with this, the first to indicate ‘the price paid for which the sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock.’¹¹²

In the work of Walter Benjamin, then, we see that much has changed, but much has remained the same, in the understanding of the aesthetics of intoxication. There remains the notion of artificial intoxication being, somehow, an inferior echo of true aesthetic intoxication, yet that aesthetic intoxication has become secularised. For both Baudelaire and Benjamin, rather than both art and intoxication reaching towards the numinous, both dwell in the world of phenomena and the synthetic. While Benjamin follows Nietzsche in seeing intoxication as exploding the certainties of means-ends rationality, for Benjamin this rupture points not to a mystical oneness, but to the concrete possibility of political change. Intoxication does not draw art into the transcendent real, but reminds it of its artificiality. For Benjamin, this notion of intoxication provides the possible grounding for a genuinely political art. In the readings of the novels which follow, this idea of a intoxication as providing the narrative grounding for the political positioning of the text emerges in *Ulysses*. Here images of intoxication such as Leopold Bloom’s confrontation with the Citizen in ‘Cyclops’ and Stephen Dedalus’ confrontation with the English soldiers in ‘Circe’ allow for more or less overt political observations to be made. However, I would suggest that the legacy of the aesthetics of intoxication in terms of my core texts is not so much the possibility of direct political intervention but the positioning of the writer and the text outside of stultifying ideological formations. That is, it is through the depiction of drinking and intoxication that the text can both challenge aspects of dominant ideology, but also clear the ground for new ways of representing and evaluating the practices of everyday life.

This process takes different forms in the different texts I will discuss. The idea of a relationship between the artificiality of intoxication and the artifice of the literary text achieves its fullest exposition in the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ chapter of *Ulysses*. In this regard, it could be argued that Joyce, far from using intoxication to reintegrate

¹¹¹ Bürger, p. 80

¹¹² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 196

art into the praxes of everyday life, actually encloses intoxication entirely within the text. That is, in 'Oxen of the Sun', intoxication becomes fundamentally important not as the object of representation, but the mode of representation. Hemingway, on the other hand, addresses the idea of the modern hero as intoxicated. His idealisation of sympotic drinking emerges from an understanding of the drinking place as both the privileged site of male intellectual exchange, and the site of cultural practices which resist the hegemony of bourgeois sobriety as most clearly manifest in Prohibition. Hemingway's depiction of drink as 'changing ideas', to the extent that adept drinking can in some ways transcend the centrifugal and atomising effects of modernity, is Nietzschean in the sense that intoxication, and the ability to use and learn from it, provides an identifiably superior epistemological standpoint on modernity. In an aesthetic which positions both intoxication and art as forms of synthetic transcendence and artificial fertility, the male drinker is privileged in that not only are the rituals and cultures of drink around which intoxication occurs implacably masculine, but the artificial fertility of textual production can become an exclusionary site of male creativity. What Jean Rhys' fiction illustrates is the degree to which the myth of the male modernist writer, and the mythology of the male drinking space – as synthesised in the literary culture of 1920s and 1930s Paris – combine to exclude women both from the cultures of drinking and from the sites of literary productivity.

Up to this point, this study has outlined the emergence of an identifiable set of meanings which became associated with drink and drinking. In Hogarth's depiction of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* drinking was associated with both dangerous transgression and an idealised communality. In the literature of the temperance movement, the male drinker was positioned as deviant, but also as exceptional. At the same time the drinking place became the site of a critical conflict over ideas of leisure, masculine socialisation and economic propriety through which it became the possible site of a conspicuous and assertive rejection of aspects of bourgeois ideology and cultural practice. Finally, throughout these processes the female drinker has been positioned as problematic in two senses: firstly in the structural opposition of the female domestic sphere to the male social sphere of which the drinking place is a focal location, and secondly in the opposition of intoxication to motherhood. In the writers discussed in this chapter, these constructions of the meaning of drink have been seen to produce a dialectic in which the deviant exceptionality of the drinker becomes the possible celebrated alterity of the intoxicated consciousness, in which the

unacceptable expenditure of the bar becomes the oppositional socialisation of the symptomatic, and in which the artificiality of intoxication becomes privileged in as much as art repositions itself in relation to concepts of the 'real'. It is in the light of these matrices of meaning that the subsequent texts will be considered.

Chapter 5

Writing Intoxication: James Joyce's *Ulysses*

In tracing the emergence of discourses around drinking and intoxication from the Gin Epidemic through to the avant-garde art and criticism of the 1920s and 30s, the previous chapters have assessed the relationship between drinking as social practice and theoretical construct, and post-Enlightenment constructions of privatised, rational and disciplined subjectivity. It has been shown that the construction of a subjectivity predicated on sobriety is a signifying process endlessly implicated in the production of its own problematic other. In one way, this can be understood as a structurally necessary tactic in the sense that the idealization of the sober individual is predicated on the pathologization of the drunk; a process that requires the constant representation of drunkenness as pathological in such forms as the temperance tale, the confessional narrative and the medical textbook. Stallybrass and White's observation about the realm of Folly can apply here to the realm of the drunken; as drunkenness 'was being restructured within bourgeois consciousness as precisely that *other realm* inhabited by a grotesque body which it repudiated as part of its own identity and disdained as a set of real life *practices and rituals*, so it seemed to become more and more important as a set of *representations*.'¹ However, while ideologically enclosed representations of the drinker as demonic proliferated, simultaneously this very move constructed the intoxicated as a possible site of contestatory discourse. The more the drinker became a pathologised figure within culture, the more the self-consciously transgressive adoption of that persona became a means to contest a bourgeois hegemony, the ideological self-justification of which was, in many cases, predicated on the manifold deployment of idealizing tropes for which sobriety – in its most literal sense – served as the ruling metonym. Similarly, intoxication functions in many of the texts I have already discussed as a mode of philosophical or aesthetic resistance on the level of cognition and epistemology. If capitalism is understood as a set of economic and social relations predicated on the valorisation of a particular understanding of rationality (and, as Foucault shows, one of the earliest tactics of a nascent bourgeois

¹ Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 103

culture was to redefine madness as not ‘other’ but ‘lesser’), then intoxication provides a perennial – and, importantly, a perennially accessible – tool for undermining the premises of instrumental, enlightenment reason.

The degree to which alcohol has acted as an ostensible and visible touchstone in the aesthetics of intoxication is an issue that has been relevant throughout this study. In the case of writers such as Baudelaire and Poe, the metaphorical and symbolic potentialities of intoxication are always rooted to the material facticity of drunkenness and being drunk; in both writers the link between alcohol and intoxication remains very much on the surface. In the case of Nietzsche and, to an extent, Benjamin, this facticity is sublimated to a degree in which the originary metaphorical condition of being drunk becomes lost in the abstract notion of intoxication as a form of expressive, unifying, and ecstatic transcendence. This sublimation of alcohol (or any other drug) into the abstract category of ‘intoxication’ serves to disguise the material basis of the intoxicated experience just as the idealization of sobriety serves to naturalize and universalise a pragmatic mode of cognition whose very existence as a recognisable category is predicated precisely on its otherness to being drunk. As the determining figure of the abstemious citizen is effaced in the ideology of pragmatic and instrumental reason, so the figure of the drunk lies hidden beneath the flamboyant metaphysical gestures of Nietzsche.

It has been one of the central goals of this study to bring to light the constitutive role of alcohol and drunkenness both in the construction of dominant ideological forms and the formation of philosophical and aesthetic strategies of resistance. In other words, the aim has been to reveal the critical role that alcohol has played in the construction of what Hogarth might have termed the ‘modern moral subject’. The work of the thinkers discussed previously – Benjamin, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Foucault – will emerge in the following analyses either as analytical tools or as identifiable precursors and antecedents to positions articulated within the core texts. By way of employing a further useful critical perspective I will also use the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to my readings when it is appropriate. This is not to say that what will be provided is a set of ‘Bakhtinian’ readings, in the sense of reading the texts as being consistently illustrative of such categories as carnival or polyphony. Rather, in a similar fashion to my use of Foucault in chapters two and three, I will apply Bakhtin’s categories as and when they are able to usefully

illuminate particular passages or when the work under discussion seems to problematise Bakhtinian analyses.

The question of the sublimation of drunkenness is particularly relevant to the work of Bakhtin. Unlike Nietzsche who, for his own philosophical purposes, abstracted the material aspects of drunkenness into the metaphysical category of intoxication, Bakhtin bypasses almost entirely the cognitive and phenomenological (and, if only by metonymic extension, the potentially metaphysical) aspects of alcohol consumption in favour of a concern with the material fact of, literally, drinking. As I have discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Bakhtin's refusal to engage with the experience of intoxication poses serious questions about the validity of his concept of carnival. If, as Marty Roth argues, carnival is 'unthinkable without mood alteration' and drink is 'the suppressed literal of carnival',² then the theoretical framework supporting the reading of texts through the idea of the carnivalesque begins to shake at the foundations. Throughout *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin is forced to formulate the significance of drinking through its status as a bodily function; in other words, his understanding of alcohol consumption as a cultural practice positions the cognitive as, at best, an epiphenomenon of the somatic. This is clearly central to Bakhtin's task in *Rabelais and His World* of reincorporating the physical body into history and criticism. However, the apparent analytical perversity of structuring a theoretical position around a reading of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* that consistently reifies the totality of drink and drunkenness into the symbolic process of liquid ingestion problematises *a priori* the integrity of Bakhtin's conclusions.

A perennial problematic in the representation of alcohol consumption is its reification into enclosed and supposedly definitive forms. Drink has a tendency to be understood as either wholly somatic (Bakhtin) or wholly abstract (Nietzsche), or as either the high road to hell or the gateway to paradise. The reason that the notion of synthetic transcendence is important to this study is that this idea allows for polarising tendencies in the representation of drunkenness to be negotiated and overcome. Drink, as Derrida suggests is the case with illegal drugs, is problematic because it is perceived as existing in the realm of inauthentic experience. Of course the 'authentic' in this formulation is either that realm of rational functioning for

² Roth, 'Carnival, Creativity and the Sublimation of Drunkenness', pp. 4, 6

which sobriety is a pivotal signifier, or that no longer accessible realm of the sacred for which modernism sought compensation in the aesthetic. The notion of synthetic transcendence dissolves this dialectic by embracing the artificial as a possible version of, or even improvement on, a putative transcendent 'real' that can only be accessed hypothetically anyway. Understood as a synthetic transcendence, intoxication can be both true and untrue, real and fake, sublime and deadly, ethereal and gross. Applying a structural understanding of the relationship between art and intoxication through the category of the synthetic is crucial to understanding the nature of the relationship between modernist literature and alcohol.

The essentialised location of authenticity in either the metaphysical or the somatic is a theoretical manoeuvre that drinking obviates. It is a crucial position of this study to insist that alcohol – not just in fact, but in representation – straddles precisely that eternally shifting border between the material and the mental; between Descartes' *res intelligensa* and Bakhtin's 'material body lower stratum'. What makes drink – real, actual drunkenness – problematic is precisely that it simultaneously speaks of the body *and* the mind, violence *and* contemplation, insight *and* incomprehension. What makes this problematic important for a reading of Western culture is precisely that drink – and real, actual drinking – is either at the heart or at the root of a vast range of cultural practices and beliefs – from the Last Supper to last orders. To sublimate drinking in a reading of carnival and transgressive practices is not just to miss the specific importance of drink in such practices, but to miss the chance of relating them generically to a whole range of other cultural forms. Bakhtin relates carnival to a number of superficially divergent cultural practices across history; insisting, for example that the 'symposium is by nature a purely carnivalistic genre'.³ However, he is forced to make this connection through discussing the somewhat vague category of 'special privileges (originally of a cultic sort): the right to a certain license, ease and familiarity, to a certain frankness, to eccentricity, ambivalence' unique to 'banquet discourse'.⁴ I would argue that these discursive tendencies can be theorised concretely by understanding them as branches of a far broader cultural genre; the drunken conversation. Essentially, my position differs from Bakhtin's in that I do not view intoxication as a minor and relatively

³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 120

⁴ *ibid.*

unimportant subset of carnival, but instead view many important elements of the carnivalesque as aspects of the representation of actual drunken intoxication.

In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the polysemic and profoundly ambivalent significance of alcohol is raised as a crucial textual element from the very start of the novel. 'The sacred pint alone can unbind the tongue of Dedalus,'⁵ says Buck Mulligan as he, Haines and Stephen leave the Martello tower at the start of the book. This superficially humorous, but actually economically and personally exploitative, comment foregrounds early in the novel a number of the most important aspects of the representations of drink which flow through the entire book. It touches upon the relationship between drink and both the experience and rituals of the sacred, the complicated role of drink in the social, economic and political conditions of colonial Ireland, and the relationship between drink and various modes of linguistic expression and intercourse. It places beer at the top of a hierarchy of drinks which is otherwise topped, at various point throughout the book, by wine, whiskey, absinthe, port, tea and water. Equally, the micro-economic context in which the words are spoken – that between a penniless Mulligan and Stephen who is about to receive his week's wages – is appropriately dysfunctional in a book in which the economics of gift exchange as mediated through alcohol play an important role. In *Ulysses*, drink not only functions as a near ubiquitous medium of social exchange, nor the pub as simply a social space crucial to much of the action that takes place. Rather, drink, and its associated rituals and economies, provides a rich texture of signification through which Joyce incorporates issues of history, literature, and national identity into the text. I will later argue that drink unbinds, as it were, the tongue of *Ulysses* itself; which is to say that the depiction of drunkenness becomes the means by which Joyce opens up language within the novel in order to re-imagine the functions and possibilities of literary language itself.

To move chronologically through *Ulysses* discussing each drinking event in turn would be a lengthy project. As is often the case when looking at representations of drinking in fiction, once the eye becomes accustomed to look for it, alcohol begins to appear to seep into the narrative at almost every turn: an old woman carrying a noggin bottle over the road, the name of a horse at the Ascot Gold Cup, an apparently

⁵ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 24. Further references to be given in text as U.

throwaway metaphor for spilled blood.⁶ Drink, on page after page of *Ulysses*, is casually bought and sold, talked about, remembered, recounted, praised, denounced and, of course, consumed. There is barely a character in the novel who does not drink - indeed Gerty MacDowell, the only major character who appears not to drink, is herself involved in a temperance tale of her own, fulfilling the role of the suffering daughter and 'ministering angel' (U, p.353) to her drunken father. Given this, rather than provide a systematic survey of drinking events in *Ulysses*, I will concentrate on three specific episodes which are representative of the trajectories which the images of drinking in *Ulysses* trace. The episodes are arranged around three structural themes: broadly, the symbolism of specific drinks, the drinking place as narrative space, and the emergence of the intoxicated as a mode of narration. In keeping with this thematic structure then - rather than the strict chronology of the text - I will begin the discussion proper with a look at the violent culmination of the day that *Ulysses* describes - a day which, for Stephen at least, is one of more or less consistent alcoholic excess.

Guinness or absinthe? Drink and cultural identity in 'Circe'

The 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* begins where this particular study of *Ulysses* will end - with the chaotic and farraginous explosion of vocality which bursts into life at the end of the 'Oxen of the Sun'. For a reading of the book which follows Joe Brooker's assertion that throughout *Ulysses* 'the narrative voice ... becom[es] gradually more tipsy along with Dublin itself,'⁷ the Circe episode is the point at which the narrative blacks out; the increasingly spectacular and mutable narrative techniques of the earlier chapters being replaced here by a phantasmagoric hybrid of expressionist dramaturgy and surrealist poetry. Drifting through the vertiginous swings in, out and around the consciousnesses of Bloom, Stephen and countless other characters is the *fabula* of Stephen and Bloom's visit to Bella Cohen's brothel, their somewhat ignominious departure from that establishment, and their confrontation with two English soldiers, Private Compton and Private Carr. In this closing act of the chapter,

⁶ See *Ulysses*, pp. 63; 316-7. The tipped horse for the Ascot Gold Cup is called Zinfandel.

⁷ Joe Brooker, 'Could a Swim Duck: Social Drinking in *Ulysses*', in James Nicholls and Sue Owen eds., *A Babel of Bottles: Drink, Drinkers and Drinking Places in Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 102-20 (p. 108)

an argument takes place between Stephen and Private Carr which, while ostensibly over an insult Private Carr believes Stephen to have directed at the prostitute Cissy Caffrey, is fraught with political overtones. Having decided that Stephen has insulted the British king, Private Carr punches him to the ground before escaping with his friend. Bloom, meanwhile, attempts to intervene to calm the situation:

STEPHEN: Kings and Unicorns! (*He falls back a pace*) Come somewhere and we'll ... What was that girl saying? ...

PRIVATE COMPTON: Eh, Harry, give him a kick in the knackers. Stick one into Jerry.

BLOOM: (*To the privates, softly*) He doesn't know what he's saying. Taking a little more than is good for him. Absinthe, the greeneyed monster. I know him. He's a gentleman, a poet. It's all right.

STEPHEN: (*Nods, smiling and laughing*) Gentleman, patriot, scholar and judge of impostors.

PRIVATE CARR: I don't give a bugger who he is.

PRIVATE COMPTON: We don't give a bugger who he is.

STEPHEN: I seem to annoy them. Green rag to a bull.

(*Kevin Egan of Paris in black Spanish tasselled shirt and peep-o'-day boys hat signs to Stephen.*) (U, p.522)

This exchange conflates, through its association of absinthe and the colour green, a series of events, associations and symbolic references which are significant both privately to Stephen and to the wider political contexts of *Ulysses*. Absinthe functions on a number of symbolic planes: as the 'green fairy' – a signifier of Stephen's other life in Paris; as a symbol of Stephen's personal sense of political, artistic and sexual jealousy; and as symbolically associated with the ever potent question of colonialism and Irish cultural identities.

Privately, absinthe represents to Stephen the world beyond Dublin from which he was forced to return by the death of his mother; the bohemian exile that Stephen remembers as the 'froggreen wormwood' of Paris (U, p.48). As I illustrated in Chapter Four, Paris was, by the turn of the century, implacably associated with absinthe drinking, particularly amongst the avant-garde writers and artists who

gravitated towards the city in the years leading up to World War One.⁸ The association in Stephen's mind between drinking absinthe and a degree of knowing cosmopolitanism is illustrated when, during the melee of voices calling for drinks at the end of the 'Oxen of the Sun' episode, Stephen shouts 'Absinthe for me, savvy?' (U, p.422); the pidgin French 'savvy' connoting a conspicuous display of Stephen's presumed excess of sophisticated continental *savoir faire*.

Surprisingly, however, it is not primarily the bohemian world of the Left Bank cafés with which Stephen associates absinthe when it first emerges in his consciousness in the 'Proteus' section near the beginning of *Ulysses*. Unlike Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, for example, absinthe does not conjure up images of boulevards and bookshops; it does not suggest encounters with artists and writers, the aristocracy of the artistic Parisian *demimonde*.⁹ Rather, it brings back for Stephen memories of his friendship with the exiled Irish nationalist Kevin Egan rolling 'gunpowder cigarettes through fingers smeared with printer's ink, sipping his green fairy.' (U, p.48). According to Richard Ellmann, Kevin Egan is based on Joseph Casey – a well-known republican activist who had, according to Michael Davitt, 'a leaning toward dynamite and a decided taste for absinthe.'¹⁰ Casey had been involved in an attack on a police van in Manchester in 1867 and jailed in Clerkenwell prison – where twelve people were later killed during an attempted breakout in which Casey was involved. As a politically engaged, often actively violent freedom fighter, Egan represents an almost polar opposite persona to that of the politically withdrawn artist that Joyce presented himself as in, for example, his conversations with Frank Budgen;¹¹ or that Stephen Dedalus pictures as the ideal artist, a man 'refined out of existence, indifferent, pairing his fingernails.'¹² Despite this, and despite Stephen's avowedly artistic purposes in travelling to Paris, it is to Egan – dynamiter and terrorist – that Stephen is drawn as he wanders the city of high

⁸ In the years preceding 1904, when *Ulysses* is set, Joyce had spent a total of around four months living in Paris: from December 1st -23rd 1902 and January 23rd until April 11th 1903. This was the period when, in Paris, absinthe drinking was at its height and there is evidence in Richard Ellmann's biography that Joyce drank absinthe himself. Ellmann, in fact, claims that Joyce only gave up drinking absinthe in 1918. See Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 467.

⁹ See the following chapter for a more detailed discussion of this.

¹⁰ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 129-130.

¹¹ Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, (1934; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 191-192. Budgen states that 'On one subject [Joyce] was more uncommunicative than any man I know: the subject of politics.' (p. 191).

¹² James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 215.

art and high times: 'In gay Paree he hides, Egan of Paris, unsought by any save by me.' (U, p.49)

The question that this remembered friendship between Stephen Dedalus and Kevin Egan raises is: what, in the trajectories of the impotent, exiled Fenian, and the ambitious, but as yet unknown writer, draws them together over absinthe in the cafés of Paris? Why, furthermore, is it specifically the recollection of absinthe drinking that brings the memory to the forefront of Stephen's thoughts? The answer is related largely to the ideational association between the iconic status of the colour green in absinthe, with all the bohemian and continental connotations that implies, and in the mythic symbolism of Irish nationalism. Stephen's aside during his confrontation with the two soldiers – 'I seem to annoy them. Green rag to a bull.' – draws these two symbolic spheres together. This 'green rag', shaken as it is in the red face of John Bull's irate privates, can be understood as simultaneously Stephen's absinthe-soaked, annoyingly erudite belligerence, and his politically assertive upstart insubordination. The question is, when face to face with the might of His Majesty's armed forces do either amount to anything more than romantically self-congratulatory, and ultimately ineffectual, gestures of defiance. Similarly, in looking at Stephen's recollection of Kevin Egan in 'Proteus' – where the dangerous exoticism of the green fairy turns inexorably back towards the simultaneously deadly and peripheral politics of the emerald isle – the question is whether it is shared impotence or shared defiance that brings the would-be artist and has-been terrorist together in a Parisian café. Evaluating this question involves evaluating Joyce's representation of the relationship between drink and Irish cultural identity. While I will discuss the issue of drinking – particularly Guinness drinking – as a privileged signifying practice in Irish culture below, here I will consider whether and to what extent Joyce constructs a parallel between intoxication and active political resistance.

Stephen's absinthe drinking is, in a sense, a mirror image of Egan's. Where Egan embarked on hopeless and bleakly farcical acts of political violence before facing exile and the delirium of absinthe, Stephen returns from an abortive self-imposed exile, becomes delirious on a cocktail of absinthe and beer, and then engages in an act of farcical political violence.¹³ Stephen's trajectory, in this way, is the

¹³ The description of the Clerkenwell bombing in Malcolm Brown's *The Politics of Irish Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 223 foregrounds the combination of farce and tragedy that the event represented.

bathetic reverse of Egan's pathetic original. For both men, drink acts as compensation; Stephen drinks when he should be writing, Egan drinks when he should be fighting. That both should drink as a compensation for their failure to transform their native country is characteristic of a novel in which drink, at the level of diegesis, is represented as both the dominant facilitating medium of male discourse and the obviator of constructive political action. This is not to suggest, however, that Joyce denies a political value to drink and drunkenness. Later in this chapter, I will discuss in detail what positive value Joyce ascribes to – or distils from – the inherently carnivalesque nature of drunken discourse. Firstly, though, I will discuss how Joyce deals with the question of drunkenness as an assertion of an autonomous cultural identity. Considered in terms of the pun on the colour green, the association of Stephen with Kevin Egan via the ironically French culture of absinthe drinking opens up a critical perspective on *Ulysses* through which to consider a number of serious issues concerning the construction of an Irish national identity within the discursive structures of colonialism; structures through which the images of the exiled terrorist and the drunken upstart punched out cold by the English private are brought into meaningful dialogue with one another.

During the argument with the soldiers, Bloom's paraphrase of Iago's warning to Othello that he 'beware, my lord, of jealousy ... the green-eyed monster'¹⁴ places the absinthe, which has led to Stephen's semi-delirious state, in a matrix of quasi-Oedipal associations which J. Colm O'Connor suggests Joyce constructs around the colour green. O'Connor argues that colour was used by Joyce for very specific symbolic purposes, and that green was 'used in Joyce's major works only to a limited degree and generally in a negative way.'¹⁵ According to O'Connor, green represents to Stephen a matrix of negative associations which include his dead mother, the sea, and an oppressive relationship with Ireland and notions of Irishness. Stephen's fears of being dragged down into the network of familial, cultural and religious restrictions which he left Ireland to escape are encapsulated in his fear of suffering the 'Salt green death' (U, p.242); that is, drowning.

Alongside this, Joyce twice uses the colour green to poke fun at the revival of Celticism in Irish art. Early in the book, Buck Mulligan, gazing over an old

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Othello* (III, 3, 165-166) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), p. 110.

¹⁵ J. Colm O'Connor, *Joyce's Use of Colors: Finnegans Wake and Earlier Works* (London: UMI Research Press, 1987), p. 29.

handkerchief, perceives 'A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen.' (U, p.11). Later, in 'Cyclops', a similar joke is made at the expense of Celticism in the description of the Citizen's handkerchief as the gargantuan second narrator eulogises in fine detail the intricate Celtic artwork that adorns the 'emunctory field' (U, p.330) of the nationalist's nose rag. This tallies with O'Connor's analysis in that here the symbolic green of Ireland connotes not a productive and future-oriented liberatory project within the sphere of culture, but an intransigent, insular and backward-facing fetishisation of a mythic, and potentially self-defeating, identity.

In *Inventing Ireland* (1995), Declan Kiberd looks at the problematic role of the Celtic Revival in constructing a potentially resistant notion of Irishness within colonial discourse. He points out that, as with many postcolonial strategies of cultural resistance, the idealization of the Celtic risked amounting to the polemic adoption of what was always already a colonially constructed essentialism. Kiberd quotes Matthew Arnold by way of illustrating the degree to which even the most sympathetic formulations of mythic Celtic identity carried within them an inherent infantilization and derationalisation of the colonised other. For Arnold, 'The Celtic genius had sentiment as its main basis ... with love of beauty, charm and spirituality for its excellence, ineffectualness and self-will for defect.'¹⁶ While such views allowed a romanticisation of the Celtic both in Britain and Ireland which ostensibly sought to validate aspects of Irish literary tradition, this romanticisation was based, fundamentally, on constructing the Celtic peoples (in itself an essentialising construct that Joyce had difficulties with) as essentially childlike, therefore incapable of governing themselves; a formulation which, of course, implicitly validated the idea of the 'civilising mission'.¹⁷ In the construction of the Irish as not-English, as 'the perfect foil to set off [English] virtues'¹⁸ of rationality, stability and control, irrationality became the dominant trope of representations of Irishness. Thus the Irish could be seen simultaneously as spiritual and violent, charming and drunken,

¹⁶ Quoted in Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.31.

¹⁷ Joyce, in his early critical essays, was keen to promote and praise the cultural history of Ireland while, at the same time, divorcing himself from the kind of nationalist Celticism that veered dangerously close towards a discourse of racial purity. In his 1907 essay 'Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages', Joyce points out that 'to exclude from the present nation all who are descended from foreign families would be impossible, and to deny the name of patriot to all those who are not of Irish stock would be to deny it to almost all the heroes of the modern movement.' James Joyce, *The Critical Writings*, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1966), pp. 161-162.

¹⁸ Kiberd, p. 9.

emotional and incapable.¹⁹ The flipside, as Emer Nolan points out, of the sentimental Celtic bard was the terrorist: 'the practically incompetent Celt resorts either to mysticism or to random, meaningless violence.'²⁰ Another manifestation of this persona is the alcoholic – the 'drunken paddy' – simultaneously loveable and terrifying, demanding in equal measure moral guidance and bodily restraint.

The image of the Irish as inherently heavy drinkers facilitated the colonial construction of the Irish as always potentially uncontrolled, violent and self-destructive. Drunkenness was able to become both the figure for and the putative cause of the rebelliousness of the Irish. In as much as the drunken father in temperance fiction squanders the family wealth and mistreats his kin, so the Irish people could be imagined as incapable of dragging themselves out of their poverty while simultaneously engaging in sporadic acts of violent ingratitude towards their quasi-feudal colonial overlords. The notion of the persistent drunkenness of the Irish, and its association with rebellion has a long genesis. As far back as 1584, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, in passing a decree restricting access to whiskey among the peasantry, claimed, in a comment typically conflating the notions of irrationality and rebellion, that whiskey 'sets the Irish mad and breeds many mischiefs'.²¹ The role of drink in the 1798 Uprising was to become a hotly contested issue, particularly as the paths of the temperance and Home Rule movements began to converge in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with some arguing that the rebellion was simply a set of drunken outrages, and others arguing that it was drunkenness on the part of the rebels that led to the failure of a movement that otherwise could, and should, have succeeded.

The second of these viewpoints represents an interesting adoption of the figure of the 'drunken paddy' by nationalists and the harnessing of it in the cause of

¹⁹ There is an interesting tradition of the simianisation of the Irish in colonial discourse. In a letter of 1860, Charles Kingsley, returning from a successful fishing trip in Ireland wrote that he was 'haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country', adding 'to see white chimpanzees is dreadful, if they were black one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.' (Charles Kingsley, *His Letter and Memories of his Life* [London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880], pp. 111-12). Punch magazine regularly used simian imagery, often representing John Mitchel, founder of the *United Irishman* as the 'Irish monkey'. This use of simian imagery could be seen in the background to Stephen Dedalus' exclamation of 'Kings and unicorns!' (U, p.522) during his argument with Private Carr. If read as a paraphrase of Othello's 'goats and monkeys!' (Othello [IV.I.265]), then it acts as a reversal of one set of stereotypical images for another; the language of clichéd English pageantry and power standing in for the simianising language of contemporary discourses of dominion and control.

²⁰ Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 91.

²¹ Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free*, p. 2.

independence. The implications of this strategy, which became widespread within the Irish temperance movement from the 1830s onwards, will be dealt with in detail in the following section of this chapter. It was, however, an assumption which, dovetailing neatly as it did with colonial representations of the Irish, was rejected by many leading Irish politicians. In terms of parliamentary politics, the issue came to a head in the 1870s when English temperance campaigners attempted to force through a series of bills restricting Sunday licensing in Ireland. The Irish Sunday Licensing debates, which took place between 1872-1878 crystallised a number of fundamental questions around the degree and nature of devolved power to be given to Dublin and caused splits among nationalist parliamentarians between those who supported temperance, those with close ties to the drinks industry, and those who saw the Bill as an unacceptable extension of English power into the realm of sumptuary legislation. During an 1891 debate on further extensions of Sunday closing Charles Stuart Parnell complained of ‘a patronising attempt on the part of the majority of English members to make the Irish people sober’ – an attempt made the more unacceptable as the Irish refused to ‘believe in our excessive drunkenness in comparison to our English friends.’ The proposed legislation amounted, according to Parnell, to nothing more than the ‘meddlesome interference and bungling attempts [by the English] to legislate in reference to the wants of people whom they cannot possibly understand.’²² His argument has some statistical justification; only in 1831 and 1851 did Irish per capita spirit consumption exceed that of the UK as a whole, while American spirit consumption only lowered to levels comparable to that of the Irish by around 1890. Beer drinking in Britain was consistently between two and four times that of Ireland throughout the nineteenth century.²³

Returning to *Ulysses* and the face-off between Stephen and Private Carr, the episode can be read as a reconstruction of the colonial condition in miniature; one that reflects on the ineffectuality of certain constructions of Irishness. Arguably, Stephen not only allows himself to engage in a relatively futile confrontation with the agents of British power, but, in doing so, plays up to stereotypes of Irishness that he has challenged, and which have been challenged in various ways throughout the book.

²² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 271

²³ *ibid.*, p. 324. Malcolm does point out that, given the large numbers of teetotallers in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century, these statistics could point to a higher per capita consumption amongst those left who drank. However, the sheer scale of the Irish temperance movement in itself throws into questions assumptions of generalised drunkenness amongst the Irish.

His 'green rag' to the red bull of England is both that of the recusant and that of the aggressive drunk; the Fenian and the 'drunken paddy'. That the hapless Kevin Egan should walk uninvited into the middle of the action suggests the specific dangers of assuming as a given identity that which is ascribed in colonial discourse and attempting to construct an oppositional politics based on that identity.

While the figures of both the drunk and the terrorist can be seen as playing directly into the hands of negative colonial constructions of Irish identity, Joyce's structural associations between these possible identities and those of an idealised Celticism highlight the fact that all three versions of Irishness share more common ground than may at first appear. As Kiberd points out, the idea of the Celtic romanticised by writers such as Yeats could be reached by simply performing a positive semantic inversion on any number of negative stereotypes through which Irish colonial inferiority was articulated; thus, 'for *superstitious* use *religious*, for *backward* say *traditional*, for *irrational* suggest *emotional*.' Kiberd continues, 'the positive aspect of this manoeuvre was that it permitted Irish people to take many images that were rejected by English society, occupy them, reclaim them, and make them their own ... The danger was that, under the guise of freedom, a racist slur might be sanitised and worn with pride by its very victims.'²⁴ It is precisely this danger that Joyce satirises in his images of ornate, celticised handkerchiefs. Stephen, in his confrontation with Private Carr, is, arguably, acting the part of the classic upstart Irishman. For his pains, he receives the classic colonial response: a thump in the face with no legal recourse. This said, Stephen also deconstructs the role of the drunken rebel precisely as he fills it. It is he who quotes and paraphrases Blake, Swift and Shakespeare throughout the exchange. Nevertheless, while Stephen may be a 'Gentleman, patriot, scholar and judge of impostors', the fact is that the privates 'don't give a bugger who he is' (U, p.522) and, in this particular situation, don't need to; might, so long as Stephen is caught within the power relations of the 'brutish empire' (U, p. 524), makes right.

Stephen's drunken brawl can be read as a synecdoche of the Irish colonial condition in much the same way as can the trial of Myles Joyce in Joyce's 1907 essay 'Ireland at the Bar'. In this essay, which depicts the murder trial of a Gaelic-speaking peasant in an English-speaking court, it is the inarticulacy of Ireland, its inescapable

²⁴ Kiberd, p. 31-32.

dependence on the interpretative role of the British press and other mouthpieces of colonial power, that is held up as the image of the subaltern condition of the Irish people.²⁵ In Stephen's case, it is the near impossibility of finding modes of articulation which stand outside of colonially ascribed identities with which he struggles. Financed by his vehemently unionist employer Mr Deasy and rejected by the pseudo-mystical Dublin literary circles, Stephen plays the role of the drunken buffoon, the Celtic *idiot savant*. This stereotypical persona ('Irish by name and Irish by nature, says Mr Stephen, and he sent the ale purling about.' [U, p.396-397]) is one that Buck Mulligan, from the start of the novel, shows his desire to foist on Stephen when he announces that 'Today the bards must drink and junket. Ireland expects that every man this day will do his duty.' (U, p.22)²⁶

The petty and embarrassing ineffectuality of Stephen's absurd political intervention in the streets of nighttown is a clear illustration of the limits of the carnivalesque when confronted head on with the brute facts of *realpolitik*. The adoption of a grotesque persona – that of the staggering drunk – appears here as a practically ineffectual form of resistance. While Stephen's erudite dismemberment of the English language may facilitate his articulation of truths and discursive positions outwith the scope of rational political debate, it is in itself incapable of transforming that transgressive truth into effective action. What I would argue, however, is that Joyce attempts to sublimate the ineffectuality of the lived carnivalesque into affective reality through its transformation into literature. That is to say, drunkenness in *Ulysses* is effective as the object of representation, not as a primary activity or cognitive condition. In political terms, this is to say that while Joyce represents lived drunkenness as tending towards political ineffectuality, he does attempt, in Benjamin's terms, to 'harness the energies of intoxication for the revolution' – albeit the revolution in language. A further analysis of Joyce's literary use of drinking and intoxication with reference to political discourse will take place in the following discussion of the 'Cyclops' chapter. My discussion of the 'Oxen of the Sun' will look

²⁵ Joyce, *Critical Writings*, pp. 21-27

²⁶ According to Richard Ellmann it was believed by a number of Dublin contemporaries that Oliver St. John Gogarty (the model for the character of Buck Mulligan) had introduced the young Joyce (who had initially decided not to become a drinker) to drinking for malicious purposes. It is claimed that Gogarty told a friend that he would 'make Joyce drink to break his spirit'. Stanislaus Joyce also witnessed Gogarty mocking Joyce's sobriety when Joyce quoted from Autolycus 'And a quart of ale is a dish for a king', to which Gogarty replied, 'A quart of milk is more in your line.' Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 136.

more closely at the relationship between the diegetic representation of drunkenness and the use of intoxicated cognition as a revolutionary narrative device. While Joyce would appear to agree in advance with Terry Eagleton's argument that the danger of carnival is 'the fact that its affirmative images of transcendence rest upon the potentially crippling sublimation of the drives necessary to achieve it in practice,'²⁷ carnival, in the guise of intoxication, can play an important role in clearing the ground for new modes of consciousness – in the same way that sobriety is required for the effective and practical introduction of new political relations.

Another of Terry Eagleton's problematising observations on carnival that Joyce appears to illustrate is that a possibly fatal limitation on the transformative powers of carnival as a social practice is that it is, and always has been, 'a *licensed* affair in every sense.'²⁸ In Ireland, indeed, the carnival of drunkenness, as signified by the consumption of Guinness, had already become by the start of the twentieth century an integral part of the nation's social, political and economic culture. The ambivalence of Guinness as simultaneously a signifier of gregarious Irish social relations, a dangerous privileging of alcohol consumption, an improving native economy, and the domination of that economy by a narrow Protestant elite is raised throughout *Ulysses*. Three brief excerpts will illustrate this. The first, from 'Proteus' takes place as Stephen walks, lost in his thoughts along Sandymount strand:

A porter-bottle stood up, stogged to its waist, in the cakey sand and dough.

A sentinel: isle of dreadful thirst. (U, p.46)

The following two represent the thoughts of Leopold Bloom as he wanders around the streets of Dublin:

Lord Iveagh once cashed a seven-figure cheque for a million in the bank of Ireland. Shows you the money to be made out of porter ... An incoming train clanked heavily above his head, coach after coach. Barrels bumped in his head: dull porter slopped and churned inside. The bungholes sprang open and a huge dull flood leaked out, flowing together, winding through

²⁷ Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin*, p. 149

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 148

mudflats all over the level land, a lazy pooling swirl of liquor bearing along wideleaved flowers of froth. (U, p.81)

As he set foot on O'Connell bridge a puffball of smoke plumed up from the parapet. Brewery barge with export stout. England. Sea air sours it, I heard. Be interesting some day to get a pass through Hancock to see the brewery. Regular world in itself. Vats of porter, wonderful. Rats get in too. Drink themselves bloated as a big collie floating. Dead drunk on the porter. Drink till they puke again like christians. Imagine drinking that! Rats: vats. Well of course if we knew all the things. (U, p.152)

Guinness here figures as both sentinel and export, associated both with economic success and excessive consumption. In Stephen's somewhat jaundiced eyes, the porter-bottle stands guard against the wider world, symbol of a cloying insularity and false relief for a thirst that cannot be slaked as long as the shores of Ireland are closed to the cultural diversity of the outside world. From this perspective, the porter bottle acts in a similar way to the representations of drink in the *Dubliners* stories 'After the Race' and 'A Little Cloud'. In these two stories drink functions as the displaced signifier of liberation and escape which, in reality, simply further confirms the stasis of Dublin life. In 'After the Race', Jimmy's reckless indulgence in a drinking spree with his glamorous continental acquaintances leads, ultimately, to his losing the money which could have facilitated his own escape from Dublin in a gambling game played for stakes far beyond his provincial means. In 'A Little Cloud', Little Chandler feels that every step towards Corless's, where he was to have drinks with his old friend Gallaher, 'brought him nearer to London, farther from his own sober inartistic life.'²⁹ But the drinks turn out to be just that: drinks. Indeed, they provide little more than an excuse for Gallaher to get Little Chandler drunk by way of giving him a taster of the debauched continental life which Gallaher is all too keen to point out Little Chandler cannot gain access to. Drink, in this sense, may point to a wider world but, in effect, bars any meaningful access to it.

On the other hand, Guinness functions very much as a bridge to the outside world in the everyday, Bloomian rather than Dedalian, sphere of economics. While

²⁹ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p. 71.

Stephen suggestively points out in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that ‘the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead’,³⁰ Guinness’s brewing industry acts as the realisation of this principle in the material world – putting into practice the political ideals of Arthur Griffith’s *Sinn Fein*: that the best policy for Irish independence was the promotion of native industries and the construction of a vital and autonomous export economy. Griffith’s economic ideas, if not his questionable ideas on race and empire, were ones which Joyce supported in both essays and letters.³¹ While a number of other drinks appear in *Ulysses* as signifiers of the flow of trade, culture and ideas in and out of Ireland,³² Guinness through a combination of its economic role, its iconic status, and the wealth and influence of the Guinness family, represents a particularly significant and ambivalent element in the Dublin drinking culture which Joyce depicts.

Guinness, by the turn of the century, was one of the seven largest companies in the world with a vast turnover which would later make brewing ‘by far the most important industry in the Irish Free State.’³³ Although reputedly invented in Shoreditch in 1722, porter, primarily under the aegis of the Guinness family, was to spearhead the creation of a viable Irish brewing industry which, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century had been restricted to producing substandard ales which failed to compete with their imported English competitors. The Guinness brewery opened at St James’s Gate, Dublin in 1759 and was brewing porter by 1796. According to Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, brewing, in the years after the Great Famine, represented one of the primary channels through which a modern, capitalist

³⁰ Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 250.

³¹ See ‘Fenianism’, esp. p. 191, in Joyce, *Critical Writings*, pp. 187-196. See also, Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 86-89. Joyce wrote to Stanislaus that he would probably consider himself a nationalist if Griffith’s party did not insist on the use of Gaelic, and if their paper *United Irishman* were not ‘educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred’ (quoted in Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], p. 192). Griffith was not so much against the idea of empire as in favour of Ireland gaining equal sovereignty over the British Empire with England. Joyce was alive to problematics of this idea. Writing about the nationalist Stephen Gwynn in 1903, Joyce wrote ‘his nationalism, as he says, has nothing irreconcilable about it. Give Ireland the status of Canada and Mr. Gwynn becomes an Imperialist at once.’ (‘Today and Tomorrow in Ireland’, in *Critical Writings*, pp. 90-92, p. 90).

³² Bloom canvasses for an advert for ‘Alexander Keyes, tea, wine and spirit merchant’; the name Keyes clearly suggesting thresholds of ingress and egress. Tea is associated both the continent and Bloom’s orientalist fantasies: lemon tea is described as a ‘Paris fad’ (U, p.18) by Buck Mulligan, and tea later triggers off an idealised vision of the tea plantations of Ceylon in Bloom’s mind (U, p.73).

³³ S.J. Connolly, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 58.

economy spread from the eastern seaboard westwards across Ireland.³⁴ Guinness provided the Irish economy with its first indigenous, industrialised, exporting giant - by 1840, 60% of Guinness by value was exported.³⁵ It also dominated the home market through a combination of timely deals with canal and railway builders and through an early example of clever marketing in the adoption of the O'Neill (or Brian Boru's) harp as its logo in 1862 (possibly the first example of the conscious close association of Guinness and a version of 'Irishness' that still persists in Guinness marketing today). At the same time as Guinness was becoming Ireland's favourite drink and biggest export, the Guinness family were becoming increasingly more prominent members of Irish society. By 1820, for example, Arthur Guinness II (1768-1855) had become governor of the Bank of Ireland. In 1851, his son Benjamin Lee (1798-1868) was Lord Mayor of Dublin and in 1865 was elected as Conservative member of parliament for Dublin. Sir Arthur Guinness (1840-1915), who had also been a Conservative MP for Dublin, was created Lord Ardilaun in 1880 while his younger brother Edward Cecil Guinness (1847-1927), who assumed sole control of the brewery in 1876, was later created Lord Iveagh.

Richard Ellmann relates a story told by James Joyce's father John in which he claimed, having campaigned for the Liberals in the general election of 1880, to have 'had the pleasure of telling Sir Arthur Guinness that he was no longer a member.'³⁶ The story highlights the antipathy felt towards the Guinness's by many people at the time. This hostility was due, partly, to the unionist and pro-establishment leanings of the Guinness family. Benjamin Lee described the Fenians, in a letter from 1866, as 'wicked and worthless adventurers who would not only deprive our country of the advantages which, as part of the British Empire, we enjoy, but who ... would deluge our country in bloodshed and misery and reduce the industrial classes to want and misery.'³⁷ In a signally pro-establishment gesture, he restored St Patrick's cathedral at a personal cost of £150,000. Both Arthur Guinness II and Sir Arthur Guinness publicly opposed the Repeal movement. Edward Cecil Guinness summed up the political principles of his family as being to 'support the cause of Conservatism, and the interests of the church of which I am a member'; that is, the established Church of

³⁴ Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, *Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy 1759-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 168-172

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 140

³⁶ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 16

³⁷ Lynch and Vaizey, p. 180

Ireland.³⁸ None of these views represent either an extreme unionism or a marked anti-Catholicism; however, they do place the Guinness family firmly in the upper echelons of conservative Protestantism where they could be seen as personifying the concentration of social and economic power in a narrow social clique.

Guinness the drink, then, functions as a signifier of a broad social aspect of Irish society ('wine of the country' is the euphemism the Citizen uses for it in 'Cyclops'[U, p.294]), while Guinness the family, represents a narrow economic one. In its role as exporter, Guinness represents an important channel to the outside world, while in images of excess and consumption it acts as the signifier of the underlying fear, manipulated by the pro-temperance lobby of the time, that maybe the Irish *do* drink too much. The Guinness family's role in providing and promoting the drink that facilitates this counterbalances their role in the expanding of Irish economic horizons. As a practical, business-oriented man, Bloom can appreciate the economic importance of not only the Guinness brewery but the entire drink trade. On the other hand, he is acutely aware of the potentially exploitative and hypocritical nature of this respected and respectable business. Recalling the fate of an old acquaintance Bloom muses:

Ben Dollard's base barreltone ... Big ship's chandler business he did once ...
Failed to the tune of ten thousand pounds. Now in the Iveagh home.
Cubicle number so and so. Number one Bass did that for him ... Ruin them.
Wreck their lives. Then build them cubicles to end their days in. Hushaby.
Lullaby. Die, dog. Little dog, die. (U, p.282)

Here Bloom censures the Guinness family for providing philanthropic homes for people who, in all likelihood, ended up there through excessively purchasing the product which financed their building. His ire is slightly misdirected, however, in that he specifically points out that it was the English beer Number One Bass that led to Ben Dollard's comedown. As will be discussed below, Bass beer comes later in *Ulysses* to assume a symbolic intensity beyond even that of 'the foaming ebon ale

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1867-7

which the noble brothers Bungiveagh and Bungardilaun brew ever in their divine alevats'.³⁹ (U, p.298)

The comparison of Joyce's representations of Guinness and absinthe reveals a number of characteristics common to the representations of drinks in *Ulysses*. Firstly, drinks in *Ulysses* (and this includes non-alcoholic drinks) are specified and semantically charged according to their type. There is no such thing as 'drink' *per se* in *Ulysses*; instead there are any number of different drinks whose meanings and symbolic resonances are unique to themselves. Equally, the values attached to these drinks are fluid and malleable. Absinthe can at one and the same time represent the bohemian world of continental Paris, and yet be metaphorically implicated in the close world of Irish politics. Guinness can represent both the outward-looking face of Ireland and its most insular and self-destructive aspects. However, in the examples so far cited drunkenness retains a fairly consistent semantic value. For both Stephen and Kevin Egan it is a form of paralysing compensation for their inability to perform effectively in their chosen spheres of action.⁴⁰ In Bloom's world view, drunkenness always tends towards excess and the capitulation of the spirit; the great Ben Dollard pent up in a cubicle, bloated rats floating on a flood of black, enervating stout. That is to say, the evidence so far would suggest that, for Joyce, drunkenness tends towards the morbid and the impotent. However, as I have suggested above, Joyce constructs a complex relationship between the diegetic fact of drinking – that is, the effect of drink on characters within the text – and the representation of drunkenness at the level of the narrative. The drunken as a mode of narration, and as a sphere of discourse, becomes increasingly valuable for Joyce as *Ulysses* progresses. While the discussion of this movement in 'Oxen of the Sun' will focus primarily on intoxication as an aesthetic principle and narrative technique, a reading of 'Cyclops' will first show how both the discourses of drunkenness, and the drinking space, play a fundamental role in narrative organisation of the most explicitly political passage in *Ulysses*.

³⁹ 'Mr Bung' was the name given by the pro-temperance nationalist D. P. Moran, to the drink trade (see F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], p. 59).

⁴⁰ Bernard Benstock applies the notion of drink as compensation to *Dubliners*, arguing that the Dublin of Joyce's short stories is populated by reluctant and resentful British subjects who 'in contrast to open opposition to British rule ... are either baiting each other ... or compensating with drink.' (Bernard Benstock, *James Joyce: The Undiscover'd Country* [Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977], p. 46)

The Politics of Drink, Temperance and Nation in 'Cyclops'

Bloom, for all his disturbing visions of a nation drowned in porter, is not against drinking *per se*. He himself likes the occasional glass of burgundy and has a mistrust of complete abstinence ('selfish those t.t.'s are' [U, p.161]). Falling, as he does in so much of his life, between two stools, Bloom maintains a solidly moderationist stance. Moderate drinkers were a particular bugbear of total abstinence campaigners who saw moderate drinking as the crack in the door through which the spirit of intemperance would always enter.⁴¹ Equally, however, in any culture of male socialisation structured around the rituals of drinking, the moderationist risks appearing both parsimoniously superior in his refusal to engage in the economics of the bar and emotionally untrustworthy in his refusal to indulge in communal intoxication.⁴² Bloom's moderationism, and the potentially radical implications it represents in the light of the political history of Irish temperance, is brought to the foreground in 'Cyclops'. As movements that emerged and rose in parallel to each other through the nineteenth century, there were various points of convergence between the temperance movement and the movements for Repeal, Home Rule and cultural nationalism. For each moment of convergence, however, there were also periods of distrust between temperance and nationalism; temperance's ambient association with Protestantism and its often excessively narrow political goals being two areas around which it moved away from broader nationalist ideology.

The 'Cyclops' episode is steeped in the generic styles of the pub conversation and the drunken anecdote. Of the two nameless narrators, one retells the story in the first person; the free and easy colloquial manner, peppered with acerbic observations, suggests a captive and familiar audience such as would be found exchanging stories over drinks in a local pub. The second narrator is an absurd caricature of the exaggeration and excess that accompanies the drunken conversation which is the actual action of the chapter. To this extent, 'Cyclops' can be read as an exemplary instance of the use of the bar as a unique narrative space which facilitates particular

⁴¹ Harvey Green, the demonic moderate drinker of T. S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Barroom* is, alongside the bar owner Simon Slade, depicted as the most morally repulsive of the cast of characters.

⁴² The response of the Citizen and his companions to Bloom's abstemiousness echo Baudelaire's assertion that 'A man who drinks only water has a secret to keep from his peers.' (Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*, p. 9)

and specific forms of language exchange and narrative movement. While I will employ this concept in more detail in the following chapter, it is useful at this stage to consider the use of the bar in *Ulysses* in terms of Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. Essentially, this means considering the bar as a narrative (and, in Foucauldian terms, discursive) formation in which the spatial and temporal characteristics and parameters do not simply reflect or house meaning, but are fundamentally constitutive of meaning. That is to say that particular narrative spaces (Bakhtin uses examples such as the road and the threshold) are not simply interchangeable neutral spaces in which discourses take place and meanings are produced coincidentally. Rather, the narrative space defines both *what* discourses can take place within it and what meanings those discourses can generate. So, for example, much of the action in Dostoevsky's fiction takes place on thresholds not because they happen to be there, but because for Dostoevsky meaning is generated through synchronic encounters and crises, not the linear unfolding of teleological plots. Thresholds are liminal and transient spaces in which encounters take on the immediacy and intensity of crises; hence they do not simply house but construct the encounters around which the narrative is built.⁴³

Chronotopic spaces produce discourse, but also reflect their historical and geographical environment. The bar is an *enclosed* space in which meetings occur and discourse is to an extent ritualised. The forms of this ritualisation reflect both the historical and the geographical positioning of the bar; the rules of acceptable conversation and the rituals of drink buying will, for example, differ between countries and historical periods. At the same time, rituals such as treating both reflect and reflect upon the economic culture within which they occur. To this extent the bar can be understood as chronotopic in that it is a spatial form through which 'the graphically visible markers of historical time as well as of biographical and everyday time are concentrated and condensed.'⁴⁴ The bar is also a space saturated by the temporal in that it is regulated both juridically, through licensing laws, and socially; there are both acceptable times to *be* in bars and to *spend* in bars. Thus the bar is a space in which power emerges in the temporal both in terms of governmental regulation, but also at the capillary level in the regulatory gaze of friends and strangers.

⁴³ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 149, 287

⁴⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', p. 247

In terms of its function within narrative, the bar can be understood as not only a meeting place, but a *revelatory* space. This revelatory function is allied to the role of the bar as a space in which the codifying rules of everyday, rational language are undermined; that is, a space where people talk both excessively and, often, inappropriately. While Stallybrass and White argue that this is due to the inherently carnivalesque nature of a space which has historically functioned outside of the ideologically closed spaces of workplace and home, I would argue that the expressive and distorted forms that language acquires in the bar (a phenomenon which, of course, increases with the amount of time spent in the bar) cannot be divorced from the specific fact of drunkenness. The bar, in this understanding, is a spatial and temporal unit which has a degree of cognitive and linguistic distortion built into itself *a priori* – it is a space in which people get drunk. This alone can account for much of the importance of the bar as a narrative space – or, more properly, chronotope – in literary fiction. While other aspects of the bar as chronotope will emerge in the following chapters, it is primarily the role of linguistic excess and distortion which are will be of importance in my current reading of *Ulysses*.

Previous discussions of ‘Cyclops’ have highlighted the distrust veering towards naked aggression directed towards Bloom which centre around the two signifiers of his alienation from the mainstream of male society in Dublin: his Jewishness and his sobriety.⁴⁵ While Bloom’s racial outsideness is alluded to with varying degrees of subtlety, his refusal to engage in the buying of rounds is seen, by both the narrator and many of the drinkers at Barney Kiernan’s, as open to explicit ridicule and hostility. The buying of rounds appears in ‘Cyclops’ as an equally powerful bar ritual in Dublin at the turn of the century as it does in Jack London’s memoirs of drinking in America during the same period. As Marianna Adler points out, treating was not simply a means of organising the economics of drink consumption, it was ‘a primary symbolic vehicle for the generation and affirmation of the social relations of a community ... *Not* to drink was tantamount to a complete withdrawal from socially meaningful existence’.⁴⁶ As I have argued earlier, this economic practice was implicated in a range of complex and problematical relations between the bar as an autonomous social and economic space and the dominant

⁴⁵ See Brooker, ‘Could a Swim Duck’, p. 116

⁴⁶ Marianna Adler, ‘From Symbolic Exchange to Commodity Consumption: Anthropological Notes on Drinking as a Symbolic Practice’, in Barrows and Room, *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History*, pp. 376 - 398 (p. 381)

economic and social relations of the world beyond its doors. Whereas in the American saloon this alternative socialisation was articulated primarily around class and gender, in Joyce's Dublin the question of nationhood and cultural identity becomes a pivotal element of the pub society.

Both Mark Osteen and Joe Brooker discuss 'Cyclops' in terms of the gift exchange economy of drinking culture. In the Homeric original, Odysseus – unlike Bloom – takes care to bring a gift of wine to the Cyclops' cave; although he in fact manipulates the convention of the drink offering in order to make good his escape. As Osteen points out, in the Homeric tale of the Cyclops, both the frame narrative and the tale itself revolve around the reciprocal exchange of gifts; the tale is told by Odysseus to the Phaeacians in return for the gift of food and drink that they have provided him.⁴⁷ Bloom, like Odysseus at Phaeacia, does not bring drink to the party; unlike Odysseus, however, neither does he provide an alternative reciprocal gift in the form of a narrative. In fact, he refuses to engage on any level with the economics of gift exchange at work in the bar. His only contribution to the conversations that take place are inept and humourless attempts at rationalising explanations of events and phenomena. Again, this goes against the grain of the verbal economy of the barroom in which language and verbal intercourse function almost as much in a performative manner as in an explicatory one. Of Bloom's verbal *faux pas*, it is his observations on drink and temperance which excite, in the nameless narrator, one of his most virulent outbursts:

So then the Citizen start talking about the Irish language ... and Bloom putting in his old goo with his twopenny stump that he cadged off Joe and talking about the Gaelic league and the antitreating league and drink, the curse of Ireland. Antitreating is about the size of it. Gob, he'd let you pour all manner of drink down his throat till the Lord would call him before you'd ever see the froth of his pint. And one night I went in with a fellow into one of their musical evenings ... a lot of colleen bawns going about with temperance beverages and selling medals and oranges and lemonade and a few dry old buns, gob, flahoolagh entertainment, don't be talking. Ireland sober is Ireland free. (U, p.309)

⁴⁷ Mark Osteen, *The Economy of Ulysses: Making Both Ends Meet* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 251.

In the midst of a drunken debate on the problems of nationalism and identity, Bloom compounds his perceived outsideness by raising the issue of temperance. Implicit in the suggestion that drink is the curse of Ireland, is the accusation that the drinkers gathered around the Citizen are part of the problem, not the solution. In suggesting that actions (in the form of temperance) speak louder than all the words the angry barrooms of Ireland could muster, Bloom throws down an aggressive moderationist gauntlet to the Citizen and his drinking partners.

‘Ireland sober, Ireland free’, or variations on that slogan, is a concept at the heart of the difficult relationship between the Irish temperance movement and nationalist aspirations. For such a significant phrase, its provenance is uncertain. Ascribed variously to Father Mathew in the 1840s⁴⁸ and to the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance in the 1880s,⁴⁹ it encapsulates the fundamental concept through which the conflation of temperance and nationalism was achieved: the idea that drink acted as the social arm of British colonialism. In many ways, the relationship between temperance and nationalism forms the backdrop to the entire ‘Cyclops’ episode. Throughout the chapter, the economics and politics of drink are juxtaposed with a mock-parliamentary debate on political, economic, and cultural problems of Irish identity and independence. To this extent, the bar in ‘Cyclops’ functions chronotopically as a carnivalesque parliament – that is, not simply a place where politics are discussed in ‘unparliamentary’ language, but a place where the high functions of the legislature are brought down to the spit and sawdust of the barroom. As I have argued previously, drinking places have a long historical association with both political debate and political organisation. In reflecting the important function of political debate within bar discourse in 1904 Dublin, Joyce is able to use a pub as the setting through which the politics of identity and the politics of a specific, and culturally privileged, drinking culture are conflated.

As Joe Brooker points out, ‘Cyclops’ sets up a problematical dialectic between drinking as an engagement with a traditional set of social relations within male Irish culture and the temperance view of drinking as ‘the curse of Ireland’ (U, p.309). As in Britain and America, the temperance movement in Ireland began as an

⁴⁸ George Bretherton, ‘Against the Flowing Tide: Whiskey and Temperance in the Making of Modern Ireland’, in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room eds., *Drinking: Behaviour and Belief in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 147-164 (p. 159)

⁴⁹ Malcolm, p. 318.

anti-spirits movement among the mercantile social elite, initially dominated by Quakers in the South and by Presbyterians in the North. In Ireland where industrialisation was less advanced and the most pressing social issues revolved around the welfare of the peasantry and the problems of colonisation, it was not solely, or even primarily, class politics that were articulated in the drink question, but the politics of religious and national identities. While in Britain and America the complex class politics of temperance meant that it could be seen both as an attack on working class culture and as a means of proletarian emancipation, Irish temperance would be transformed from a signifier of the moral authority of the Protestant Ascendancy to a strategic sphere of cultural praxis which could be harnessed to the cause of national liberation.

While Brian Harrison argued that in England teetotalism marked ‘a phase in the secularisation of the conversion experience’,⁵⁰ In Ireland teetotalism marked a reawakening of religious feeling following on the trail of Father Theobald Mathew’s phenomenal temperance crusade of the late 1830s.⁵¹ Father Mathew was a Capuchin friar who, ironically, had been expelled from the Maynooth seminary for drunkenness in 1808. In 1838, he joined the fledgling Cork Total Abstinence Movement. Within two months he had been responsible for over a thousand people taking the abstinence pledge, within a year the figure reached 9,000, and by August 1839 signatories to the pledge were increasing by over 4,000 a week.⁵² Total figures for numbers who took the pledge by 1841 range between 4 and 6 million, although these figures are notoriously unreliable.⁵³ What is clear is that, in the years between 1838 and 1841, Father Mathew spearheaded an enormous mass movement, albeit one that relied almost as much on superstitious beliefs in the thaumaturgical powers of Father Mathew himself as it did on a desire for national sobriety.

The enormous popular success of the Matthewite temperance crusade meant, inevitably, that it became the focus for a broader range of social and political

⁵⁰ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 130.

⁵¹ Bretherton, suggests that ‘what has been called the devotional revolution, the process by which the fabric and organization of the church were reordered so as to relate more closely with its parishioners, can be traced back to the Matthewite movement.’ (Bretherton, p. 161).

⁵² Malcolm, pp. 111-114.

⁵³ Colm Kerrigan, in *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement 1838-1849* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992), p. 82, points out that this would mean over ten thousand people taking the pledge each day for the year 1840-1841. Although these numbers were not unheard of during Mathew’s visits to Waterford in 1839 and Dublin in March 1840, Kerrigan suggests that such consistent signing was unlikely.

concerns. The temperance crusade created, albeit in a relatively haphazard manner, a network of new social structures; organising permanent temperance bands to play at the mass parades and opening free reading rooms as alternatives to pubs. It was through what could be described as an entryist policy towards temperance bands, parades and reading rooms, and a less than entirely convincing adoption of the teetotal pledge, that Daniel O'Connell was able to harness the power of the temperance movement and hitch it to his Repeal campaign.⁵⁴ By 1840, Repeal literature regularly appeared in temperance reading rooms and temperance bands regularly played at O'Connell's monster meetings. This near seamless transference of the momentum of the temperance crusade into the Repeal movement sheds some light on Stephen Dedalus' imagined vision of O'Connell's meetings as representing the power the spoken word held over the pre-literate Ireland of the nineteenth century:

Gone with the wind. Hosts of Mullaghmast and Tara of the kings. Miles of ears of porches. The tribune's words howled and scattered to the four winds. A people sheltered within his voice. Dead noise. Akasic records of all that anywhere wherever was. (U, p.144)

Behind the figure of O'Connell and his mass displays of informed political engagement stands that of Father Mathew and the combination of mass religious zeal and personality politics that his temperance crusade represented.

Colm Kerrigan suggests that 'Father Mathew may not have banished the idea that temperance was associated with Protestantism but, by engaging such a large part of the population in the crusade, made it an acceptable concern for Catholics.'⁵⁵ Radical Catholic zeal, total abstinence, and undisguised nationalism would later come together in the Pioneer Total Abstinence movement, created by the Jesuit James Cullen in 1901. Cullen saw temperance and the rigorous observation of the dictates of Catholic piety as the only means to the moral regeneration needed to justify and facilitate an independent Ireland. In this, he enthusiastically rearticulated the notion

⁵⁴ Despite claiming 'It is temperance that will give us the repeal', O'Connell privately blamed teetotalism for ruining his sons brewing business in 1840. He withdrew his pledge on medical grounds in 1843. See Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p.22, Malcolm, pp. 127-129, and Kerrigan, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Kerrigan, p. 180.

than drunkenness was at the forefront of Irish colonial servility. The Gaelic Athletics Association, founded by Michael Cusack – supposedly the model for Joyce’s ‘Citizen’ – in 1884, would itself later become associated with the temperance movement and particularly Father Cullen’s Pioneers. Drink was eventually banned from GAA meetings and the organisation even refused to accept the sponsorship of publicans.⁵⁶ Where the promotion of rational recreation was seen in Britain in primarily class terms, in the Ireland it became an issue articulated more specifically around nationhood and cultural identity. For the GAA sport was imbued with political and cultural meaning that far outweighed its function as a healthy pastime. However, it can be seen as a logical progression to move from the engagement in sport as a culturally powerful signifying practice to the promotion of that sport as an active challenge to what is perceived as the cultural and economic self-destructiveness of traditionally drink-centred social formations.⁵⁷

Given this political history, it would appear that Joyce’s conflation of Bloom’s moderate approach to drinking and his pragmatic but engaged approach to politics (Martin Cunningham surprisingly claims at one point that Bloom gave Arthur Griffith the idea of proposing the withdrawal of MPs from parliament and support for a dual monarchy) is to be set advantageously against the dropsical patriotism of the Citizen and his clique. Bloom is not only speaking in line with a tradition in liberationary politics going back at least to the 1840s, but one which has shown itself to be effective in shoring up nationalist projects from Daniel O’Connell’s monster meetings to the GAA and Father Cullen’s Pioneers. However, while a reading of Bloom as the voice of reason has tended to be the accepted critical interpretation of Cyclops, Emer Nolan makes a persuasive case for looking again at this episode in order to reassess whether the Citizen – for all his verbal and political excessiveness – is simply to be seen as a negatively grotesque foil to Bloom’s politically expedient moderation.

Taken to represent the monocular vision of the Cyclops, the Citizen is, according to critics, alternately ‘clamorous and fulminant’, ‘vituperative’, or

⁵⁶ Malcolm, p. 318. Cusack, whose propensity for drinking the Citizen is taken to reflect, was ousted from the secretaryship of the GAA in 1886, long before Cullen had created the Pioneers and the GAA moved towards temperance.

⁵⁷ Not only was there a tradition of temperance leaders becoming associated with nationalist causes, but equally the adoption and promotion of temperance among the more zealous of nationalist leaders in Ireland has a long tradition. John Blake Dillon, leading Young Irelander, enthusiastically supported Father Mathew while Patrick Pearse, leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, was a dedicated teetotaller.

'arrogant, cruel and stupid.'⁵⁸ His more obnoxious xenophobic and anti-Semitic outbursts are cited as evidence that he and his drinking partners represent nothing more than the extremist and impotent face of Irish nationalism. Undoubtedly, these outbursts illustrate the danger of promoting myths of national identity based on ideas of exclusivity, mythic authenticity, and insularity. However, while acknowledging that Joyce uses the Citizen to problematise areas of contemporary nationalist sentiment, Nolan also suggests that to adopt a monocular view of the Citizen is in itself to allow a desire for stereotypes to colour the reading of a complex piece of writing. The Citizen, Nolan suggests, is too easily read as nothing more than a two-dimensional personification of the Irishman as drunkard / terrorist / primitive. 'It seems strange,' she argues, 'to conclude that Joyce's massive creative effort in 'Cyclops' should ultimately be read as proposing the idea of the barbarism of the Irish, the hoariest stereotype in all of Irish colonial history, and one which he very frequently publicly attacked.'⁵⁹

Nolan's point is that the excessive language of the Citizen is fundamentally parodic, and that as such it is able to undermine both its own monologic narrowness and also the self-satisfying and quietist tendencies in Bloom's world view. For example, Bloom's much vaunted observation that love is 'the opposite of hatred' (U, p.331), is seen by Nolan to be successfully called to account for its platitudinous simplicity by the Citizen some moments later when he questions the meaning of the words 'God is love' when they were pasted around the mouths of Oliver Cromwell's cannons at the sacking of Drogheda. Equally, while Bloom is politically allied to Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein, which strived for an equal monarchy with Britain at the head of a maintained empire, it is the Citizen who is prepared to associate the conditions of the Irish with those of colonised people across the world. Nolan, indeed, points out that a number of the more reasonable assertions which lie behind the Citizen's verbose barracking tally with opinions expressed by Joyce in his critical essays.⁶⁰ Contained in the flood of verbal outbursts which pour from the Citizen's

⁵⁸ Gilbert, p. 235; Budgen, p. 158; Harry Blamires, *The New Bloomsday Book: A Guide Through Ulysses*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 240.

⁵⁹ Nolan, p. 104.

⁶⁰ Compare Joyce's complaint that England has not paid 'the moral debt ... to Ireland for not having reforested this pestiferous swamp' ('Home Rule Comes of Age', *Critical Writings*, p. 195) and his anger at 'the depopulation, more unique than rare in a civilized country, which was and still is the bitter fruit of misgovernment' ('The Home Rule Comet', *Critical Writings*, p. 212) with the Citizen: 'Where are our missing twenty millions of Irish should be here today instead of four ... And the beds of

mouth, therefore, are the destabilising combinations of laughter and abuse, conviction and absurdity which serve to undermine not necessarily the substance of the political opinions that are expressed by both the Citizen and Bloom, but the ossifying effect of allowing such ideas to remain unchallenged either through quasi-apathetic quietism or a through an extremist fetishisation of a specific political programme.

Richard Ellmann has argued that the perception of Joyce as apparently indifferent towards politics is the result of a misunderstanding of his technical approach to politics within his fiction. Ellmann suggests that Joyce avoids passing explicit political judgement on his characters but obliquely repudiates the simplest assessment of them. The Citizen may exist to prove that 'if British tyranny was brutally materialistic, so was Irish fanaticism',⁶¹ but that does not necessarily allow the reader to then disbar everything he says. *Ulysses*, Ellmann suggests was, politically, 'Joyce's Trojan horse ... a comedy, but with teeth and claws.'⁶² A 'comedy with teeth and claws' could, of course, be another term for the carnivalesque. As the most grotesque figure in this most grotesque chapter, the Citizen should perhaps be understood not so much as the personification of an irreparably unacceptable personal and political world view, but as a tropical figure through whom numerous otherwise unproblematised discursive strategies are undermined and called to account: the political bar conversation, the anger of a subaltern colonial, the platitudinous view of love as simply that which is not horrible. By using the vituperative vocality of the Citizen to break up the political homogeneity of both his own and Bloom's discourse, Joyce, arguably, creates a space in which new political positions can, and should, be imagined.

Central to this narrative strategy is the fact that the action is housed in a carnival setting. Joyce can represent this multiplicity of verbal modes of expression within a parodic framework precisely because the setting of that framework is a bar. Here again, the bar functions as a literary space which not just facilitates, but to an extent is semantically constructed by verbal excess and the juxtaposition of a diverse range of voices. Although within its own diegetic parameters, the debate between the Citizen and the other drinkers is politically ineffectual and impotent, as a literary event it allows Joyce to use laughter to puncture the pretensions of the barroom bore

the Barrow and Shannon they won't deepen with millions of acres of marsh and bog to make us all die of consumption.' (U, pp.324 -325)

⁶¹ Ellmann, *Consciousness*, p. 80

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 79.

and parliamentary overlord simultaneously. The question of staging is important. In presenting events with no authorial guidance as to the axiological hierarchy of the actors or their utterances 'Cyclops' turns what Bakhtin identified as Dostoevsky's polyphonic technique into an exercise in ironic atonality. Not only are all the diegetic voices given an equal weighting, but all of them are subject to irony – as is very the act of narration.

To sum up the argument so far then, not only are Joyce's representations of drink and drinking 'internally stratified' as it were, each articulating a different set of social and symbolic associations, but Joyce's use of the drinking space and the rituals of drink provide him with a technical means through which to ambivalently insert the text into the political discourse of colonial Ireland. The bar becomes a space in which the relationships between language and communication can be problematised precisely because the bar is a space in which the everyday use of verbal and communicative language is problematised – both through the rituals of bar conversation and the identifiably nonrational tendencies of the drunken exchange. The Bakhtinian carnivalesque functions here in a manner akin to the profane illumination of Benjamin's intoxication. In both cases the shock of intoxication serves to clear away complacent, ideologically enclosed structures of truth and clears the conceptual ground for productive, if not for Joyce revolutionary, forms of thought and action.

The use of the drunken exchange and the language of intoxication as a means to effect a 'continual competition between rigid design and riotous exuberance,'⁶³ characterises Joyce's parodic undermining of simplistic political discourse in 'Cyclops'. However, these same techniques become the essential grounding of Joyce's concerted attempt to position himself at the vanguard of literary modernism in 'Oxen of the Sun' episode. Here, Joyce's brazen depiction of the modernist culmination of the entire evolution of the canonical Western literary tradition is, in effect, presented as a chaotic farrago of drunken verbal excess. In other words, in the 'Oxen of the Sun', Joyce harnesses the energies of intoxication for a revolution of the word.

⁶³ Osteen, p. 274

'Oxen of the Sun': Drink and the birth of the new

In 'The Oxen of the Sun' the figurative relationship between intoxication and displaced fertility in the form of 'literary paternity' becomes a foundational narrative trope. Throughout 'Oxen of the Sun', Joyce juxtaposes three processes: the increasing drunkenness of the medical students downstairs at the maternity hospital; the birth of Mrs Purefoy's child upstairs; and the creation at the textual level of a new mode of literary discourse. Throughout *Ulysses*, Joyce constructs a series of complex symbolic relationships between drink and fertility. The seminal significance of liquids is not limited to alcoholic ones alone; as Harry Blamires points out, a connection is established right at the start of the book between making tea, passing water, fertility, and creativity.⁶⁴ This series of associations and allusions continues through to the 'Ithaca' episode in which Stephen and Bloom share cocoa and then simultaneously micturate in Bloom's back garden while contemplating the universe. However between these two representations of sober drinking runs a constant stream of alcoholic consumption, much of which is associated with literary creativity in one form or another.

In itself, the 'Oxen of the Sun' chapter can be seen as an illustration of the seemingly paradoxical relationships Joyce constructs between drink and fertility throughout *Ulysses*. On the one hand, Joyce made it clear that the Homeric parallel of the slaying of the sacred oxen on the island of Trinicaria was intended to be reflected in the symbolic slaying of fertility manifested in the ribald and often crude attacks on procreation expressed by the increasingly drunken medical students at the National Maternity Hospital.⁶⁵ This can be taken to mean that the drunkenness of the students at the hospital is in itself to be regarded as a crime against fertility, one which (as with so many perceived wrongdoings in *Ulysses*) is to be set against the moderate example of Leopold Bloom who both maintains a respectful concern for the suffering of Mrs Purefoy and carefully avoids overindulging in the drinking that is taking place. This reading of the role of drinking in 'Oxen of the Sun' fails, however, to acknowledge the fact that the final, cumulative explosion of textuality at the end of the chapter - the textual birth, as it were, at the end of the gestative process which the

⁶⁴ Blamires, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Budgen, p. 220.

rest of the chapter represents - is inextricably bound up with drink and drunkenness; it is, indeed, unthinkable without drink.

'Fermented drink,' Joyce once said, 'must have had a sexual origin.'⁶⁶ Alcoholic drinks are, throughout *Ulysses*, recognised for their aphrodisiac qualities. Blazes Boylan, for example, brings to his assignation with Molly Bloom some peaches and a bottle of port – the port clearly being associated, at least in Blazes Boylan's mind, with Molly Bloom's exotic Iberian background (U, pp.226, 233, 668). While drink provokes the desire, however, it also takes away the performance.⁶⁷ In *Ulysses*, failure of sexual congress due to over drinking only really occurs at Bella Cohen's brothel and even there, it is more a failure to even initiate the process than to complete it. Representations of actual drunken impotence in *Ulysses* are usually codified through images of creative and social paralysis and stagnation. Despite its lack of explicit representation, however, frustrated coition is the invisible, unarticulated signified of multiple images of failure and infertility which appear throughout the book, from disappointed bridges to dead children.

Drink oscillates between images of morbidity and fecundity throughout *Ulysses*. In 'Calypso', Bloom's first horrified vision of a desiccated humanity, Palestine as 'the grey sunken cunt of the world', is intertwined with his seeing 'a bent hag ... clutching a noggin bottle by the neck.' (U, p.63) On the way to Paddy Dignam's funeral in 'Hades', the mourners pass Dunphy's pub. Bloom assumes that they will 'pull up here on the way back to drink his health. Pass round the consolation. Elixir of life.' (U, p.100) This is the same Paddy Dignam whose death is clearly associated with 'Too much John Barleycorn.' (U, p.97)⁶⁸ In 'Sirens', on the other hand, a beer pump becomes the object of ersatz sexual display: 'Fro, to: to, fro: over the polished knob (she knows his eyes, my eyes, her eyes) her thumb and finger passed in pity: passed, repassed and, gently touching, then slid so smoothly,

⁶⁶ Budgen, p. 108.

⁶⁷ It is perhaps worth noting here the relationship between drink and perverted fertility in *Macbeth*. There, as in *Ulysses*, intoxicating liquors are juxtaposed with maternal milk as the fluids of alternate creativities, the synthetic (human creativity in the world of action) and the natural (procreation). The murder of Duncan is, indeed, figured as a kind of intoxicated parricide. The image from *Hamlet* of drinking in the Danish court as a signifier of a vicious and illegitimate authority is alluded to in 'Cyclops' when John Wyse says of the caning on the breech (a form of corporal punishment in the British navy), 'Tis a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance' (U, p.327).

⁶⁸ Paddy Dignam's red alcoholic face ('Blazing face: redhot' [U, p.97]) creates a direct Homeric parallel between him and Elpenor, who dies through falling from the roof of Circe's house when drunk; El-pen-or, according to one etymology, meaning 'the blazing-face' (Gilbert, p. 150).

slowly down, a cool firm white enamel baton protruding through their sliding ring.’ (U, p.285)

Joyce’s remark about the relationship between fermented drink and sexuality was made in reference to what, according to Budgen’s account of their conversation, appear to be rituals such as the kava ceremony of various Melanesian and Polynesian religious cultures in which the women of a tribe chew an intoxicating root before spitting it into a receptacle from which the men then drink.⁶⁹ Joyce claimed that it was with the relationship between fermentation and the specifically female process of mastication in mind that he had Molly Bloom pass the chewed seedcake to Leopold when they kissed on Howth.⁷⁰ The seedcake is, in itself, clearly symbolic of fertility. The link, therefore, between this image and alcohol could be seen as tangential to the fundamental symbolic structure of this image if it were not for the environment which gives rise to Bloom’s memory of it. Drinking a glass of wine in Davy Byrne’s ‘moral pub’ (U, p.171), Bloom muses:

Glowing wine on his palate lingered swallowed. Crushing in the winepress grapes of Burgundy. Sun’s heat it is. Seems to a secret touch telling me memory. Touched his sense moistened remembered. Hidden under wild ferns on Howth ... Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet and sour with spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. (U, p.175-176)

It is during one of Bloom’s rare moments of mild intoxication that his mind returns to the seminal moment of his and Molly’s sexual relationship. In other words, it is in intoxication that Bloom is liberated, albeit momentarily, from his present sense of social and sexual impotence.

Contrasting this association in Bloom’s mind with those created by the images of Guinness barrels or of an old woman clutching a drinks bottle reveals something of

⁶⁹ See Richard Rudgley, *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), pp. 132-5. In the case of kava, the chewing process does not instigate fermentation but is carried out because the psychoactive properties of the root are water soluble.

⁷⁰ The full quotation from Budgen is “‘Fermented drink must have had sexual origin,’” said Joyce to me one day. “In a woman’s mouth, probably. I have made Bloom eat Molly’s chewed seed cake.” (Budgen, p. 108)

Bloom's hierarchical view of alcohol. Bloom drinks, and praises the healthful influence of, red wine; something that associates him not only with the Catholic church but, equally, the upper class Protestant ascendancy; wine is the drink of both the sacramental and the privileged.⁷¹ Hence Bloom's drink order at the end of 'Oxen of the Sun' is transcribed, in a phrase which manages to place him in both categories, as 'Rome booze for the Bloom toff' (U, p.423).⁷² Wine, which had been a popular and affordable drink in the seventeenth century, came to be more exclusively the drink of the upper classes from the mid-eighteenth century when tariffs on wine importation began to increase as a result of British wars with France. The class status of wine is reflected in Bloom's thoughts when, on seeing Sir Frederick Falkiner entering the freemason's hall, he imagines Falkiner would 'turn his nose up at that stuff I drank. Vintage wine for them, the year marked on a dusty bottle.' (U, p.182) One of the reasons the early anti-spirits movement in Ireland was held in such mistrust was that it was felt that it allowed for the continuing consumption of wine by those who could afford it while outlawing whiskey – the one form of alcohol available to those at the bottom of the economic scale.

The association of drink and sex contained in Bloom's memory of the kiss on Howth is faintly echoed in the environmental association of temperance and masturbation in the 'Nausicaa' chapter. Temperance invades 'Nausicaa' from two directions. Firstly, Gerty MacDowell plays out in her imagination the typical role of the daughter in late nineteenth and early twentieth century temperance imagery: that of the selfless, angelic victim of a drunken father.⁷³ Secondly an aural background to the entire voyeuristic adventure is provided by the sound of hymns emerging from a men's temperance retreat taking place at a nearby church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The sounds of the litany from this service are interspersed with the ongoing

⁷¹ The association of wine with privilege here is culturally specific. Wine drinking will be seen to take on a very different semantic meaning in the work of Hemingway.

⁷² Red wine also links Bloom into a more continental set of drinking patterns, just as absinthe does for Stephen. This similarity is brought out in 'Ithaca' when we are told 'Both preferred a continental to an insular manner of life' (U, p.587). A tenuous allusion to the link between wine and European emigration could possibly be extracted from the name of the favourite horse at the Ascot Gold Cup in *Ulysses*: Zinfandel (U, p.173). Zinfandel is a species of grape that was, at the time, believed to have been introduced to America by the 'father of Californian viticulture' Agoston Haraszthy de Mokesa (Tim Unwin, *Wine and the Vine* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 303); who, like Bloom's father, was Hungarian. However, given Joyce's lack of interest in the more esoteric cultures based around wine, it is possible that this connection is entirely coincidental.

⁷³ Gerty MacDowell refers to herself as a 'ministering angel' (U, p.353) just as Joe Morgan in *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* refers to his daughter as 'more like a guardian angel than a child' fifty years earlier. (Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, p. 73). The drinking of her father also provides Gerty MacDowell with a Homeric parallel to Nausicaa, whose father Alcinous appreciated his wine.

pseudo-sexual encounter between Bloom and Gerty MacDowell. That Gerty plays with the idea of herself as Virgin Mary highlights that other fundamental doctrine of displaced fertility in Catholic theology: the immaculate conception. Just as sexuality of the Virgin is displaced, so is the sexual intercourse of Gerty MacDowell and Leopold Bloom; so also, by extension, is the social intercourse of the attendees at the temperance retreat. As the story 'Grace' in *Dubliners* shows, the temperance retreat is often at most a temporary plunge into the cold bath of sober society; a temporally finite replacement of the animated intercourse of the bar for the mediated and unitary discourse of the mass, and a set of relational structures which, in this case (a retreat dedicated to the Virgin Mary), finds its contemplative focus in an idealised image of unattainable, and therefore always ersatz, sexual purity.

These images of displaced, distorted, enhanced and synthetic fecundity are fused with the notion of literary production and creativity in the 'Oxen of the Sun' where the procreation of the body is allied to the recreation of language. Here, in an inversion of the Johannine formula, the flesh is made the Word, and the Word, as Mrs Purefoy's baby is born in an upper room, is: 'Burke's!' (U, p.419). Whether assessed as a representation of apocalyptic chaos⁷⁴ or as the first articulations of a new literary form,⁷⁵ the last pages of 'Oxen of the Sun' exemplify both Joyce's technique of juxtaposing and conflating the language and rituals of drink with the production of literature, and of allying that (masculine) literary process with the (feminine) somatic processes of childbirth.

Joyce achieves this displacement of fertility through intoxication in two ways. One is the manipulation of intoxication as a narrative mode, the second is the use of the drinking place as a gestative space – one which creates its own unique discursive

⁷⁴ As, for example, by James H. Maddox Jr., in *Joyce's Ulysses and the Assault upon Character* (Hassocks; Harvester, 1978), p. 180-181. Maddox argues that Joyce employs a model of history based Giambattista Vico's *La Scienza Nuova* in which history, after passing through its third 'age of men' would fall back into chaos before returning to an 'age of gods'. This argument can be justified to an extent by reference to Vico's idea that the formation of human consciousness was rooted in the fear of loud noise, specifically thunder. While Stephen describes God as 'a shout in the street' (U, p.40), the shouts of the students as they journey towards Burke's can be read as a more literal expression of both Stephen's definition of God and the idea of *vox populi, vox dei* that lies, with all its political and cultural connotations (particularly in terms of the appropriate objects of artistic representation), behind it. This thunder / noise in the street version of God is further intensified in the voice of Alexander J Dowie at the very end of the chapter.

⁷⁵ See Mark Gaipa, 'Culture, Anarchy, and the Politics of Modernist Style in Joyce's 'Oxen of the Sun'', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 195-217. Gaipa argues that Joyce follows closely the contemporary idea that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Therefore the final pages represent the recapitulation, endpoint and leading edge of the cultural evolution of English literary language.

and linguistic forms. In his poem 'The Holy Office', Joyce stated that one of his literary intentions was that of 'Bringing to tavern and to brothel / The mind of witty Aristotle'.⁷⁶ With reference to *Ulysses* this formulation could also be inverted. Beginning with 'Sirens', Joyce, in bringing literature to the pub, brings the pub into literature. By bringing the pub into literature, Joyce creates a reciprocal relationship between the events narrated in that social space and the form which that narration takes. This does not simply mean, as is most clearly seen in 'Sirens', that the narrative mode echoes the diegetic action (in the case of 'Sirens' the music of the piano in the Ormond Bar dominating the narrative technique), but that the narrative form becomes profoundly and reciprocally implicated in the complex of social and economic relations, verbal manifestations, and phenomenological effects of drink and drunkenness.

Mark Osteen suggests that, from 'Cyclops' onwards, the economic rituals of gift exchange and extravagant expenditure that are witnessed in Barney Kiernan's are taken on by Joyce as a mode of literary production: 'Joyce's defiance of organic unity and the economic relations of words to meaning violates that Jamesian "sublime economy" of realism and replaces it with one of splendid waste.'⁷⁷ In *Ulysses* the drunken conversation is a form of communication in which meaning becomes subservient to expression; in which the linguistic hierarchy of signifier and signified is inverted. In itself, this element of drunken conversation provides both metaphor and metonymy for that aspect of Joyce's experimentally modernist technique which Colin McCabe identifies as the refusal to invite and satisfy desire through the illusory construction of a transcendental signified, a putative real, beyond the textuality of the narrative.⁷⁸ One of the methods by which Joyce privileges the signifier in 'Sirens', 'Cyclops' and 'Oxen of the Sun' is to allow the performance elements of drunken conversation to merge with the framing narration, while also using the cognitive obfuscations of the drunken condition as a vehicle which introduces the linguistic and narrative obfuscations through which the language itself maintains an unfinalised and polysemic potential. The semantically unmoored materiality of the written language, in other words, is facilitated by an assumed cognitive dissonance created in relation to

⁷⁶ 'The Holy Office', in *Critical Writings*, p. 149. Compare this to Addison's similar formulation of his own undertaking quoted in Chapter One.

⁷⁷ Osteen, p. 273.

⁷⁸ Colin McCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 104-132.

spoken language by alcohol. Edmund Wilson, in his 1922 review of *Ulysses*, emphasised the phenomenological, rather than verbal, mimesis of 'Oxen of the Sun' stating his opinion that 'if it be urged that Joyce's gift for fantasy is attested by the superb drunken scene, I reply that this scene is successful not because it is reckless nonsense but because it is an accurate record of drunken states of mind.'⁷⁹

Here, intoxication becomes the mode by which the carnivalesque is introduced into the text, in the sense that it is through the mimetic representation of drunken perception and language that instrumental and communicative discourse is dismembered, ambiguity is woven into the speech act, discontinuous discourses are intertwined, and the somatic – in the form of the physical manifestations of the drunken; slurs, staggers, belches and vomiting – is inscribed in the textual. Despite, however, Joyce's structural assertion that the final pages of 'Oxen of the Sun' are unprecedented in the history of literature (coming as they do at the end of his parodic genealogy), there is a direct antecedent to this passage in the work, not entirely surprisingly, of François Rabelais, specifically 'The Drunkard's Conversation' in Book One of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.⁸⁰ A comparison of two excerpts will illustrate this:

-This is how Bacchus conquered India. - This is the science that won Melinda. - A little rain allays a great wind. Long gulps break the thunder. - If my tool pissed urine like this, wouldn't you like to suck it? - I can keep it down. - Page, come here. Let me write myself next in your list. - Throw it down, Will! There's another pot still. - I appear as an appellant against thirst; its an abuse. Page, draw my appeal up in due form.⁸¹

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⁷⁹ Edmund Wilson, review of *Ulysses* for *New Republic*, 1922; in Robert H. Deming, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage, Volume 1: 1902-1907* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 230. Frank Budgen refers to this passage as the 'no style at all slang of half-drunken human utterance' (Budgen, p. 224). Of course, this section one of the most stylised in the novel.

⁸⁰ Rabelais is only mentioned once by name in *Ulysses*, when Molly Bloom remembers a book her husband bought her by 'Master François somebody' (U, p.672). However, the shadow of Rabelais falls behind much of *Ulysses* - the scatology, the extended lists, the 'sacred pint' – which, in a sense, was the goal of Pantagruel's quest. Joyce himself considered that Jonathan Swift and François Rabelais shared 'the place of the best satire in the world' (*Critical Writings*, p. 170).

⁸¹ François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. J. M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p. 50.

My tippie. *Merci*. Here's to us. How's that? Leg before wicket. Don't stain my brandnew sitinems. Give's a shake of pepper, you there. Catch aholt. Carraway seed to carry away. Twig? Shrieks of silence. Every cove to his gentry mort. Venus Pandemos. *Les petites femmes*. Bold bad girl from the town of Mullingar. Tell her I was axing at her. Hauding Sara by the wame. On the road to Malahide. Me? If she who seduced me had left but the name. What do you want for ninepence? (U, p.422)

In both cases, this ongoing verbal babble continues for over two pages. Fundamentally, the clearest similarity between the two excerpts is the unattributed, disembodied nature of the voices. In both cases, while careful reading could illuminate where some of the voices come from and to whom they refer, the narrative technique essentially leaves the reader in no position of privileged coherence from which to assess the text. To this extent, the reader is forced into a position of equivalent, even denigrated, comprehension to that of the diegetic characters. There is here no surplus of knowledge on the part of the reader; the ironic distance which separates the narrative from the reader is dissolved in the melee of spectacular vocality and ruptured signification that the depiction of drunkenness facilitates. Furthermore, both conversations (if that remains an appropriate term in this instance) place side-by-side erudition, wit, bawdy, cultural allusions and a kind of parodic formality which creates a carnivalesque re-enactment of that other drunken conversation, the symposium. What the carnivalesque verbal exchanges of both Rabelais and Joyce remind us is that, though the metamorphosis may be pronounced, the Dionysus of the symposium is still the same god as the Dionysus of the bacchanalia.

This apparent paradox can be thought of in terms of the Bakhtinian concept of speech genres. For Bakhtin, the speech genres of the workplace or of specific formal modes of linguistic exchange are regulated by possible discursive forms – forms which, in a notably Foucauldian sense, construct the knowledges which they articulate. In other words, what you can say and mean is limited by the discursive environment in which you speak. The drunken conversation, if understood under the sign of Dionysus – that is, as characterised by excess, openness, and the liminal – can incorporate both the symposium and the babble of the bar at last orders; high

philosophy and low bawdy can interact and overlap because they are both part of the larger speech genre of the drunken conversation. Bakhtin incorporates this type of generic discourse under the term 'banquet dialogue';⁸² ascribing its characteristics to its association with communality and the physical fact of consumption. Again, however I would adapt Bakhtin's notion by arguing that the actuality of intoxication is a fundamental principle of this mode of discourse. That is, the verbosity of the symposium and the chaos of the carnival cannot be abstracted from the actuality of being drunk.

The precedent set by Rabelais in this form of drunken speech representation creates something of a kink in the would-be smooth line of ontogenic emergence that the literary styles of this chapter are taken to mirror. However, it could be argued that, as much as Joyce is using the drunken exchange as a means to create a new mode of literature, he also uses the possibilities it affords for the introduction of heteroglossia into the text precisely as a way of problematising *Ulysses*' relationship to the canonical and to the literary 'tradition'.

Mark Gaipa reads the ending of 'Oxen of the Sun' as both a manifesto of Joyce's modernist intent and also a challenge to the unquestioned validity of canonical writing. Joyce, of course, was self-consciously working within a literary tradition; indeed Joyce's erudition, in keeping with his verbal excessiveness, leans towards an almost grotesque encyclopaedism. Where T.S. Eliot, by way of confirming his position at the cusp of 'tradition', provided a glossary of classical allusions at the end of *The Waste Land*, Joyce was happier in the belief that he had 'put in so many enigmas and puzzles that [*Ulysses*] will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant.'⁸³ However, Gaipa suggests that Joyce was equally aware of the role canonical English literature played in the integration of autonomous cultures into the dominant colonial centre, providing a standardising (and, in Bakhtinian terms, monologising) touchstone of written English within which the pluralities of colonial and regional spoken English could be subsumed. Gaipa sees Joyce's apparently stark mimesis of the drunken conversation as an attempt to reintroduce into literature the orality which 'culture', in the Arnoldian sense and

⁸² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 120

⁸³ Quoted in Armstrong 'James Joyce and the Politics of Reading: Power, Belief, and Justice in *Ulysses*' (<http://www.jough.com/joyce/essays/politics.htm>)

exemplified by the written literary tradition, represses.⁸⁴ To this extent 'Oxen of the Sun' is both a modern and postcolonial piece of writing: modern in its positioning of fragmentation within an ordered tradition through which that fragmentation may be comprehended; postcolonial in that it problematises the value of that tradition in terms of the cultural and political functions which it has fulfilled. Furthermore, Declan Kiberd sees the attempt in *Ulysses* to 'unleash a plurality of voices' as revealing Joyce's desire to prevent the Irish struggle to create an identity outside of that created under colonisation from remaining 'frozen in its nationalist stage'.⁸⁵ The freedom afforded by the chaos of the drunken conversation, the 'pandemonium of ejaculations in every form of dialect, jargon, slang, ancient and modern',⁸⁶ provides Joyce with the means by which to articulate the hybrid and fluid nature of Irish identity as he saw it and as he wished to represent it in a literature that would work towards 'forging the uncreated conscience of [the] race.'⁸⁷

Appropriately enough for a piece of writing that combines ideas of rebirth and verbal incomprehension with an insistent sense of authorial omniscience, one of the primary symbolic frameworks employed the final pages of 'Oxen of the Sun' is that of the Pentecost:

And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance ... And they were amazed, and were in doubt, saying to one another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.⁸⁸

The glossolalia of the apostles at Pentecost was not only taken for drunkenness by their contemporaries but was viewed by analogy to drunkenness by such distant luminaries as Erasmus.⁸⁹ The first appearance of the Pentecostal flame in 'Oxen of the Sun' is seen from Bloom's point of view as he drifts off into his own world while still at the Maternity Hospital. The focus of his De Quincey-esque reverie is the red triangle trademark of a bottle of Bass.

⁸⁴ Gaipa, pp. 201-203.

⁸⁵ Kiberd, pp. 337-338.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, p. 268.

⁸⁷ Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 253.

⁸⁸ Acts 2. 12-13.

⁸⁹ See M. A. Screech trans., Michel de Montaigne, *The Collected Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 381.

This oneiric passage combines the pseudo-sacramental and quasi-sexual aspects of alcohol consumption with a modernist investigation into the relationship between the ephemera of daily consumption and high art. While the medical students continue with their ribald debate on the nature of procreation and contraception, Bloom entertains a vision of his daughter Milly as the symbol of youthful fertility:

How serenely does she now arise, a queen among the Pleiades, in the penultimate antelucan hours, shod in sandals of bright gold, coifed with a veil of what do you call it gossamer! It floats, it flows about her starborn flesh and loose it streams emerald, sapphire, mauve and heliotrope, sustained on currents of cold interstellar wind, winding, coiling, simply swirling writhing in the skies a mysterious writing till after myriad metamorphoses of symbol, it blazes, Alpha, a ruby and triangled sign upon the forehead of Taurus. (U, p.411)

Two pages later a more prosaic narrative voice informs us that ‘During the past four minutes or thereabouts [Bloom] had been staring hard at a certain amount of number one Bass bottled by Messrs Bass and Co at Burton-on-Trent’ (U, p.413).

The Bass triangle is both a fertility symbol and the Pentecostal flame. In this respect it represents the conflation which occurs throughout the text of fertility and Christian doctrine and tradition as mediated through the symbolism of drink. The final pages of ‘Oxen of the Sun’ can be read as an extended parody of Christian rebirth and incarnation imagery: the ‘Word’ as ‘Burke’s!’, the glossolalia as a drunken babble, the Pentecostal flame as the Bass triangle. This association of New Testament incarnation and resurrection imagery with drinking is first constructed near the start of the novel when Stephen leaves Sandymount strand at the end of ‘Proteus’, heading for the pub. Here, he echoes Jesus’ penultimate words at the crucifixion: ‘Come. I thirst.’ (U, p.57).⁹⁰ As Jesus’ physical thirst could not be slaked by the vinegar passed to him, so Stephen’s spiritual and artistic thirst will not be slaked through indulging in a day’s drinking. In both images there is the idea of a frustrated

⁹⁰ ‘After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* into his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.’ (John 19: 28-30). The New American Standard and World English Bibles translate vinegar as ‘sour’ and ‘bad’ wine respectively.

slaking of thirst; a false or bad wine. For Stephen, unlike for Joyce, drink is an illusory and impotent medium of creativity. This illustrates the tendency in *Ulysses* for the creative potential of drink and the drunken conversation to be realised at the level of narration, not diegetic action. That is, it is when the author uses the rituals, effects, symbolism and economics of drinking within a narrative production that it accedes to the realm of actual creativity, not when, in and of itself, he gets drunk.⁹¹

John Rocco, in an essay comparing Picasso's use of Bass beer in his synthetic cubist collages with Joyce's in 'Oxen of the Sun', discusses how both artists use the trademark red triangle to problematise the notion of the artistic production in a commodity culture. Picasso, Rocco argues, engages with the problem of art in the age of mechanical reproduction through his hand-drawn reproductions of the Bass label within found-object collages. In recreating the trademark as the work of the artist, Picasso 'takes the bottle of Bass as art and attempts to stick an aura of "tradition" on it with his own handwritten label.'⁹² Joyce, it is suggested, similarly uses the Bass bottle to interrogate assumptions about the nature of the relationship between the everyday commodity and art. In another of the narrative filters through which we are presented with the Bass label Buck Mulligan stops Lenehan from picking up one of the bottles:

He was laying his hand upon a winejar: Malachi saw it and withheld his act, pointing to the stranger and to the scarlet label. Warily, Malachi whispered, preserve a druid silence. His soul is far away. It is as painful perhaps to be awakened from a vision as to be born. Any object, intensely regarded, may be a gate of access to the incorruptible eon of the gods. (U, p.413)

⁹¹ Joyce, however, is recorded as personally associating drink with creativity on a number of occasions. In a letter to Padraic Colum, he wrote 'wine is sunshine, under the figure of wine the creator of the universe could manifest himself. Can you imagine a manifestation under another figure?' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 693 n. 1). According to Ellmann, while drinking white wine with a friend in 1919, Joyce asked 'What does that remind you of?', to which his friend replied 'Orina'. 'Si,' said Joyce laughing 'ma di un 'arciduchessa' ('Yes, but an archduchess's')' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 469). Frank Budgen gives a different version of why Joyce took to calling white wine 'archduchess', claiming it was a pun on the German for ore (Erz) and archduchess (Erzherzogin). In the same conversation, Budgen reports Joyce as saying 'White wine is like electricity.' (Budgen, p. 172). Compare this to Bloom's thoughts in Davy Byrne's: 'Nectar, imagine it drinking electricity: god's food.' (U, p.176)

⁹² John Rocco, 'Drinking *Ulysses*: Joyce, Bass Ale, and the Typography of Cubism', *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Pt. 3 (1996), pp. 339-409, p. 403.

In other words, any object, intensely regarded, may be art; and art may be any object intensely regarded, beer bottles included.

One element of the punning at work in Picasso's representations of Bass beer that Rocco highlights is the pun on the French word *bas*, meaning low, inferior, or decadent. With the shift to synthetic cubism, Rocco argues, 'the *bas* becomes art.'⁹³ What this suggests lies behind the modernist projects of Picasso and Joyce is an attempt to represent the low and the everyday in art by way of redeeming it from its denuded and commodified condition. In this sense, what Erich Kahler identifies as a modernist 'transcendence downward ... the thorough and unrestricted pursuit to the end of the very corporeal'⁹⁴ is pursued not as an isolated and ironic existential project of synthetic transcendence, but as means of both revivifying art *as* art and of squeezing the remnants of the auratic from the long drained vessel of the commodity. *Ulysses* is littered with advertising slogans, newspaper headlines, labels, throwaways, pamphlets, news reports, and beer bottles. To this extent, Joyce's use of the Bass label, the Guinness bottle, and all the other ephemera of alcohol that he depicts can be understood entirely as elements in the construction of *Ulysses* as a manifesto for the representation of everyday life in literature and the subsequent transformation of everyday life through that ennobling process.

However in the image of the Bass triangle as the Pentecostal flame, we also see drink – as intoxication, not simply as the combined ensemble of its own material paraphernalia – functioning as the source of an ironical and synthetic transcendence. In as much as glossolalia both is and is not comprehensible, so drink both is and is not the medium of a new forms of literary expression. Diegetically, the journey from Horne's to Burke's is the culmination of the increasing nonsensicality of the conversation that has taken place between the medical students. It is indeed a spontaneous, farraginous babble; the very opposite of the intricately constructed artwork. However, on the textual level, the episode is both metaphorically and actually a self-consciously modernist experiment in narrative technique and linguistic possibilities. For Stephen Dedalus drink provides a compensatory simulation of creative expression; for James Joyce it provides the key and means to a very real creative expression. The absurd transcendence of the former becomes the material by

⁹³ Rocco, p. 403. This gesture, however, differs substantially from what critics such as Peter Bürger identify as the avant-garde gesture, in which art becomes the *bas*.

⁹⁴ Erich Kahler, *The Tower and the Abyss* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958), p. 154

which the latter transcends the limitations of realist mimesis. The entirely synthetic and highly stylised *mis en abyme* of vocal spontaneity and literary quotations facilitates the ‘persistent exploration of and encounter with language’ that Andreas Huyssen suggests characterises literary modernism.⁹⁵ While the (synthetically and ironically) sacred pint unbinds in Stephen and his friends a stream of anonymous, incoherent and half-formed utterances, it unbinds in *Ulysses* the last ties to a traditional mode of narration, thereby opening the gates to the literary materiality of ‘Circe’, ‘Ithaca’ and ‘Penelope’. While the description by the remnant of a narrator of drink as ‘the milk of madness’(U, p.421) represents drink as a dangerous and unnatural fertility; it nonetheless proves instrumental in producing the text itself.

Wolfgang Iser suggests that ‘Oxen of the Sun’ makes clear the fact that ‘presentability or nonpresentability is not a quality inherent in any observable reality, but has to be imposed on the reality by the observer.’⁹⁶ Which is to suggest that Joyce, as modernist thaumaturge, not only redeems everyday life and experience but self-consciously creates a language which acts as the condition of possibility of its very representation. Just as the sustained interior monologue can be seen as Joyce’s project in achieving this for the first time in the sphere of interior mental life, so his representation of the drunken conversation in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ can be seen as this project realised in the sphere of the verbal. In both cases, the revolution in literary technique required to achieve this serves to lift the novel out of the sphere of bourgeois public discourse from which it emerged – both inwards to the workings of two often dirty minds, and outwards to the drunken edges of rational social intercourse. Equally, this revolutionary technicality typically calls attention to itself as art and artifice. The very preposterousness of dispensing with all frame narration and instead plunging the reader into pure vocality foregrounds the limits and possibilities not of speech, but of writing.

Indeed, not only is writing foregrounded as the medium of literary representation here, but language as communication is figured as a process of endlessly reflexive quotation and signification in which the illusion of a substantial relationship between word and meaning is lost in the performative spectacularity of the drunken speech act. However, while this experimental play threatens to dissolve

⁹⁵ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 53

⁹⁶ Wolfgang Iser, ‘Doing Things in Style: ‘The ‘Oxen of the Sun’’’, in Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Interpretations: James Joyce’s Ulysses* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), pp. 32-41 (p. 34)

entirely the literary text as coherent artefact and medium of truth claims – that is, to throw the baby of literary representation *per se* out with the bathwater of a mendacious ‘realism’ – the almost lost but quietly insistent voice of sober Leopold Bloom pegs both Stephen and the novel as modernist experiment back to a reality that is not entirely disqualified by the linguistic explosion at the end of ‘Oxen of the Sun’. It is Bloom’s concerned and confused surveillance (with the help, of course, of Private Carr’s fist) that finally brings Stephen back down to earth at the end of ‘Circe’. Sober Bloom acts as a kind of guarantor of a possible mundane real with which modernism must negotiate its relationship. His is the voice of a sober, everyday pragmatism that, while existentially unadventurous, points to another possible language of modernity; a language of persistent, indeed indefatigable, level-headedness rather than one of intoxicated resistance and misdirected Dionysian transcendence. While Bloom very nearly disappears in the simulacrum of language and text at the end of ‘Oxen of the Sun’, he never quite goes away entirely.

Bloom’s fortunate emotional equilibrium is perhaps best symbolised by his love for water. In ‘Ithaca’, Bloom, the ‘waterlover’ admires water’s ‘democratic equality ... its unplumbed profundity ... its subsidence after devastation.’ (U, pp.592-593). This hydrophilia is set in stark contrast to Stephen’s hydrophobia. Stephen is described in ‘Ithaca’ as both ‘hating partial contact by immersion or total by submersion in cold water’ and ‘distrusting aquacities of thought and language.’ (U, p.593) Stephen’s hydrophobia is linked to his fear of drowning, which, by extension, can be seen as a rejection of his own baptism.⁹⁷ Also, however, his supplantation of ‘natural’ water with unnatural alcoholic drinks is a gesture towards the aesthetics of intoxication described in the previous chapter. It is both Baudelarian in its rejection of the natural, and Nietzschean in its haughty and would-be Dionysian rejection of a pragmatic Enlightenment rationalism characterised as aquacity of thought and language. It is, however, characteristic of the representation of alcohol in *Ulysses* that while water-loving Bloom may emerge as the hero of the piece, the condition of possibility for his conjuring into literary life is precisely the Dedalian rejection of those ‘aquacities of thought and language’ that had forced the transgressive spheres of inner mind and body to the margins of literary representation.

⁹⁷ See Blamires, p. 6.

Drink, then – like the bottles in comes in – is transformed in *Ulysses* from the all too human into the regenerating stuff of art. Diegetically, the functions of drink range from, at its best, the privileged facilitator of male social intercourse to, at its worst, a compensatory escape mechanism with the potential to be both materially and spiritually destructive. At the level of narration, intoxication becomes an increasingly dominant structural mode of writing. To this extent Joyce differs from both Hemingway and Rhys. In Hemingway's fiction, as will be seen, drink enters the text at a different structural level, dominating the spaces in which events occur and the conversations that take place within those spaces. For Hemingway, however, intoxication remains essentially an object, not a mode, of representation. Jean Rhys, on the other hand, mirrors Joyce's technique of intoxicated narration at the end of *Good Morning, Midnight* while at the same time deconstructing the privileging of intoxication as a properly modernist cognitive standpoint.

The representation of drink in *Ulysses* can be judged in relation to both the image of the drinker and the representation of the drinking place. So far as the idea of the drinker as providing a privileged modern, and always potentially modernist, epistemological standpoint is concerned, Joyce is typically ambivalent. On the one hand this idea is burlesqued by Joyce in his representation of Stephen's adoption of the persona of a drunk bohemian *manqué*. Nonetheless, Joyce puts both images of drink and the carnivalesque structures of drunken cognition at the heart of his literary project as a means of questioning both the proper objects of literary representation and the possible limits of representational form. While Joyce appears finally to reject the idea of the drinker as the modernist hero, he asserts the importance of intoxication as a modernist technique. In other words, Joyce moves on from a modernist gesture of suggestively depicting intoxication to the experimental technique of *writing* intoxication; a technique through which he test the boundaries both of the literary representation of consciousness and the self-conscious literary representation of literature itself.

Joyce employs a similar technique in his depiction of the drinking place and the rituals and discourses of drink housed within it. The gargantuan grotesquery of the 'Cyclops' episode is made possible through the deployment of the drunken anecdote as narrational principle. The layered distantiation this technique produces between reader and author (as it appears on the page, it is, in effect, a 'friend of a friend' tale) combined with the facility for exaggeration and unreliable narration that

it allows, facilitates a representation of pressing political discourse in such a form as to obviate its ossification into right or wrong. That is, Joyce uses the depiction of drink to allow him to ask, but resolutely refuse to answer, critical political and ethical questions. While this could be seen as an avoidance of political responsibility on the part of the author, it equally can be understood as facilitating what Bakhtin might term a carnival inversion, or what Benjamin might have termed a series of dialectical images. That is, the radical ambivalence and instability of ideological standpoint that the depiction of drunken debate and diatribe allows potentially clears the conceptual ground for radically new ways of addressing real political concerns. To this extent, Joyce's depiction of drink can be seen as a radically avant-garde gesture.

Joyce's radical experiments here are built upon the representation of the exclusively masculine culture of public drinking in turn-of-the-century Dublin. What is notable in Joyce is that, for all the radical political implications of his representations of drinking, they remain resolutely entrenched in an exclusively masculine culture of consumption. The degree to which this problematises his association between intoxication and radical literary experimentation will be considered in my discussion of Jean Rhys' fiction. Prior to that, however, I will discuss another writer for whom the rituals of drink, the experience of modernity, and the assertion of masculinity are crucial narrative concerns. What I will suggest, however, is that while Joyce uses drink to plunge deeper into the experience of modernity and the radical representation of it in modernist fiction, Hemingway deploys drink to construct narrative spaces in which modernity is either problematised or controlled through an appeal to mythic notions of pre-modern social exchange. In other words, while Joyce redeems *Gin Lane* by sublating it into the literary text, Hemingway's narratives finally propose a return to the social relations of *Beer Street*.

Chapter 6

Drink, Space and Control: Ernest Hemingway's Early Fiction

In the previous chapter, the representation of drinking in James Joyce's *Ulysses* is seen as facilitating a proliferation of vocality and the experimental deconstruction of linear narrative form. Intoxication comes increasingly to dominate *Ulysses* at the level of narration, facilitating a simultaneous dismemberment and expansion of language that ultimately produces Joyce's climactic and experimental reconception of the possible modes of literary narration at the end of 'Oxen of the Sun'. In essence, then, while Joyce's representation of drinking is notable for its symbolic hierarchisation of alcoholic drinks, and while his representation of drink is both informed by, and to an extent illuminates, the social history of drinking and temperance in Ireland leading up to the writing of *Ulysses*, it is fundamentally as a possible mode of linguistic representation that intoxication functions in the novel. That is to say, it is through the medium of the intoxicated consciousness, and the representation of drinking and drunkenness, that Joyce finds a predicate for numerous crucial elements of his farraginous, self-consciously experimental, encyclopaedic, verbose, and dangerously cloacal epic.

The first comment that can be made about Ernest Hemingway's fiction is that it corresponds to none of the prior adjectives. Inasmuch as Joyce is associated with verbosity and encyclopaedism, so Hemingway is associated with a concision and brevity born of his now famous 'iceberg theory' of literary production.¹ Indeed, a

¹ In an interview with George Plimpton, Hemingway created an analogy between the writing process and an iceberg; arguing that both were stronger for keeping eight-tenths of their mass concealed (George Plimpton, 'Interview with Ernest Hemingway' [1963], in Harold Bloom ed. *Modern Critical Views: Ernest Hemingway* [New York: Chelsea House, 1985], pp. 119-36 [p. 122]). Interestingly, Hemingway claimed in the same interview that he hadn't been influenced by another writer 'since Joyce was writing *Ulysses*' (p. 126). Frank O'Connor argues that 'Joyce was the single most important influence on Hemingway' (Frank O'Connor 'A Clean Well-lighted Place', in Jackson J. Benson ed., *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1975], pp. 85-93 [p. 86]). This refers to the influence of *The Dubliners* on Hemingway's use of 'simplification and repetition' (87) in his short stories. Hemingway does not expand on the exact nature of the later Joyce's influence on his work – although given Hemingway's tendency to rewrite his own literary history according to who he wished to acknowledge as mentors, it is quite possible this observation was a way of further obfuscating Gertrude

veritable metalanguage of Hemingwayese can be identified in much of the critical work on Hemingway's writing which employs such descriptions of his famous 'style' as 'taut, economic, disciplined, unemotional', representing 'courage, commitment, and awareness', or 'the fortitude and dignity' with which the 'Hemingway Hero' survives such vague disasters as 'the universal catastrophe.'² The language of hard-boiled, muscular and bare-knuckle prose which is so closely associated with Hemingway's work is, I would suggest, the result of the critical conflation of a number of tendencies in Hemingway's writings. These tendencies are, firstly, the linguistic economy of restriction and repetition that Hemingway clearly employs; secondly, his representations of masculinity which, I would suggest, are not unambivalent celebrations of a primitive machismo but explorations of the social and cultural practices through which masculinity is defined and expresses itself; and thirdly the existence in Hemingway's work of what I will describe as a negation of the carnivalesque. Taken together, these tendencies can appear to produce a type of hero – masculine, laconic, controlled – who looks a lot like the fearless, courageous and disciplined heroes of a thousand western movies.

I would argue that Hemingway's heroes are neither heroic nor identical in this sense – although they are, like a wild west sheriff, men who put their faith in laws. The desire for regulation is, indeed, central to Hemingway's negation of carnivalesque. For all his representations of violence and drunkenness, Hemingway's very fascination with the ritualisation of these actions – most apparent in his obsession with bullfighting on the one hand, and the rituals of drinking and the avoidance of extravagant drunkenness on the other – reveals a deep-seated belief, *contra* Bakhtin, that the overturning of rules, the inversion of authority, and the celebration of the unpredictable is always dangerous and destructive. Unlike Joyce, who plunges enthusiastically into the grotesque and spectacular daily life of the intoxicated body and mind, Hemingway paints it from afar – employing the parsimoniousness of his literary technique to delimit, define and, thereby, control it.

Stein's influence on his early writing. In terms of this study, I would argue that Joyce's influence is evident in Hemingway's attempt to construct a prosaics of everyday life. Although, as will be seen, this aesthetic project takes a very different trajectory in the two writers.

² See Andrew Hook, 'Art and Life in *The Sun Also Rises*' in A Robert Lee ed. *Ernest Hemingway: New Critical Essays* (London: Vision Press, 1983), pp. 49-61 (p. 57); Jack J. Benson, *Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 149; Wirt Williams, *The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 49.

This is, of course, not to say that Hemingway doesn't deal with drink and violence. It would not be an exaggeration to say that drink is ubiquitous in Hemingway's early fiction. However, while virtually every other aspect of Hemingway's writing has been the object of prolonged and extensive debate in and for itself drinking has only received sporadic critical analysis. Alfred Kazin's article "'The Giant Killer': Drink and the American Writer" – one of the first articles written on the specific relationship between drink and American fiction – takes its title from Hemingway, but provides essentially an account of the drinking habits of F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner.³ Robin Room's 1984 article 'A "Reverence for Strong Drink": The Lost Generation and the Elevation of Alcohol in American Culture' discusses Hemingway's representation of drinking essentially in terms of its popularisation of the drinking culture of 1920s Paris among contemporary American youth.⁴ It was only with the publication of Tom Dardis' *The Thirsty Muse* that the relationship between drink and Hemingway's fiction received dedicated and detailed analysis. Dardis' book represents a type of criticism in which a biographical reading of an author's private drinking habits informs the critical assessment of his literary work. As I have discussed in my introduction, this is not the approach which I take in this study. Furthermore, Dardis' fundamental premise is that Hemingway's progressive alcoholism led to a disintegration of his talent in later years; therefore, what close reading Dardis provides is broadly confined to the fiction Hemingway produced after World War Two. There is, as a result, very little in Dardis' study that is of value for this analysis. Two articles on drinking in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants' have been published; one by Doris Lanier which I shall deal with below, and another very short piece pointing out that the two main characters drink beer as well as anis in the story.⁵ The only other dedicated discussion of Hemingway's representation of drinking is provided by John Crowley in his book *The White Logic*. His chapter on *The Sun Also Rises* looks closely at the representation of

³ Alfred Kazin, "'The Giant Killer': Drink & the American Writer', *Commentary* (March, 1976), pp. 44-50. Hemingway uses the term 'giant killer' in both the short story 'The Nun, the Gambler and the Radio', and at the end of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

⁴ Robin Room, 'A "Reverence for Strong Drink": The Lost Generation and the Elevation of Alcohol in American Culture', *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (1984), pp. 540-46. I will discuss some of the issues raised in this article in more detail below.

⁵ Doris Lanier, 'The Bittersweet Taste of Absinthe in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'', *Studies in Short Fiction* 26 (1989), pp. 279-88; Ellen Lansky, 'Two Unfinished Beers: A Note on Drinking in Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"', *Dionysos*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall, 1993), pp. 28-30.

drink and drinking within the actual text in order to affirm, essentially, two conclusions. Firstly, that '*The Sun Also Rises* is ... a major example of a drunk narrative, in which alcoholism is inseparable from the modernist ethos of despair'; and, secondly, that Hemingway 'subtly affirms sobriety as a means to the sheer drunkenness of the writer's art.'⁶

I agree with Crowley that *Fiesta* is a major example of a drunk narrative – indeed, this term can be applied to much of Hemingway's fiction prior to World War II. However, as I have made clear previously, I disagree fundamentally with Crowley's aetiology and definition of 'modernist despair'. I would also argue that while alcoholism receives some attention in Hemingway's fiction (specifically in the characters of Mike Campbell in *Fiesta* and Pablo in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), it is not his primary focus of concern when dealing with drinking as problematic. Rather, Hemingway tends to depict 'alcoholism' less as a pathological compulsion than as a manifestation of excessivism born of moral laxity. Hemingway rarely, if ever, depicts characters who cannot control their drinking; rather he depicts characters who choose to drink too much. To this extent, Hemingway's depiction of excessive drinking shares more with pre-temperance ideas of the immorality of drunkenness than with the more clinical understanding of excessive drinking as a pathological condition that I have traced in chapters Two and Three. It is characteristic of Hemingway, in fact, that in returning to a notion of drink and the drinker that predates the emergence of temperance discourses and the idea of the alcoholic as pathological he reasserts the moral censure of certain forms of excessive drinking while simultaneously reserving an equal, if not increased, level of moral condemnation for non-drinkers such as Robert Cohn in *Fiesta*. Furthermore, none of Hemingway's excessive drinkers are prone to the alcoholic's 'white logic' which Crowley asserts is modernist 'despair' by another name. Rather, it is Hemingway's heroes – precisely those who make a conspicuous display of their controlled drinking – more than his excessive drinkers, who think too much, who can't sleep in the dark, who live by rules because that is the only way they can live with meaning. Furthermore, it is never alcohol that drives them to what *anomie* they may experience; rather it is through the ritualised consumption of alcohol that Hemingway finds a form of coherent social interaction and private pleasure with which to transcend the alienation, banality and violence of

⁶ Crowley, *The White Logic*, pp. 44, 64

everyday life. As will be seen, however, the effects of alcohol in its less positive manifestations are shown by Hemingway to be all too often at the root of precisely this violence and banality. It will be the task of this chapter to illustrate how Hemingway negotiates the complexities of representing an essentially ubiquitous practice (drinking) whose meanings and effects range from, in one novel alone, 'kill[ing] the worm that haunts us' to producing scenes of the most horrifying violence.⁷ Hemingway, I would suggest, affirms neither sobriety nor drunkenness but attempts to map, through a sustained hierarchical classification of drinks and drinking places, the meanings drink carries in the cultures he describes, the ethical implications of drink, and the role of drinking as a response to the experience of modernity. In his negation of the carnivalesque, however, Hemingway deviates substantially from the aesthetics of intoxication as it has been described previously in this study, depicting a utopian notion of idealised drinking as a possible means to a communal resistance of the excesses and alienations of modernity, rather than intoxication as a privatised aesthetic sublimation of those very excesses into revolutionary art forms.

That the quasi-utopian idealisation of drinking can be proposed as one of Hemingway's literary projects is a reflection of the sheer centrality of drink to his fiction. However, if, for Joyce, intoxication pervades the text at the level of language, unbinding the limits of representation at the roots, for Hemingway drink dominates the text at the level of narrative structure. That is, it becomes a fundamental and structurally dominant object, rather than mode, of representation. In the two novels with which I am most closely concerned here – *Fiesta* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* – drink functions as a primary and formative aspect of the narrative structure. *Fiesta*, as has been noted by numerous critics, is structured around a movement from the expatriate American drinking culture of Montparnasse, to the drunken fiesta of Pamplona, with a pastoral interlude in between in which Jake Barnes and his friend Bill Gorton exchange intimacies while drinking wine and fishing in Burguete.⁸ *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, I will argue, is both structured geographically around the polarity of drinking space and virgin nature and contains a seminal event – the switch

⁷ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1941; Harmondsworth Penguin, 1966), p. 198 and pp. 114-20. I will discuss the relationship Hemingway constructs between drunkenness, anarchism and political violence in more detail below. Further references to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* will be given in the text as FBT.

⁸ Crowley addresses this movement in *The White Logic*. His analysis owes much to Scott Donaldson's discussion of this spatial economy in *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 21-33

of allegiance amongst the guerrillas from their erstwhile Spanish leader Pablo to the newly arrived American academic Robert Jordan – which is articulated entirely around a ritualised drinking contest. *A Farewell to Arms* is also crucially structured around drinking: Frederic Henry's first journey to the front is preceded by a drinking contest and a subsequent separation from Catherine Barkley; his second return to the front is directly caused by his loss of convalescent leave after the discovery of eleven empty brandy bottles and a bottle of kummel in his hospital room in Milan. The story 'Hills Like White Elephants' – which will provide the third core text in this discussion – is predicated on a problematisation of the drinkers' conversation as a mode of communicative interaction, while numerous other short stories such as 'Three Day Blow', 'Wine of Wyoming', and 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place' are stories specifically about drink, drinking or drinking places.

Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope provides a powerful analytical category through which to assess the meanings of drink, and specifically the drinking place, in Hemingway's fiction. In this analysis, the bar will be considered as a chronotope – or rather, to use Michael Holquist's formulation – a generic chronotope; that is, a recognisable spatio-temporal rubric within which relational structures are constructed both diegetically and between the specific texts and their historical environment, other texts, and the reader.⁹ Sue Vice suggests that the 'chronotope operates on three levels: first, as the means by which a text represents history; second, as the relation between images of time and space in a novel, out of which any representation of history must be constructed; and third, as a way of discussing the formal properties of the text itself, its plot, narrator, and relation to other texts.'¹⁰ The drinking place fulfils all these functions in the texts to be discussed. It adheres to a series of specific and recognisable spatial characteristics in all its manifestations (enclosure, crowding, darkness, the presence of alcohol), it serves as a nodal point within all the narratives, and its meanings are both dependent on and illustrative of the historical and geographical context out of which the representations emerge; which, in Hemingway's case, is Europe, as experienced by an American, during Prohibition.

One notable aspect of Hemingway's urban bars is that they are considerably less gender exclusive than those depicted by James Joyce. In *Fiesta*, Lady Brett

⁹ For more on chronotopes as genres, see Chapter 5 of Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London: Routledge, 1990)

¹⁰ Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 201-2

Ashley is as much an habitu  of the Montparnasse bars as Jake Barnes, and her frequenting of the bars in Pamplona and Madrid is not raised as a problematic issue *per se* by either the characters in the novel or the narrator. This fact alone illustrates both the historical specificity of Hemingway's bar chronotopes and the dialogic relations into which they enter. The non-gender exclusive bars that Hemingway – an American writing in the 1920s – represents are transgressive on at least two counts. Firstly, the representation of women drinking in bars goes against the exclusively male culture of saloon drinking that I have outlined in Chapter Three; to this extent, the representation of bars profoundly transgresses the male drinking culture of nineteenth and early twentieth century America. In the following chapter I will look again at the apparent gender equality of some of the drinking places depicted by Hemingway in order to consider in the extent to which, while not disbaring women entirely, it replicates problematic constructions of the female drinker. The sexually charged atmosphere of the Parisian drinking place further depicts Europe as a site of sexually cosmopolitan experience for the young Americans living there. In other words, European social and sexual culture, represented through the medium of its drinking culture, is placed in a polemically dialogic relationship to the conservative and restrictive social culture of the United States.¹¹ Secondly, the representation of drinking at all, and particularly the construction of narratives precisely around the drinking place, evidently constructs a dialogic opposition between the supposedly liberal culture of Europe and the conservative, provincial and, as popularly imagined, puritan culture of Prohibition America.

Hemingway's representation of drinking is fundamentally and inescapably informed by Prohibition. The increasing association of American temperance movements in the later nineteenth century with an economically dominant, mercantile bourgeoisie, and a cultural elite positioned outside of, and antagonistic towards, the metropolitan centres, made drinking the signifier of both a progressive cosmopolitanism and a cultural antagonism towards bourgeois respectability. In

¹¹ Lewis Erenberg describes how, in the 1910s, New York cabarets began opening their doors to women. This revolutionary cultural shift was identified as illustrative of the bohemian cosmopolitanism of the city. In 1913, two years after the Caf  des Beaux Arts became the first cabaret to welcome female recreational drinkers, *Variety* magazine wrote that 'you Americans who believe it to be the 'smart' thing to go to Paris for a 'fast' time, do not have to go out of Times Square.' Two years later *Vanity Fair* exclaimed 'At last a New Yorker can look a Parisian in the face.' (Quoted in Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 140.

America, Prohibition saw the dialectic between conspicuous proletarian alcohol consumption in the urban centres, and the status politics of a middle class whose ideological promotion of reason and thrift was symbolically distilled in the idea of sobriety, reach a moment of spectacular crisis. Where temperance found in drink the metonym around which a broader assault on the irrational, the prodigal, and the politically subversive could be articulated – and hence made intoxication the metonym in which a resistance to the ideological bourgeoisification of culture could be articulated – Prohibition added to this process the glamour of illegality. It also brought what had been a rumbling cultural confrontation into the open ground of blanket legislation and coordinated state coercion. In Prohibition, the frequenting of public drinking places that George Moore described as a ‘snort of defiance at the hearth’ became, potentially, open rebellion against the idealisation of domesticity, self-restraint, thrift and rational recreation. Hemingway, it will be seen, certainly resisted the first and last of these injunctions; while his position towards the promotion of physical and emotional self-control and economic prudence was absolutely in line with that of a solid Victorian temperance ideologue.

While numerous commentators have identified the fact that Prohibition effectively made drinking into an act of ‘political dissent,’¹² F. Scott Fitzgerald’s memories of the 1920s emphasise the economic influences on the drinking culture of that decade. Looking back in 1937, Fitzgerald wrote that in 1920

The uncertainties of 1919 were over – there seemed little doubt about what was going to happen – America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history and there was going to be plenty to tell about it. The whole golden boom was in the air – its splendid generousities, its outrageous corruptions and the tortuous death struggle of old America in prohibition.¹³

While Fitzgerald acknowledges the fact that Prohibition came to represent all that his generation were rebelling against in the 1920s, he noticeably doesn’t make it the single causative factor in the rise of a culture of hard drinking in that decade. Six

¹² Room, p. 542

¹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘Early Success’ (1937) in *The Crack Up and Other Pieces* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 57-63 (p. 59)

years earlier, indeed, he wrote that the ‘precocious intimacies of the younger generation would have come about with or without prohibition.’¹⁴ What Fitzgerald illustrates in these excerpts is that Prohibition did not emerge *ex nihilo*, creating in its wake a generation of youngsters with an unquenchable thirst for illegal alcohol. Rather, that, as I have argued, the temperance movement – and by extension Prohibition – became a symbolically privileged figure for the construction of an idealised bourgeois self predicated on reason, self-control and economic restraint. While I have suggested that resistance to this construction of the self in the nineteenth century can be identified primarily in working class economies of the bar and in avant-garde literary and artistic culture, Fitzgerald suggests that after 1919, as the first signs of a triumphant consumer capitalism emerge in the booming American economy, the resistance to an ideology of restraint suddenly emerges in the affluent middle classes.¹⁵ What Fitzgerald describes is not the attempt to sustain the pre-capitalist cultures of the tavern, the carnival and the rituals of communal drinking, nor the pseudo-aristocratic decadence of the absinthe-sipping poet, but the garish free-for-all of a young middle class for whom consumption is a way of life. Certainly the economics of the post-war boom played a considerably part in increasing the attractiveness of Paris as either a destination for young Americans or a place to stay after their tours of duty in the Great War. The franc / dollar exchange rate, which had stood at seven francs to the dollar in 1919, reached fifty francs to the dollar in July 1926, and stabilized at a little over twenty-five francs in 1927.¹⁶ The number of Americans living in Paris during these years rose from around 6,000 in 1921 to around 30,000 in 1924.¹⁷ Paris was a place where not only could Americans get a drink, but where they could get one for next to nothing. It became for a time a city where, as one of Fitzgerald’s characters recalls, Americans with anything like

¹⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’, in *ibid.* pp. 9-19 (p. 11)

¹⁵ Stuart Walton, perhaps focussing too narrowly on this especially visible example of goal-oriented drinking, argues that ‘No form of drinking was as ruthlessly instrumental as that of the original cocktail era.’ (Walton, *Out of It*, p. 136)

¹⁶ Tony Allan, *Paris: The Glamour Years, 1910-1940* (Greenwich CT: Bison, 1977), p. 13

¹⁷ Michael S. Reynolds, *Hemingway: The Paris Years* (London: Blackwell, 1989), p. 236. Ford Madox Ford wrote that in the 1920s ‘Young America from the limitless prairies leapt, released, on Paris. They stampeded with the madness of colts when you let down the slip-rails between, dried pasture and green. The noise of their advancing drowned all sounds. Their innumerable forms hid the very trees on the boulevards. Their perpetual motion made you dizzy.’ (Quoted in Robert Penn Warren, ‘Ernest Hemingway’, in Bloom, *Modern Critical Views: Ernest Hemingway*, pp. 35-62 [p. 37])

independent means could at least imagine themselves as being ‘a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us.’¹⁸

In addition to this, Paris was a city inextricably associated with literary and artistic modernism; indeed with precisely that sophisticated assault on bourgeois taste which Baudelaire and Manet specifically articulated in terms of intoxication and which I have discussed in detail in Chapter Four. I will look in more detail at Hemingway’s particular relationship to Paris as a city in which drinking and modernism are intimately associated below. In terms of the specific dialogic relations that depiction of drinking in the bars of Montparnasse sets up in his early fiction, it should be remembered that the bohemian associations of the bars of Paris gave rise as much to what was perceived as a culture of dilettantism as one of genuine artistic production. Not surprisingly, in a city in which sophisticated modernity and drunkenness had become so intimately associated, particularly a city in which the pose of public drinking had also, as T. J. Clarke has argued, become a crucial form of cultural expression for an emergent petit-bourgeoisie, the idea that merely arriving at a Montparnasse bar gave the tourist a passport to bohemia was mocked by contemporary observers. George Orwell’s ‘swarm of artists, writers, students, dilettanti, sight-seers, debauchees, and plain idlers’ was characterised by Hemingway in equally dismissive terms as he reported back to the *Toronto Star* on his first arrival in Paris that the ‘scum of Greenwich Village, New York, has been skimmed off and deposited in large ladles on that section of Paris adjacent to the Café Rotonde.’ He continued, ‘You can find anything you are looking for in the Rotonde – except serious artists.’¹⁹ Looking back in *A Moveable Feast* (1964), Hemingway maintained his haughty disapproval of the popular bars of Montparnasse, claiming that he had spent most of his time at the less well-known Closerie des Lilas:

People from the Dôme and the Rotonde never came to the Lilas. There was no-one there they knew, and no-one would have stared at them if they came. In those days people went to the cafés at the corner of the boulevard Montparnasse and the boulevard Raspail to be seen publicly, and in a way

¹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘Babylon Revisited’, in *The Crack Up*, pp. 110-34 (p. 114)

¹⁹ Quoted in , James R. Mellow, *Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p. 164

such places anticipated the columnists as the daily substitutes for mortality.²⁰

What Hemingway identifies in this passage is notably congruous with Benjamin's argument that the drinking place in mid-nineteenth century Paris existed in a dyadic relationship with the *feuilleton*. In Benjamin's Paris, the drinking place and the popular press create, to employ the term Habermas uses in relation to the coffee-shops and periodicals of eighteenth century London, a public sphere in which the bourgeois individual asserts his autonomy and ideological identity. It is equally notable that in each of these cases – the rise of a mercantile middle class in London in the mid-eighteenth century, the political triumph of the urban bourgeoisie in Paris after 1848, and the emergence of a dominant American bourgeoisie ushering in an economic culture of conspicuous and sustained consumption – should each be accompanied by the colonisation of the urban drinking place and the popular print media by those groups as a means of cultural assertiveness. Hemingway's novels – or, at least, *Fiesta* – could be seen as an ambivalent example of this symbiotic relationship between social cultures constructed around the drinking place and their representation in print. So, also, could the whole range of popular reports from American Paris that appeared in the American press during the 1920s; not only the despatches sent by Hemingway, but other journalists known specifically for documenting the period such as the Paris correspondent for the *New Yorker*, Janet Flanner.

Hemingway's fascinated but horrified depiction of drinking in the big Montparnasse bars – the Dôme, the Rotonde, the Select, and the Coupole – was both glamorous and ambivalent. If Hemingway, as Edmund Wilson put it, 'set the favourite pose for the period',²¹ it was a pose that he himself undermined by his depiction of a hierarchy of drinking places in which the most popular of the American bars were depicted as less the sites of a creative bohemia than the 'Mecca of ... bluffers and fakers in every line of endeavor from music to prizefighting.'²² To take a particular example then, when Jake Barnes, near the start of *Fiesta*, goes to the Dôme with Frances Clyne to discuss her relationship with Robert Cohn what we are presented with is a specific example of a generic chronotope (the bar) which

²⁰ Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1964; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 61.

²¹ Edmund Wilson, 'Hemingway: 'Gauge of Morale'', in *The Wound and the Bow* (1952; London: University Paperbacks, 1961), pp. 191-217 (p. 197)

²² Quoted in Mellow, p. 164

references dialogically Prohibition (these are Americans conspicuously drinking), the male saloon culture of the States (this is a man drinking publicly with a woman), Parisian drinking culture (the Dôme is a real and well-known bar), and the ambivalently bohemian heritage of Parisian café culture (Robert Cohn, who is sitting across the street in the Select, is a talentless would-be novelist whose self-indulgent loafing in Paris is set disparagingly against Jake's workaday journalist lifestyle). Looked at, then, as an example of a chronotope, the bar in Hemingway's early fiction functions in one sense almost entirely outside of its specific textual environment. It serves to locate the fiction entirely inside of, and as a specific commentary upon, a very particular moment of cultural, economic, and political history. Equally, for later readers, it serves to locate their historical position in contradistinction to the text. The fact that the intrinsically chronotopic term 'the lost generation' has now become inextricably associated with Hemingway's fiction of the 1920s and the world it purports to depict (just as exactly the same period is metamorphosed into the altogether more fun sounding 'jazz age' when the discussion is about F. Scott Fitzgerald) illustrates the absolute historical specificity of these texts. The fact that being a member of the 'lost generation' – or, indeed, the 'jazz age' – is indissolubly associated with 'hard-drinking' (lost generation) or 'endless cocktails' (jazz age) shows the centrality of alcohol and bars to the subsequent imagination of this historical period.

A second element of the bar as chronotope that is crucial to these novels is that it functions diegetically as a *revelatory* space. In Bakhtinian terms, the events that take place in Hemingway's bars 'leave a trace'. In *Fiesta* it is uniquely in bars that confrontations occur, revelations are made and events take place that power the narrative onwards. This can even be said to be the case for the fight between Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero that takes place on the night before Romero's bullfight. Although the fight occurs in a hotel room between two non-drinkers, it is narrated at second hand by Mike Campbell over beers in Jake's hotel room the next day. Hence, the telling of this particular event becomes a form of drunken narration that occurs in a drinking space. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Pablo's cave – which functions almost exclusively as a drinking place – is where every crucial decision is made, and every allegiance asserted.

Finally, the bar chronotope in Hemingway is an artificial and a transferable space. By this I mean that the generic bar chronotope incorporates not only

designated bars, but any space which functions primarily, albeit temporarily, as a drinking space. It is also set dialogically, indeed diametrically, over against nature. This is not to say it is presented as an inferior sphere of action and experience, but rather that it is the space which symbolically embodies the experience of social interaction, just as virgin nature embodies the experience of solitude – or, at most, idealised dyadic relationships. In all three of the texts to be discussed, Hemingway constructs a spatial polarity between the bar and the landscape; a polarity of enclosure against space, darkness against light, noise against silence, society against solitude, the public against the private, culture against nature. Again, the example of Pablo's cave in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* illustrates this. Although it functions primarily as a living space and meeting point, my discussion below will show that it is essentially constructed as a drinking space – indeed a form of symposium, set against the natural landscape in which Robert Jordan engages in his idealised romantic affair with Maria. The semantic stratification of the two spheres is not, however, to be understood as an insurmountable hierarchisation of the two. What Hemingway is primarily concerned to depict is the liminal exchanges between these two extremes, the thresholds between them, the ways in which they bleed into one another. Again, this will serve to show that, for Hemingway, there is no either / or between drink and sobriety or between the bar and nature, but a constant negotiation between the two.

While Hemingway in many ways privileges the experience of the isolated individual in nature, this privileging is predicated on the fact that the engagement with history – that is, the real, often drunken, round of the everyday world – is as necessary as it is unavoidable; both for the writer and for the characters he depicts. In other words, a life spent in glorious isolation in the wildernesses of Spain or Montana is as untenable as a life spent dissipating in the artificial and self-indulgent comfort of the American bars in Paris. Hemingway's characters may appear on some level to be self-sufficient, but Hemingway in fact tends to depict solitude as at best a restorative hiatus, not as a means to either private or public change or revelation. Social life takes place where people gather and, in these works by Hemingway, where people gather is in bars and around drinks. To set oneself apart from this cultural reality, as Robert Cohn does in *Fiesta*, is to set oneself apart from the mass of humanity and the movement of history.

The representation of drinking in *Fiesta*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and 'Hills Like White Elephants', addresses Hemingway's relationship to both social and textual

history; that is, to both cultural modernity and literary modernism. Firstly, his structural deployment of the bar as a crucial narrative space necessarily reflects the cultural functions of drinking at his time. Secondly the narrative means by which he renders both the private experience of drunken cognition and the public phenomenon of the drunken conversation can all be used as entry points into considering Hemingway's relationship specifically modernist aesthetic and technical concerns. The following analysis of three texts will, therefore, address both the implications of Hemingway's representation of drinking in terms of the broader cultural scene he depicts and the more narrow issue of how, if at all, this fits into the trajectory of modernist aesthetics I have discussed previously.

Idealised space and sympotic drinking in Fiesta

As I have pointed out above, the role of drinking in *Fiesta* has received some prior treatment – specifically from John Crowley. Crowley points to three examples of the representation of drink in *Fiesta* from sections of the book that have received a large amount of previous critical attention, albeit without the focus on alcohol that Crowley provides. I will introduce these analyses here by way of contextualising my own discussion; however, to avoid repetition I will give a brief overview and assessment of them rather than a lengthy reiteration.

The first of these episodes involves Lady Brett Ashley's description of her acquaintance Count Mippipopolous as 'one of us'.²³ This is something she tells Jake after she has spent a night drinking with the Count. Sometime later, the Count arrives at Jake's hotel room with a basket of champagne. As he, Jake and Brett discuss their drinks, the Count reveals two large scars below his ribs. Brett repeats that he is 'one of us'. (F p. 53) This observation, which is more usually taken in Hemingway criticism to refer to the idea that Brett, Jake and the Count are all in their unique ways the victims of war wounds, is taken by Crowley to refer instead to the "secret community," all of whose disillusioned members are initiates into the White Logic.²⁴

²³ Ernest Hemingway, *Fiesta* (1927; London: Arrow, 1994), p. 28 Further references will be given in the text as F.

²⁴ Crowley, p. 45. For a more orthodox analysis of this passage, see for example John W. Aldridge, 'Afterthoughts on the Twenties and *The Sun Also Rises*' (Linda Wagner-Martin ed. *New Essays on The Sun Also Rises* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], pp. 109-29): 'Brett identifies [the

Crowley has previously ascribed the nihilistic world-view of the 'White Logic' specifically to the effects of pathological alcoholism; that is, to use the formulation of Alcoholics Anonymous, the 'loss of control over alcohol'. I would argue that Brett, Jake and the Count cannot be classed as alcoholics, and therefore classed as characters who would fall prey to the nihilism Crowley sees as an effect of alcohol addiction. Firstly, the very ritualisation of their drinking reveals that they specifically have *not* lost control over alcohol; and secondly, Hemingway nowhere acknowledges alcoholic depression in the sense that Jack London understands it in *John Barleycorn*. Rather, I would suggest that this is an example of Hemingway's representation of drinking as cultic, and of the rituals of drinking as providing shibboleths for initiates – a 'secret community' of people who know exactly how to control their drinking. This ritualisation of drinking as an index of control is crucial to all of Hemingway's representations of drink.

A second excerpt which Crowley discusses is Jake Barnes' observation that 'Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk. Bill was a good drunk. Cohn was never drunk.' (F p. 131) Crowley argues that Hemingway can be seen here as using drinking 'to establish a hierarchy of moral merit for his characters.'²⁵ This is an assertion I would broadly agree with. Hemingway's tendency to construct moral hierarchies among his characters is one that has been widely discussed, usually with the hierarchy being understood as established on the issue of self-control.²⁶ The relationship between self-control as a measure of moral probity and the representation of drinking has been alluded to by both Scott Donaldson and Robert Penn Warren. Donaldson argues that Mike Campbell's alcoholism is censured by Hemingway primarily because it is a signifier of financial irresponsibility in a novel in which morality is measured by economic self-reliance.²⁷ This is an example of Hemingway's representation of drinking concurring with a fundamental tenet of temperance ideology: that is, excessive drinking as a mark of financial irresponsibility. Hemingway, however, because he doesn't represent drink as

Count] as "one of us," ... since he has already learned what she and Jake are still trying to learn, namely, how to live decorously and well.' (pp. 124-5)

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 51.

²⁶ See, for example, Stewart Sanderson *Hemingway* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961): 'The qualities which make up [Hemingway's code] are ... a kind of decent manners which require that one should not behave in an embarrassing way.' (p. 44); see also Hook, p. 57

²⁷ Donaldson, pp. 21-23.

addictive, doesn't represent an insatiable desire for drinking as the fundamental *cause* of this financial incapability, but rather as the symptom of a moral flaw.

Robert Penn Warren, discussing a different aspect of Hemingway's hierarchy of moral merit, argues that in *Fiesta* drinking:

is a self-conscious act. It is not the random gratification of appetite. We see this quite clearly in *The Sun Also Rises* in the contrast between Cohn, who is merely a random dabbler in the world of sensation, who is merely trying to amuse himself, and the initiates like Jake and Brett, who are aware of the *nada* at the center of things and whose dissipation, therefore, has a philosophical significance. The initiate in Hemingway's world raises the gratification of appetite to the level of a cult and discipline.²⁸

I would agree with Warren both that cultic drinking is important in Hemingway's writing, and also that disciplined drinking is equally crucial. However, I would not associate the 'philosophical significance' of drinking with the ritual of gratification of appetite *per se*. Rather, I would suggest that the disciplining of drinking in Hemingway's work functions as a means to dominate, control, and therefore ultimately protect oneself from, the violent and entropic – what I will discuss in more detail below as the bacchic – effects of drunkenness. In other words, discipline and ritual in drinking functions as it does in the violence of the bullfight: as a means of containing and controlling the carnivalesque transgression that lies at its heart.²⁹

The final episode Crowley analyses is Jake and Bill's fishing trip in Burguete. Again, this is an episode that has received much critical attention and in which Crowley agrees substantially with Donaldson that, while drinking continues to take place here, a degree of intimacy is established between Jake and Bill that transcends the mendacious, drunken intimacies of Paris and Pamplona. Donaldson argues that here Jake and Bill can drink well because their drinking is 'for the pleasure they have earned through hard work' – that is, it serves as a reward for action rather than an

²⁸ Warren, p. 46

²⁹ The knowledge of 'nada at the center of things' Crowley calls 'the alcoholic cult of nada', thereby reversing, as he does throughout his study, the aetiology of existential angst and drinking in modernist fiction (Crowley, p. 62). Drink, Crowley fundamentally asserts, is the *cause* of despair, angst and anomie in modernist writing, not the effect of it or a response to it.

excuse for it, and is thus morally dignified.³⁰ Crowley, on the other hand, argues that, having only drunk one bottle of wine each, Jake and Bill are, in fact, ‘nearly as sober as Wayne B. Wheeler himself’ and therefore their intimacy is to be understood as conspicuously sober.³¹ What I would identify as crucial to this episode, however, is its interweaving of disparate chronotopic spaces. The fishing scene in *Burguete* represents one of the many occasions in Hemingway’s work in which the drunken world of the bar and the isolated, sober world of virgin nature overlap. The fraternal intimacy Jake and Bill establish at the Irati river is as much a function of the intimacy of alcohol being clarified by the isolation of nature, as Jake’s rest in San Sebastian after the fiesta sees the isolation of nature create an intimate, privatised space within the bar.³² The overlap of the natural and the urban (as figured in the bar) is one of the most important spatial dialogues with which Hemingway deals.

A less discussed episode through which issues of the cultic and communal aspects of drinking, Hemingway’s hierarchisation of drinks, and the interpenetration of the bar and nature can be addressed is the journey that precedes the pastoral episode in *Burguete*. In this episode, Bill and Jake mount a bus full of Basque peasants to take them across the Spanish border. If the episode with the Count showed drink providing shibboleths for a select and exclusive ‘secret community’, then the drinking that takes place on board the bus from Bayonne to *Burguete* suggests a more democratic function for alcohol. On first boarding the bus, any conversation between Jake, Bill and the peasants is obviated by the fact that the peasants speak only Basque, which neither Bill nor Jake understands. However, this impasse of mutually incomprehensible languages is broken by the passing of a wine skin to the two Americans:

A Basque with a big leather wine-bag in his lap lay ... leaning against our legs. He offered the wine-skin to Bill and me, and when I tipped it up to drink he imitated the sound of a klaxon motor-horn so well and so suddenly that I spilled some of the wine, and everybody laughed. He apologised and made me take another drink. (F p. 91)

³⁰ Donaldson, p. 26

³¹ Crowley, p. 60

³² ‘I drank a bottle of wine for company ... It was pleasant to be alone and to be tasting wine and to be drinking alone. A bottle of wine was good company.’ (F pp. 205-6)

This imitation is so hilarious that, we are told, the Basque repeats it three times for the pleasure of the American visitors. Here then, where conversation is impossible, a degree of camaraderie, if not intimacy, is established through the precise opposite of conversation; indeed a verbal gesture that could be described as the ultimate non-utterance – the hooting of a klaxon. The champagnes and expensive brandies of Paris are replaced here by the wine of the country, connoisseurship by egalitarianism. Equally, the sophisticated debates on taste and economics which Jake engaged in with the Count are exchanged here for a bluff, earthy humour. Here interaction and the establishment of inter-personal bonds is less like the arcane ritualism of high Freemasonry, as seen with the relationship between Jake and the Count, and more like the nod and the wink, the funny handshake down the pub.

What the success of this interaction relies on is the adoption of an appropriate mode of conversation for the social and spatial environment in which the characters find themselves. This relatively polite move into the carnivalesque disruption of communicative language (it is a potentially base noise, but it remains firmly in the realm of the oral – unlike Joyce’s ‘Pflaaaap! Not half.’ in the final lines of ‘Oxen of the Sun’ [U p. 425]) employs an erstwhile element of the drunken conversation: the meaningless noise, the ‘way-hay!’ Susan Sontag has pointed out that ‘every place is a different language’,³³ which is to say that the forms of discourse chosen by interlocutors, and the relative success or failure of those discursive forms, are inseparable from the social, spatial and temporal environment in which they are articulated. In the drunken conversation, one of these discursive forms is the more or less meaningless hoot. Bakhtin’s notion of ‘speech genres’ understands utterances not as discrete and isolated speech acts, but as speech acts chosen from a delimited range of possible articulations whose parameters are set by the environment in which they take place. According to Bakhtin,

The speakers speech will is manifested primarily in the *choice of a particular speech genre*. The choice is determined by the specific nature of the given sphere of speech communication, semantic (thematic)

³³ Quoted in Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 80

considerations, the concrete situation of the speech communication, the personal composition of the participants, and so on.³⁴

What, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, both Joyce and Rabelais represent in their work are generic literary representations of a traditional series of speech genres. Forms which drunken conversations take in everyday life clearly change and adapt according to social and historical environments and, like all 'real life' conversational forms (taking as generic examples, say, the telephone conversation, or the lover's tiff) are necessarily codified in their literary forms. The generic forms of discourse associated with drunkenness – the emotionally effusive, the philosophical, the maudlin, the aggressive, the chaotically multivocal – collect generic narrative, linguistic and phonetic indexes by which they can be identified as drunken in literature: the 'hic!', the slurs ('shurely shome mishtake...'), the unattributed voices, the simultaneous expression of the philosophical and the bawdy. None of these generic representations tend to appear in Hemingway's depiction of the drunken conversation. Indeed, the hooting of the Basque is an almost unique occasion in which the carnivalesque is depicted as positive in a drunken conversation in Hemingway's work. It is so, however, because of its unique appropriateness to its social and spatial setting. Given the absolute limitations of language at work on the bus, it proves to be the only way in which any kind of communicative intimacy can be established between the passengers.

In more functional language situations, Hemingway's idealised drunken conversations take on an entirely different colour. Hemingway, indeed, virtually invented a literary speech genre for the bar conversation that, while bearing some relation to the generic traditions of the drunken conversation – or, at least, the rituals of bar etiquette – undermined simultaneously the verbosity and emotional extravagance upon which language of drink – from the analogous understanding of the apostolic glossolalia, to Falstaff and Macbeth's porter, to Jack London's manly saloons, to Joyce's Dublin pubs – has traditionally been predicated. On the one hand, according to Edmund Wilson, for the contemporary readers of *Fiesta* the 'great watchword was 'have a drink'; and in the bars of new York and Paris the young

³⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres', in *The Problem of Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 60-103 (p.78)

people were getting to talk like Hemingway.’³⁵ And yet the mode of drunken conversation that Hemingway created was one that cut against the grain of an entire history of literary drunken conversations. Hemingway’s drunken conversations are – instead of ribald, noisy, verbose, lewd, expressive, chaotic, or slurred – controlled, ritualised, and archly laconic. If, as has been seen both negatively in the history of temperance and positively in the aesthetics of intoxication, drunkenness is fundamentally, indeed axiomatically, about *excess*, transgression and the release of emotional bonds and cultural prohibitions, then what does Hemingway achieve by attempting to strip drunkenness of this very *raison d’être*?

In a sense, Hemingway, in a diametric reverse of Bakhtin’s gesture in *Rabelais and His World*, attempts to sublimate drunkenness not by stripping the grotesque of the drunken, but by stripping the drunken of the grotesque. Hemingway, it seems, would like to maintain alcohol’s ability to ‘change ideas’ on a personal level while idealistically stripping drunkenness of its violence and its bodily manifestations. Hemingway, to reiterate, is often almost evangelistic in his praise of alcohol; he wrote to the Russian critic Ivan Kashkeen in 1935:

When you work hard all day with your head and know you must work again the next day what else can change your ideas and make them run on a different plane like whisky? When you are cold and wet what else can warm you? ... I would as soon not eat at night as not to have red wine and water.³⁶

Twelve years earlier, he had written in a throwaway piece of commentary on his workmates ‘I like to see a man drunk. A man does not exist until he is drunk ... I love getting drunk. Right from the start it is the best feeling.’³⁷

However pleasurable and however mood altering it may be though, intoxication, like violence, functions in Hemingway’s fiction as a transgression that it is imperative to learn to control. Mike Campbell is, in *Fiesta*, the embodiment of the inability to maintain emotional self-control (or at least the illusion of this) while

³⁵ Wilson, p. 197

³⁶ Donaldson, p. 268

³⁷ Baker, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 155

drunk. When he first appears in the novel he is drunk and drunkenly effusive about Brett:

‘I’m not tight,’ Mike said. ‘Perhaps just a little. I say, Brett, you are a lovely piece.’

‘Go on to the fight,’ Brett said. ‘Mr. Campbell’s getting difficult. What are these outbursts of affection, Michael?’

‘I say, you are a lovely piece.’ (F p. 70)

One page later, Mike is again effusive, this time about the prospect of a trip to Pamplona:

‘You wouldn’t mind, really? I’ve been at Pamplona. Brett’s mad to go. You sure we wouldn’t just be a bloody nuisance?’

‘Don’t talk like a fool.’

‘I’m a little tight, you know. I wouldn’t ask you if I weren’t. You sure you don’t mind?’

‘Oh, shut up, Michael,’ Brett said. (F p. 71)

Throughout the fiesta, Mike argues with Cohn, insults the locals (including the bullfighter Pedro Romero), and is constantly being told by either Jake, Brett or Bill to ‘shut up’ and ‘pipe down’. Hence he is, unlike Jake, Brett and Bill, a ‘bad drunk’; that is, he is a drunk for whom drinking is a means to excess – as opposed to a way of controlling, and constantly testing one’s ability to control, verbal and emotional transgression.

The bar conversation is, for Hemingway, the antithesis of the raucous, expressive, violent and verbose conversation depicted by either Rabelais or Joyce. It is a regulated world of emotional understatement; one, in fact, which comes up hard against the realities of serious emotional expression and ethical decisions, as will be seen in the discussion of ‘Hills Like White Elephants.’ For Hemingway, the speech genres of the bar are constantly regulated and controlled as a prophylactic against slipping into grotesque emotional revelation. Nevertheless, Hemingway does construct spaces in which emotional and social intimacy can find means of expression without becoming either mendacious niceties or embarrassing outbursts. It

is the liminal spaces between the bar and nature that facilitate this frank and open kind of discourse.

The bus to Burguete is an example of this. The impersonation of a klaxon is a perfect choice of communicative action: it betrays nothing, indeed it says nothing, but it expresses an openness and camaraderie articulated through a kind of joshing good humour that, for Hemingway, is a microcosmic synecdoche of idealised male relationships. Indeed, this opening gambit paves the way for the subsequent bonding between Jake, Bill and the Basques that amounts, essentially, to a series of invitations to drink as the journey commences and continues along the long, tree-lined road to Burguete. The bus itself – enclosed, crowded, lubricated with drink – functions as an ambulatory bar chronotope cutting through, and enclosed by, nature at its most pristine. Here, the rituals of the invitation to drink wine, a proximity to nature that amounts to a form of existential cleansing, and the intimacy afforded by the proximity to humanity that the bar provides unite to facilitate an intimacy that transcends class, culture and language. It is the same combination of landscape and communal intoxication that facilitates Jake and Bill's intimacy as they share wine on their fishing trip:

‘Let us utilise the product of the vine. Will you utilise a little, brother?’

‘After you, brother.’

Bill took a long drink. (F p. 107)

The centrality of wine to all these symbolic exchanges of alcohol among intimate men reveals both explicit and implicit exploitation of the symbolic connotations of wine. As I discuss in Chapter Four, literary representations of wine are informed by both a biblical and a classical tradition; the tradition of the last supper and the traditions of the symposium and bacchanalia. It is through the categories of symposium and bacchanalia I propose to interpret Hemingway's apparently perverse insistence on the regulation of drunkenness. Hemingway's drinking can be analysed using two categorical rubrics: the sympotic and the bacchanalian. Hemingway's scenes of sympotic drinking are usually structured around the sharing of a communal wine receptacle in a space in which an exclusively male intimacy can be established

within boundaries of self-control and restraint.³⁸ In this binary structure, the symposium can be understood as drinking facilitating cohesion, intellectual exchange, camaraderie and confidence – such as is seen, for example, in the communal drinking that takes place between Jake, Bill and their newly acquired English acquaintance Harris during their trip to the abbey at Roncevalles. On the other side of the polarity, the bacchanalia sees drink engendering violence, dispersal, chaos and excess – as is seen in the drunkenness of the characters in Pamplona and Paris.

Hemingway's sympotic representations of wine drinking – particularly in such episodes as the bus journey to Burguete – are further aided by the symbolic connotations of wine in terms of class and European culture. As I have argued in Chapter Four, wine drinking, particularly in France, carries with it powerful mythic associations with an idealised peasantry. For an American depicting a European culture which is, both positively and negatively, older than the garish modernity of America – that is, a culture both more venerable and more atavistic – the drinking of wine signifies simultaneously a knowing cosmopolitanism, and a democratic engagement with 'the people'. In 'Wine and Milk', Roland Barthes analysed this particular mythic role of wine:

For the worker, wine means enabling him to do his task with demiurgic ease ... For the intellectual, wine has the reverse function: the local white wine or the Beaujolais of the writer is meant to cut him off from the all too expected environment of cocktails and expensive drinks ... Wine will

³⁸ I am not suggesting here that Hemingway consciously or explicitly employs the symposium as a narrative category, rather that the fact that it can be used as a way of understanding Hemingway's idealised male drinking scenes testifies to the persistence in male drinking culture of sympotic drinking practices. Greek symposiasts would share wine from a central *krater*. A. M. Bowie describes both the importance of the egalitarianism in the seating arrangements around the *krater* and describes the 'idealised sympotic practice of balance and restraint' which, Bowie points out, 'obviously was not reflected in all actual symposia.' (A. M. Bowie, 'Thinking with Drinking: Wine and the Symposium in Aristophanes,' *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, cvii (1997), pp. 1-21 (p. 4). Claude Berard suggests that the idea of regulatory surveillance in symposia is reflected in the common Hellenic practice of painting large-eyed representations of Dionysus on the side of drinking cups, something he sees as 'a reminder of the indispensable social control presiding over the banquets and drinking parties, sometimes by the intermediary of monitors called *Ophthalmoi*: the eyes.' (Claude Berard et al., *A City of Images: Iconography and Society in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 154-5. This, of course, reinforces the argument that what Bakhtin tends to point to as examples of free, carnivalesque social practices were often, in fact, highly regulated affairs. In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates could be seen as the first Hemingwayesque drinker in the canon of Western literature. His performance of emotional restraint, intellectual ability and the ability to drink his companions under the table is capped, in perfect Hemingway fashion, with a morning trip to the gym as his companion collapse into drunken slumber.

deliver him from myths, will remove some of his intellectualism, will make him the equal of the proletarian; through wine, the intellectual comes nearer to a natural virility, and he believes he can escape the curse that a century and a half of romanticism still brings to bear on the purely cerebral.³⁹

Hemingway makes this very point himself in *A Moveable Feast*, writing that

In Europe then we thought of wine as something as healthy and normal as food and also as a great giver of happiness and well-being and delight. Drinking wine was not a snobbism or a sign of sophistication nor a cult; it was as natural as eating and to me as necessary.⁴⁰

Alongside its cosmopolitan, and therefore possibly effete, associations, wine drinking in Europe confirms, as it does for Jake and Bill among the Basques, a kind of transcultural brotherhood of manliness. The homosocial structure of the symposium is here abetted by the proletarian masculinity of wine drinking. For the writer, Barthes suggests, it further cancels out the whiff of effeminacy associated with writing itself. Drinking proves that the writer, so long as he drinks, is still a man. Just as Jack London almost obsessively reconfirms his manliness by reference to manual labour, seamanship and drinking in saloons, so Hemingway's leading men not only return 'again and again to the fishing trip and the journey to the war – those two traditional evasions of domesticity and civil life,'⁴¹ but also to the bottle.

Hemingway's representations of sympotic drinking are implicit to the extent that while they follow the structure of the symposium, no overt reference is made to this parallel and, quite possibly, no direct allusion is intended. On the other hand, Hemingway's allusions to the bacchanalian are, on a number of occasions, specific and distinct. They are also often, though by no means always, associated with drinking in which sexual desire has become mixed with the alcohol. In *Fiesta* the bacchanalian is inherent in the very notion and structure of the fiesta itself. Here drunkenness produces a disorientating welter of violence – verbal and physical,

³⁹ Roland Barthes, 'Wine and Milk', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (1957; London: Granada, 1973), pp. 58-61 (pp. 58-9)

⁴⁰ Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, p. 123

⁴¹ Leslie A Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (3rd ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 317

spontaneous and ritualised. Here the codified bitchiness of Montparnasse and the frank intimacy of Burguete are exchanged for wild *riau-riau* dancing and the running of bulls. Brett Ashley, who is depicted as an incarnation of Circe throughout the novel, becomes in Pamplona the female lord of (sexual) misrule:

Some dancers formed a circle around Brett and started to dance. They wore big wreaths of white garlic around their necks. They took Bill and me by the arms and put us in the circle. Bill started to dance, too. They were all chanting. Brett wanted to dance, but they did not want her to. They wanted her as an image to dance around. When the song ended with the sharp *riau-riau* they rushed us into a wine shop ... We stood at the counter. They had Brett seated on a wine cask. (F p. 137)⁴²

The bacchic, however, is that which most profoundly needs regulating and ritualising in order to prevent its descent into chaos.⁴³ In *Fiesta* it is the bullfighter – the heroic embodiment of the injunction to ritualise the bacchic madness of the slaughter – who most clearly represents this. Just as the ritualisation of drinking serves to delimit its explosive potential, so the ritualisation of death in the bullfight symbolically achieves the same.

While the bacchanalian remains a dominant, but unnamed, signifier in *Fiesta* it moves briefly into the open in both *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Hemingway darkly refers to Bacchus in *A Farewell to Arms* when Frederic Henry embarks on the disastrous drinking contest with Bassi Filippo Vincenza the

⁴² For a discussion of Brett Ashley as Circe, see Sarah P. Unfield, *Man's Place in the Natural Order: A Study of Hemingway's Major Works* (New York: Gordon Press, 1976), p. 49

⁴³ F. Scott Fitzgerald has an equally profound sense of the violence at the heart of the drunken, although his work makes little attempt to codify a regulatory response to this. *The Great Gatsby*, for example, is peppered with images of grotesque drink-driving accidents (although Daisy is not drunk when she runs down Myrtle Wilson). *This Side of Paradise* describes the drunken road death of Amory Blaine's Harvard acquaintance Dick Humbrid. In *Tender is the Night* Dick Diver hears that Abe North has died after being beaten to death in a speakeasy. Fitzgerald's 1931 essay 'Echoes of the Jazz Age' contains a kind of summation of this tendency – while also illustrating the levels of drunkenness that the 1920s witnessed: 'By 1927 a widespread neurosis began to be evident ... contemporaries of mine had begun to disappear into the dark maw of violence. A classmate killed his wife and himself on Long Island, another tumbled 'accidentally' from a skyscraper in Philadelphia, another purposely from a skyscraper in New York. One was killed in a speak-easy in Chicago; another was beaten to death in a speak-easy in New York and crawled home to the Princeton club to die; still another had his skull crushed by a maniac's axe in an insane asylum where he was confined.' (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'Echoes of the Jazz Age' (1931), in *The Crack-up with Other Pieces and Stories* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977], pp. 9-19 [p. 16]).

night before he is sent to the front – as a result of which he misses an assignation with Catherine Barkley:

The major said he had heard a report that I could drink. I denied this. He said it was true and by the corpse of Bacchus we would test whether it was true or not. Not Bacchus, I said. Not Bacchus. Yes, Bacchus, he said.⁴⁴

Understanding this recoil from Bacchus provides the key to understanding Hemingway's polarised representation of drinking and drunkenness. Hemingway's ethical structure of alcohol can function between the poles of the sympotic and the bacchic. No representation of drunkenness or sobriety, alcoholism or moderation, social or isolated drinking is evaluated outside of its relationship to these extremes. The isolated, regular and copious drinking of the old customer in 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place' is depicted as a dignified quasi-sympotic response to the struggles of age and isolation, while the possibly occasional and social drinking of Monsieur Fontan's customers in 'Wine of Wyoming' is denounced in the grotesque bacchic image of the 'femme qui a vomis sur la table!'⁴⁵

Throughout *Fiesta*, Hemingway constructs a network of bacchic and sympotic spaces: the bars and nightclubs of Paris, the cafés of Bayonne and San Sebastien, the bars and the bullring at Pamplona, the spinning hotel rooms into which people stagger drunk at night. Here, the drive towards death and dispersal that Hemingway identifies as the outcome of the unregulated carnivalesque is largely codified in the sexual relationships of the characters and the depictions of fishing, the fiesta and the bullfight. The broad geographical sweep of the novel and the essentially frivolous and empty lifestyles of the characters allows Hemingway to play with the ideas of ritual and uncontrolled drinking – sympotic fraternity and the ugly bacchanalia of sexual desire – in terms of the privatised experience of individuals. When, over a decade later, Hemingway turned his hand towards depicting events of real political and historical significance in the Spanish Civil War, the symbolic structures of drink and drinking that he constructed in *Fiesta* remained in place and Hemingway employed them to codify his depiction of interpersonal relations, tactical decisions,

⁴⁴ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 35. Further references to be given in text as FA

⁴⁵ Ernest Hemingway, 'Wine of Wyoming', in *Winner Take Nothing* (1939; London: Grafton, 1988), pp. 130-46 (p. 139)

and private confrontations that now took on, at least within the parameters of the text, a life and death significance.

Rituals of Drink and the Semiotics of Excess in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

The most complex depiction of this ethics of drinking, and the most explicit association of the bacchic with the socially and politically destructive, occurs in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Here we see the celebration of drinking at its most ritualised, and the denunciation of drinking at its most violent. And here, again, there is a dark reference to Bacchus:

‘Go With Bacchus,’ Robert Jordan said in Spanish.

‘Who is Bacchus?’ Pablo asked.

‘A comrade of thine,’ Robert Jordan said.

‘Never have I heard of him,’ Pablo said heavily. ‘Never in these mountains.’ (FBT p. 197)

The nature of this exchange reflects a continuing battle for power that takes place between Robert Jordan and Pablo that is constantly articulated around drink; specifically the ability to drink well, and the possession of an arcane knowledge of the rituals of alcohol. The confrontation between Jordan – sophisticated, rational, courageous – and Pablo – instinctive, violent, cowardly – acts out once again Hemingway’s negation of the carnivalesque. And, once again, this negation takes place in a chronotopic structure which positions the drinking place and the natural world in absolute proximity.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* the drinking place is literally carved into the landscape in the shape of the Pablo’s cave, in and around which almost all the action of the novel occurs and in which all the decisions are made which are subsequently acted on outside. The bifurcated chronotopes of the bar and nature are materialised in the depiction of the two spheres. Inside is ‘the warm air of the cave, heavy with the smoke of both tobacco and charcoal ... the tarry, wine-spilled smell of the big skin hung beside the door, hung by the neck and the four legs extended, wine drawn from a plug fitted in one leg, wine that spilled a little on to the earth of the floor, settling the

dust smell.’ Outside the cave is ‘the clear night air of the mountains that smell of the pines and of the dew on the grass in the meadow by the stream.’ (FBT p. 59) Inside is enclosure, darkness, wine, dust, a stifling warmth, the smell of bodies. Outside is space, clarity, water, dew and the smell of pine trees. As with the bus to Burguete, the bar chronotope is here removed from its native urban scene and transferred to the natural landscape.

That the cave functions as a bar chronotope is confirmed by the fact that the crucial initial confrontation between Jordan and Pablo, in which Jordan persuades the band of guerrillas to switch allegiance to him and therefore facilitate the potentially suicidal destruction of the bridge which it is Jordan’s mission to effect, takes place in the cave and is both triggered by, and pursued through, the rituals of communal drinking. After eating dinner on the first night, Pablo, already deeply suspicious of Robert Jordan’s intentions, publicly and aggressively refuses to offer the American a cup of wine. In other words, Pablo ostentatiously excludes Jordan from the sympotic and fraternal drinking of the guerrilla band; a gesture which positions the college lecturer as definitely not one of ‘the people’, and not ‘one of us’. Jordan responds to this by resorting to the one drink that, in Hemingway’s symbolic hierarchy of alcohol, can outflank the cultic properties of wine:

His hand came up from his hip pocket with the leather covered flask and he unscrewed the top and then, lifting the cup, drank half the water and poured very slowly from the flask into the cup...

‘There is little left or I would offer some to thee,’ he said to Pablo.

‘I do not like anis,’ Pablo said. (FBT p.51)

Here, the aristocratic drinker reverts to type. If wine is the drink of communion and community, then absinthe is the liquor of the adept. In a swift display of ritual and mystery, Jordan turns the tables on his antagonist and shows himself to be more steeped in the masculine rituals of drinking than Pablo. As Jordan pours himself a cup of absinthe, it reminds him:

of all the old evenings in cafés, of all the chestnut trees that would be in bloom now in this month, of the great slow horses of the outer boulevards, of book shops, of kiosks, and of galleries, of the Parc Montsouris, of the

Stade Buffalo, and of the Butte Chaumont, of the Guaranty Trust Company and the Île de la Cité, of Foyot's old hotel, and of being able to read and relax in the evening. (FBT pp. 51-2)

Absinthe signifies not only the machismo of the absinthe drinker but also, as in *Ulysses*, the Paris of cafés, bookshops and galleries. This is surprising given that, at the time that Jordan would have been thinking back to, the only country on the mainland of western Europe in which absinthe would have been freely available was Spain, it having been banned in France in 1915. Nevertheless it is with a particular idea of Paris that absinthe is associated both here and in *Ulysses*. What this testifies to, then, is as much the symbolic function of absinthe as the privileged signifier of bohemian and literary Paris as the uniqueness of absinthe to that city. Here, the preparation and consumption of absinthe identifies Robert Jordan not only as an adept drinker, but as a cosmopolitan intellectual whose prior life in the Paris of American expatriates is illuminated through the metonym of absinthe. That is, the preparation of absinthe serves not only an active plot function in that it shifts the balance of power towards Jordan in his confrontation with Pablo, but a passive one in that it opens a window onto the personal history of Robert Jordan himself. It is noticeable that both here and in *Ulysses* absinthe provides a mnemonic trigger which places the prehistory of a central character in the cafés of Paris. The mnemonic function of absinthe is further characterised in both books by a sense of a vaguely melancholic nostalgia for a lost time – Stephen's memories of Kevin Egan and Jordan's memories of the parks and bookshops which were his old haunts before war intervened. This suggests a further semantic quality of absinthe – one that is somewhat paradoxical in the light of its emergence as a drink specifically symbolising modernity and the new in the late nineteenth century. The nostalgia for absinthe, or the nostalgia for a version of Paris that it conjures up, illustrates both its close association with a particular cultural moment – that is, a turn of the century Paris imagined as both bohemian and gay – and the fact that its subsequent outlawing endows it with an auratic quality; a simultaneous experience of intimacy and distance from the culture and time that it represents born of its very inaccessibility. It is precisely this aura that will be seen to be punctured in 'Hills Like White Elephants'. Here, however, Robert Jordan fully exploits the auratic qualities of his vial of real, French absinthe; the mythic absinthe that fuelled the great creative minds of the Parisian avant-garde and which he

produces here with all the reverence of a medieval mountebank unwrapping an evangelist's toenail:

'That's the wormwood,' Robert Jordan told him. 'In this, the real absinthe, there is wormwood. It's supposed to rot your brain out but I don't believe it. It only changes the ideas. You should pour the water into it very slowly, a few drops at a time. But I poured it into the water.'

'What are you saying?' Pablo said angrily, feeling the mockery.

'Explaining the medicine,' Robert Jordan told him and grinned. (FBT p. 52)

With the band gathered in the cave to discuss whether or not to accept Robert Jordan's leadership and embark on the mission to destroy the bridge, Pablo's initial refusal to offer wine acted both as a marker of his dominance within the group and Robert Jordan's status as unwelcome outsider. The confrontation between the two functions, therefore, as ritualised drinking contest on a number of levels. Firstly it concerns in whose gift it is to share what drink there is with whom; secondly, it is a trial of strength sublimated into a competition as to who takes the strongest drink; thirdly it is a test of knowledge and conversance with the cultures of drink. Each of these elements are markers of manhood: social status, physical strength, esoteric knowledge. Through the dysfunctional inversion of the rituals of treating, then, an aggressive trial of masculinity is carried out, the prize of which is control of the group. It is one which Jordan wins – both gaining the acquiescence of the group, but also effecting a perception of Pablo as an untrustworthy coward and drunkard.

Scott Donaldson suggests that absinthe functions in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as a marker of fraternity and confidence realised in the metaphor of the gift. He points out that, as Jordan and the old guerrilla Anselmo become closer, they share Jordan's absinthe.⁴⁶ It is undoubtedly true that the gift function of alcohol plays a crucial role in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The thoughtfulness of the other guerrilla leader, El Sordo, in procuring a bottle of whisky for Jordan when they meet provides the American with a justificatory reminder of why he is fighting in Spain at all. Robert Jordan's war, as contemporary commentators such as Arturo Barea pointed out

⁴⁶ Donaldson, p. 119

at the time, was as much about a romanticised notion of the supposedly free Spanish peasantry as it was about the real political conditions of the time, and for Jordan 'remembering to bring the whisky was one of the reasons you loved these people.'⁴⁷ However, in the exchange I have quoted it is the *refusal* to offer the gift that carries symbolic meaning. Robert Jordan's drinking is adept, knowledgeable, and sophisticated; the drink he produces is mysterious and suggestive. It is the 'real' absinthe which needs the knowledge of the insider to be prepared and which 'changes ideas' rather than stupefying the drinker. In one sense, absinthe stands metaphorically for the dangerous power of dynamite in the hands of a well-trained outsider (which is, of course, what Jordan needs to convince the band of). Pablo's wine drinking, on the other hand rejects the sympotic rules of communal consumption and becomes, instead, the greedy drinking of a man who drinks to get drunk, a *borracho*.

Pablo, from this point on, not only retreats into a perpetual drunken stupor, but becomes the object of explicit accusations that he is a hopeless drunkard from the rest of the previously subservient group. In a later confrontation with Pilar, she accuses Pablo of the worst excesses of the drunkard. Here, what is dwelt on by Hemingway is not the notion of a compulsion to drink as a spiritual or physical pathology, but the suggestion that a drinker becomes a drunkard when his drinking drags him down into a life of moral laxity and bodily excess; that is, that drunkenness is to be understood pragmatically, in terms of its effects and manifestations rather than its unknowable causes. Pilar's condemnation of Pablo rearticulates both Hemingway's horror of grotesque and unregulated somatic functions, and his implicit spatial separation of the domestic and the social / drunken:

Of all the men the drunkard is the foulest. The thief when he is not stealing is like another. The extortioner does not practice in the home. The

⁴⁷ Arturo Barea, 'Not Spain but Hemingway' (1941), in Roger Asselineau ed., *The Literary Reputation of Hemingway in Europe* (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1965), pp. 197-210 suggests that Hemingway 'had once taken Spain, the Spain of *toreros*, wealthy young *señoritas*, gypsies, tarts, tipsters, and so on, rather as one takes drugs. That colourful and purposeless game with life and death which followed ancient and rigid rules must have responded to some inner need of his.' (p. 208). Allen Guttman concurs somewhat with Hemingway's idealised notion of the Spanish peasantry being forced to 'surrender their archaic relation with the hard, dry Spanish earth, to become members of a technologically-based mass-society ... the result [of which] would have been a curtailment of freedom and an increase in repression' while pointing out that this primitivist romanticism has its antecedents in 'a very *American* tradition of thought and feeling' (Allen Guttman, "'Mechanized Doom": Ernest Hemingway and the American View of the Spanish Civil War' [1960], pp. 95-107 [p. 107] in Carlos Baker ed., *Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962])

murderer when he is at home can wash his hand. But the drunkard stinks and vomits in his own bed and dissolves his organs in alcohol. (FBT p. 201)

Pablo's drunkenness, his proximity to Bacchus, is seen as both a cause and effect of his political apathy, his tactical impotence, his untrustworthiness, and his cowardice. It is also understood in terms of appropriate and inappropriate drinking spaces; Pablo doesn't leave his drinking in the bar, but, like the home-wrecking drunkard of a nineteenth century temperance tale, brings it back into the home. He also, dangerously, brings it into the sphere of political action in the sense that his judgement is taken to be detrimental to the military effectiveness and well-being of the group.

The association of drunkenness with misguided, cowardly and, most pertinently, uncontrolled political violence is most explicitly set out in Pilar's narrative of the massacre she witnessed in her home town at the start of the civil war. In this narrative drunkenness is both ascribed to and symbolically conflated with the anarchism that Hemingway depicts throughout *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as a non-ideology amounting to the pseudo-codification of madness.

Pilar's narrative recalls the execution of a number of fascists in her local town at the start of the civil war. While the story begins as a description of inevitable and necessary violence engendered by war, it becomes a tale of the descent into chaos and the thin line between acceptable and brutal bloodshed; between state execution and mob rule. Pilar initially describes how she and Pablo had been involved in the brutal but controlled execution of the town's fascists by forcing them over a cliff. What tempers the viciousness of the executions at first is that they amount to a form of collective responsibility; the townsfolk were asked to stand in a line and each take part in goading the fascists to the brink of the ravine. However, the execution descends into an orgy of drunken violence in which, by the end, 'there were no more lines but only a mob.' (FBT p, 118). This descent into chaos is explicitly attributed to two things: the consumption of drinks other than wine, and the irresponsibility and drunkenness of the local anarchists. Describing the beginning of the collapse of order, Pilar says:

the people of this town are as kind as they can be cruel and they have a sense of natural justice and a desire to do that which is right. But cruelty had entered into the lines and drunkenness or the beginning of drunkenness ... I do not know how it is in other countries, and no-one cares more for the pleasure of drinking than I do, but in Spain drunkenness, when it is produced by other elements than wine, is a thing of great ugliness, and the people do things they would not have done. (FBT pp. 113-4)

This suggests that the different manifestations of drunkenness can be ascribed to different types of drinks; that wine produces the symptomatic and that the anis and cognac that the locals have taken from the fascist club produces bacchic violence. This, however, is not a pattern repeated throughout Hemingway's work. Throughout these novels and stories, the semantics of drink remain fluid. Again, there is no hard and fast ethical hierarchy of drinks *per se*, but rather a hierarchical relational structure of drinks to drinking places. As has been seen, absinthe and whisky both assume positive roles in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, while it is an improper fondness for wine that is Pablo's downfall. However, the scene of the mass execution is typical in that the hierarchical stratification of semantic meanings accorded to drink is crucial to the narrative as a whole.

The direct association of the chaotic violence of bacchic drunkenness with anarchism emerges slightly later. As the bloodshed continues Pilar describes how each anarchist

Would take a drink and then shout, "*Viva la Anarquia!*" lying on his back and shouting as though he were a madman ... A peasant who had left the lines and now stood in the shade of the arcade looked at them in disgust and said, "They would shout, 'Long live drunkenness.' That's all they believe in." (FBT pp. 119)

Anarchy is here metamorphosed into drunkenness and vice versa. With drunkenness and anarchy functioning as interchangeable synonyms both can be condemned by Hemingway as amounting to the same thing: the abandonment of control and the celebration of the irrational and venal. For Hemingway, anarchism as a political programme can be condemned for exactly the same reason as private excessive

drunkenness can be condemned because they amount to the same thing. What Hemingway attempts to do here politically is precisely what he attempted to do with the character of Mike Campbell on a personal level in *Fiesta*; that is, denounce what he sees as the renunciation of regulation and control. For Hemingway, the worst thing that can happen – in social relations, in drinking habits, in sexual conduct, in politics – is the overturning of order. What is signified by promiscuity in the sexual sphere, and by anarchism in the political, is signified by uncontrolled intoxication in the sphere of drink.

Again, this episode illustrates the rejection of excess and transgression in Hemingway's fiction – or at least the need for strict regulation of excess when it inevitably occurs. Here, the highly carnivalesque scenes of the public square and the threshold, the overturning of social hierarchies, and the violent abuse of established authorities, produces no laughter but the obscene laughter of the drunks, and provides not fearlessness and spiritual regeneration but only guilt and anxiety. The unregulated carnival here becomes nothing so much as a glimpse into hell.⁴⁸ Bakhtin, in his discussions of the carnivalesque, rarely addressed twentieth century literature or authors. One of the few who he does discuss directly, albeit very briefly, is Ernest Hemingway. While considering whether positive representations of the carnivalesque can exist in modern literature, Bakhtin wrote:

It cannot be denied, of course, that a certain degree of special fascination is inherent in all contemporary forms of carnivalistic life. It is enough to name *Hemingway*, whose work, on the whole deeply carnivalized, was strongly influenced by contemporary forms and festivals of a carnival type (especially the bullfight). He had a very keen ear for everything carnivalistic in contemporary life.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ It would be outside the scope of this study to discuss in detail the many parallels between this scene and the final pages of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). Both, however, contain a conflation of drunkenness with political violence that culminates in the Dante-esque descent of bodies into a ravine – in a way, the death of the Consul could be read as the fascists' bloody revenge on Hemingway's anarchists. *Under the Volcano* also shares much with *Fiesta* – not least its spatial polarity between the imagined utopian sobriety of British Columbia and the intoxicated landscapes of Mexico. Lowry was sufficiently aware of these parallels (and anxious enough about the reception of his intensely personal epic) to insist in a letter that he was not simply copying *Fiesta* (Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters*, ed. Harvey Breight and Marjorie Bonner Lowry [1967; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985], p. 144).

⁴⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 179, n. 22. Bakhtin doesn't pursue his line of thought beyond this footnote.

This unusual acknowledgement, I would suggest, does more to illustrate the argument that Bakhtin tended to turn a blind eye to the regulatory nature of carnival than to confirm the persistence of carnival as he understood it in isolated pockets of modern literature.⁵⁰ Hemingway's representations of the carnivalesque are always representations of the idealised regulation of the carnivalesque: bullfighting, controlled drinking, boxing. Far from representing 'the temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life',⁵¹ what Bakhtin identifies as carnivalesque in Hemingway is, in fact, the ritualised assertion of the absolute need for regulations, hierarchy and prohibition. When Hemingway does depict the suspension of hierarchy and regulation, he depicts carnivalesque deaths – whether those of the fascists in Pilar's narrative or that of Catherine Barkley and her baby in *A Farewell to Arms* – which are neither 'drawn into the circle of life'⁵² nor go any way to overcoming fear. To this extent, Hemingway's depiction of the grotesque can be seen as confirming Bakhtin's argument that the bourgeois privatisation of the body leads to a negation of the positive meanings of the grotesque. However, in the example of the bullfight, which Bakhtin does identify as carnivalesque, the carnival functions as precisely that which *regulates* excess, rather than that which celebrates it. Just as the medieval carnival can be understood as a means of allowing a regulated degree of laxity and transgression by way of controlling it (rather than employing the untenable tactic of outlawing it altogether), so Hemingway's representation of drinking can be understood as a means of controlling the drive to excess, violence and self-destruction.

Whether this negation of the carnivalesque – or perhaps, this celebration of the regulatory carnivalesque – amounts to a strict and pre-ordained 'code' is a questionable point. The notion of a heroic code in Hemingway, which emerges among critics such as Robert Penn Warren in the early 1960's, claims that Hemingway places characters who adhere to rules of courage, style, honesty and self-control in various testing conditions in his different fictions. What results is

⁵⁰ Bakhtin insists that post-Romantic representations of carnival inevitably privatise the grotesque to a point where its connotations 'become narrow and specific, torn away from direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole.' (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 321) However, what Bakhtin implies he has identified in Hemingway is a persistence of the medieval carnivalesque that has survived the privatisation of the body.

⁵¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 15

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 359

essentially an illustration of how such codified behaviour can overcome the entropy and meaninglessness of everyday life. This, however, seems to me to place unnecessary limitations on the actions of Hemingway's characters and the possible critical readings of them. If the 'code' includes courage, then what is to be made of Frederic Henry's desertion into Switzerland? If it demands dignity, what of Jake Barne's self-abasing role as pimp in *Fiesta*? Wesley A. Kort has argued that Hemingway's characters do not come to his fictions fully formed, there simply to act out a pre-ordained 'code'; rather, 'how one should act or should have acted is taught by *encounter* and is a function of alignment and appropriation.' [my emphasis].⁵³ The prioritisation of the encounter, and the argument that what Hemingway depicts is not a pre-fixed way of acting but series of possible responses to specific situations allows us to return again to the function of chronotopes in Hemingway's work. While *Fiesta* is a novel constructed essentially around nodes of interaction – Paris, Burguete, Bayonne and Pamplona – *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a novel of thresholds at which encounters occur which force existential, political and tactical choices onto the characters and through which they define themselves.

A number of these threshold spaces can be identified immediately: the mouth of Pablo's cave (where Jordan takes his first communal drink with the guerrilla band, and where he sleeps at night); the military front; the cliff-top over which the fascists are thrown in Pilar's narrative; the bridge which the band are to destroy. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a book built around borders, crossing points (the hero's name referencing one of the most famous crossing points of all), and the self-defining choices that are made in and around those spaces. To this extent, Hemingway echoes the use of threshold spaces that Bakhtin identifies in Dostoevsky's fiction:

In his works Dostoevsky makes almost no use of relatively uninterrupted historical or biographical time, that is, of strictly epic time; he "leaps over" it, he concentrates on action at *points of crisis, at turning points and catastrophes*, when the inner significance of the moment is equal to a "billion years," that is, when the moment loses its temporal restrictiveness. In essence he leaps over space as well, and concentrates action in two "points" only: on the *threshold* (in doorways, entrance ways, on staircases,

⁵³ Wesley A. Kort, 'Human Time in Hemingway's Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 24 (Winter 1980-1981), pp. 579-596 (p. 583)

in corridors, and so forth), where the crisis and the turning point occur, or on the *public square*, whose substitute is usually the drawing room (the hall, the dining room), where the catastrophe, the scandal take place.⁵⁴

Clearly there are important differences between what Bakhtin sees as Dostoevsky's use of the threshold and Hemingway's. Most importantly, Hemingway, particularly in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* places historical time at the heart of his work; indeed, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, as in much fiction of the 1930s and early 1940s, historical time itself becomes a threshold between fascism and freedom. Equally, for Hemingway biographical time is magnified by the looming presence of death; the three days which *For Whom the Bell Tolls* cover are the last three days of Robert Jordan's life. However, it is perhaps for these very reasons that the threshold becomes so central to this novel. The desperation of the situation that the novel depicts enforces the realisation that, in the John Donne poem the title alludes to 'no man is an island, entire unto himself.' Where Bakhtin sees Dostoevsky employing the threshold as a space in which the existential fact that identity is predicated on the relation and interaction between self and other is embodied and narrated, in Hemingway the threshold serves to magnify the fact that, whether identity is relational or not there are moments of decision in which survival is relational and interactive; whether that be the survival of the self, the country, the political structure or the personal relations between individuals.

In *Fiesta* we saw the liminal point between bar and nature facilitating and idealised – and quite possibly unsustainable – fraternity between men of different class and culture. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* Pablo's cave emerges as the space in which confrontations occur and decisions are made on the personal level that are then acted out in the threshold spaces with which it is surrounded. A final investigation into Hemingway's spatial narrative structures, the function of the threshold within these, the representation of history through the spatial, and the role of a hierarchy of drinks within these spaces, will illustrate what happens when the threshold of bar and nature ceases to become either utopian or decisive, but instead becomes a space in which the two spheres cancel each other out. 'Hills Like White Elephants', although one of Hemingway's shortest pieces of fiction, both encapsulates and problematises

⁵⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 149

the representation and function of drinks and drinking spaces in the work that both precedes and follows it.

Indeterminate Space and the Destruction of Aura in 'Hills Like White Elephants'

In 'Hills Like White Elephants' we see all of the narrative structures discussed above at work. The conversation that the story depicts takes place on a threshold between the drinking place and nature. It is set in a bar that is not really a bar (it is an adjunct to an isolated railway station) in a landscape that is not accessible in any way other than forming a distant visual horizon beyond the railway tracks. The train station is placed somewhere between Barcelona and Madrid in the valley of the river Ebro. The two interlocutors sit outside, separated from the station bar by a beaded curtain (just as the blanket hung over the mouth of Pablo's cave at night separated Robert Jordan from that space), and separated from the landscape by the railway tracks. They drink both beer and absinthe and discuss, without actually using the words, an abortion that the female character may or may not be about to have. The unspoken subject of the conversation raises, in Hemingway's work, the question of the relationship between gender, drink, and fertility that has been important throughout this study and that will be seen to be crucial to Jean Rhys' fiction in the final chapter.

Leslie Fiedler has written that 'there are ... no *women* in [Hemingway's] books!'⁵⁵ Obviously, this refers not to a literal lack of female characters but to a tendency in Hemingway's work for women to appear as mere ciphers of an idiosyncratic but self-consciously masculine fantasy of femininity: docile, sexually available, noticeably androgynous, ineffectual. John Crowley has suggested a specific relationship between the representation of drinking and the representations of sexuality and gender in Hemingway's fiction. He argues that Hemingway simultaneously represents the male alcoholic as effeminate and the female drinker as unwomanly.⁵⁶ The two flaws in this construction are that on the one hand one of the most effeminate of Hemingway's characters is Robert Cohn, whose effeminacy is explicitly linked to his refusal to get drunk, and on the other hand that Hemingway's

⁵⁵ Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, p. 316

⁵⁶ Crowley, p. 57

female characters, such as they are, all drink to a greater or lesser degree.⁵⁷ What I would suggest, however, is that while Hemingway, unlike Joyce, depicts women drinking, his depictions are ideologically circumscribed. Women who drink in Hemingway's fiction are usually either, like Brett Ashley, sexually dangerous; like Catherine Barkley and the female character in 'Hills Like White Elephants', sites of perverted fertility; or, like Pilar and Madame Fontan, the stoic and domineering wives of weak men. What I would want to concentrate on here is not so much whether or not Hemingway's female characters drink or whether that makes them in some broad sense 'unwomanly', but the specific issue of the relationship between drinking, gender and fertility specifically as it is interwoven into the spatial construction of 'Hills Like White Elephants'.

I have argued throughout this study that the construction of a problematic of alcohol throughout the nineteenth century was, to a considerable degree, predicated on the association between drink and distorted fertility. From the image of the drunken mother in Hogarth's *Gin Lane* to the centrality of alcoholism in the discourses of inherited racial degeneration, drinking among women has consistently been associated with the both promiscuity and either infertility, child mortality, or defective birth. Hemingway, in his depictions of female drinkers consistently rearticulates this discourse of drink and problematic fertility. Brett Ashley's promiscuity is, along with her drinking, fundamental to her role as modern Circe; her driving of men mad with desire occurs under the influence of, and is figured as analogous to, intoxication. When Brett repeatedly asks Jake not to get drunk during their final meeting in Madrid, it refers as much to his unrealisable carnal desire for her as to the unusually excessive drinking which he engages in as a compensation for his sexual frustration. Jake's literally dismembered body obviates any drive towards procreation on his part leaving his intact sexual desires as a source of pain and frustration and forcing him to seek compensatory pleasures in masculine and homosocial rituals of death: hunting and bullfighting, and the sympotic drinking with which they are ideally – though not always actually – associated.

⁵⁷ It is during an argument initiated by Mike Campbell accusing Cohn of being a steer that Mike asks 'Why don't you ever get drunk, Robert?' (F p. 125). In *Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley drinks and it is the actions of a non-drinking nurse that send Frederic Henry back to the front after his stay in Milan. Madame Fontan in 'Wine of Wyoming' is one of Hemingway's most adept drinkers (unlike her husband). And in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* both Pilar and Maria (both versions of a fantasised femininity: the dominatrix and the victim) drink.

Farewell to Arms, while containing Hemingway's most explicit portrayals of homoerotic drinking, also culminates in an extended representation of intoxicated, and ultimately tragic, fertility. In one of the very few occasions in which Hemingway actually represents a central character engaging in drunken verbal erotic intimacy, we see at the same time Hemingway's closest formal approximation of Rabelais' and Joyce's drunken conversations. Here, as Frederic Henry, Lieutenant Rinaldi and a hospital major get drunk together the night before Henry goes to the front, it is as if the Joycean merging of the depiction and the narration of drunkenness serves less to produce the aesthetic experience of a new and liberating consciousness, but rather to obscure and enshroud the dangerous overstepping of the symptomatic into the homoerotic:

Roma is feminine, said Rinaldi. It cannot be the father. Who is the father, then. The Holy Ghost. Don't blaspheme. I wasn't blaspheming, I was asking for information. You are drunk, baby. Who made me drunk? I made you drunk, said the major. I made you drunk because I love you and because America is in the war. Up to the hilt, I said. You go away in the morning, baby, Rinaldi said ... You go to live in a big city and have your English there to cuddle you. Why don't I get wounded? Maybe you will, I said. We must go, said the major ... Don't go. Yes, we must go. Good-bye. Good luck. Many things. Ciao. Ciao. Ciao. Come back quickly, baby. Rinaldi kissed me. You smell of Lysol. Good-bye, baby. Good-bye. Many things. The major patted my shoulder. They tiptoed out. I found I was quite drunk, but went to sleep. (FA p. 63-5)

Later, as Rinaldi strokes Henry's wounded knee (which he has removed his breeches to show his friend), he, shocked at hearing Henry can't drink due to jaundice, exclaims 'Oh, baby, how you've come back to me. You've come back serious and with a liver.' But promises, 'I will get you drunk and take out your liver and put you in a good Italian liver and make you a man again.' (FA p. 131)

While this exchange sublimates body parts and promises that drink will provide the key to a reawakened, homoerotic masculinity, Catherine's birth scene at the close of the book allies drink and intoxication with a ruined heterosexual fertility. Here Henry moves from bar to hospital room and back again as Catherine pleads for

ever increasing doses of anaesthetic gas to ease her evidently doomed labour. Unable to see Catherine after the death of their baby is announced, Henry drinks enough beer to notice 'quite a pile of saucers now on the table in front of me' (FA p. 253) before returning to witness Catherine herself die. There is the sense of disrupted fertility as a kind of moral punishment here.⁵⁸ The death of Catherine and the child are represented as a kind of cruel cosmic judgment on Catherine and Frederic's decision to establish a 'separate peace' in Switzerland; a choice which, for all its sentimental idealism, is also pictured in the book as both self-indulgent and banal. In the midst of the most bloody upheaval in human history, Catherine and Frederic live a life of pastoral bliss in which their conversations reach the banality of the following exchange:

'What are you thinking, darling?'

'About whisky'

'What about whisky?'

'About how nice it is.'

Catherine made a face. 'All right,' she said.' (FA p. 238)

If, as Brett Ashley asserts in *Fiesta*, 'we pay for the things we do' (F p. 23), then the price of a somnolent drift into self-regarding stupefaction in *Farewell to Arms* is high indeed.

'Hills Like White Elephants' presents a similar conflation of images of sterility, banality and drink. Again, Hemingway foregrounds the belief, which rumbles around all his fiction, that women who drink should not be women who mother. Intoxication in women – whether it be Brett Ashley's constant drinking, Catherine Barkley's anaesthesia, or Jig's experimentation with absinthe – is consistently allied to infertility. To this extent, Hemingway is entirely within the tradition of nineteenth and twentieth century representations of drink and drunkenness. While Hemingway in his fiction – and even in his memoirs – tends not to sublimate male intoxication into the metaphorical fertility of the creative process, he does idealise exclusively male drinking as the possible site of fertile conversation

⁵⁸ Clearly this rearticulates an essential aspect of the gendered representation of drinking from the central figure of Hogarth's *Gin Lane* through to the use of dying wives and children as moral lessons in temperance fiction. This discursive image will re-emerge in the following chapter, particularly in Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark*.

and of an openness and honesty that tends towards the production of instrumental truth. Drunken conversations between men and women tend, on the other hand, to become banal and mendacious. In this regard, he depicts from a male standpoint the ideologically enclosed subjection of the female drinker as lesser than the male drinker that Rhys foregrounds in her writing. In 'Hills Like White Elephants' this conversational sterility is figured analogously to the sterility of the woman who drinks. Here a relationship based on the intimacy of the bar hits a taciturn crisis when faced with a real-life decision. When Jig asks her partner to 'please, please, please, please, please, please, please stop talking',⁵⁹ she is responding to a frustrating conversational impasse in which the dialogue, for all its brevity, has already descended into a series of apparently meaningless platitudes and evasive observations. The conversation between the two characters is one in which a terse lack of the specific not so much belies as obviates an intimacy between the two, an intimacy that has become incapable of finding a viable means of self-expression.

Spatially, the conversation takes place on a threshold, surrounded by thresholds. Unlike both the bus to Burguete or Pablo's cave, it is not an artificial bar space transplanted into natural surroundings. Where the couple sit is on the threshold of both bar and landscape; between trains and between cities. As we have seen, for Hemingway, the positive liminal space between bar and nature is essentially a site of male intercourse. To the extent that the terrace of the station bar is a liminal space, it proves here to be one in which Hemingway depicts precisely the limits, as he sees them, of intimacy between men and women – or at least, between American men and women in Europe at that point in history. Furthermore, the relationship between the two is one based on the limits of emotional engagement possible in the expatriate scene. When Jig asks to try absinthe, she observes that 'That's all we do isn't it – look at things and try new drinks?' (H p. 39) This is, in many ways, a summation of the most negative aspects of Hemingway's 'lost generation'; what James T. Farrell identified as the depiction of people whose attitude is that of perennial vacationers who 'have love affairs ... drink, go fishing, and see new spectacles.'⁶⁰

Hemingway's ambivalent relationship to the Paris of the twenties lies behind much of the symbolism of 'Hills Like White Elephants'. Writing twenty years later,

⁵⁹ Ernest Hemingway, 'Hills Like White Elephants', in *Men Without Women* (1928; London: Arrow, 1994), pp. 38-42 (p. 42). Further references to be given in text as H.

⁶⁰ James T. Farrell, 'The Sun Also Rises: The League of Frightened Philistines' (1945), in Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels*, pp. 4-6 (p. 5)

Hemingway would depict the kind of Parisian memories that absinthe brings to Robert Jordan's mind. In 'Hills Like White Elephants', however, absinthe is stripped of its aura and divested of its cosmopolitan, bohemian and magical connotations. The drink that Hemingway would later depict as the mysterious drink of the genuine adept drinker is here drained of all semantic privilege, becoming instead a signifier of the 'flirtation with irresponsibility, alcohol, and sex,' that Leslie Fiedler describes as the banal end of the American invasion of Paris.⁶¹ According to Jig, finally getting to try the absinthe, it says nothing of Baudelaire or Boulevards, of cafés or kiosks, it simply tastes like liquorice: 'Everything tastes like liquorice,' she says. 'Especially the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe.' (H p. 39)

Doris Lanier suggests that Hemingway uses the motif of absinthe to create a metaphor of the addictive and destructive nature of the relationship between the two characters in this story. However Hemingway, while according absinthe a privileged function as either a arcane ritual and signifier of a lost, bohemian Paris (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*) or as the signifier of a bacchic drunkenness (Jake Barnes gets drunk on absinthe on his last night in Pamplona), at no point concurs with the rhetoric of the anti-absinthe lobby – on whose literature Lanier largely relies in her study – by whom it was depicted as pathologically addictive and incalculably detrimental to the mental and physical health of the drinker. I would argue that, rather than Hemingway denouncing the relationship as being *like* that between a helpless *absintheur* and absinthe, he uses absinthe as a metonym of the pseudo-bohemian world that the two Americans have flirted with; a world where the pleasure and irresponsibility of the bar conversation never had to face hard facts such as poverty or choices between life and death. Absinthe here ceases to act as the signifier of an attractively glamorous *laissez-faire*, becoming instead the index of the shallow gaze of the tourist – a gaze directed both outwards to the world (which amounts here to a disposable commodity: a white elephant) and inwards to the self which can do nothing much more than 'look at things and try new drinks'.

The physical setting of the story clarifies this. It is by removing two typical visiting Americans from the dark, smoky, crowded bars of Montparnasse that the essential vacuity of their supposed immersion in cosmopolitan European culture is highlighted. Again, the spatial setting of Hemingway's work functions

⁶¹ Leslie A Fiedler, *Waiting for the End The American Literary Scene from Hemingway to Baldwin* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1967), p.21

chronotopically. The transformation of the natural landscape, in Jigs eyes, into a white elephant amounts to the transformation of the old world into a commodity to be consumed by the Americans who descended upon it in the years following World War One. The bar alongside which the narrative is set is, therefore, placed in a dialogic relationship to both the bars of America (which are, of course, officially closed) and those of Paris with which absinthe is most famously associated (absinthe becoming therefore merely the commodified provider of an ersatz experience of the lost years of the 'green hour' which, in truth, the majority of expatriates arrived too late to witness anyway). Here a potentially life-changing decision is talked around, euphemised, hinted at, made weightless ('It's just to let the air in' [H p. 40]). In Hemingway's hierarchical structure of drinks and drinking spaces, this deserted station and the drinks consumed alongside it combine to produce a second negative construction of drinking; not the bacchic drinking of the fiesta or the execution of the fascists, but the impotent, ineffectual drinking of the tourist and the escapee; the kind of drinking Bill Gorton condemns in *Fiesta* while suggesting a parallel between it and Jake's impotence:

'You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés.' (F p. 101)

Ernest Hemingway in many ways defined a particular drinking culture: that of the disparate, affluent American émigrés living in Paris in the 1920s. However, his was a depiction charged with ambivalence. Hemingway on the one hand depicts absinthe as a drink which signifies an insider's privileged proximity to a mythic Paris. An early description from *Fiesta* provides a connoisseur's discrimination between real absinthe and the Pernod that an unwary dilettante may consume in the mistaken belief that it will provide that auratic access to the creativity, inspiration and genuine bohemianism of the green fairy: 'Pernod is a greenish imitation absinthe. When you add water it turns milky. It tastes like liquorice and has a good uplift, but it drops you just as far.' (F p. 12). And yet we find, in 'Hills Like White Elephants' that absinthe itself just tastes like liquorice – is just a set of new clothes for the old emperor, alcohol; and is just a frivolous medium of ersatz authenticity for dissipated and

privileged youths who are incapable of discussing real life decisions with any more gravity than that with which they would discuss whether to try a new drink or not. Hemingway depicts women drinking without ostensible moral censure, but then privileges absolutely the culture of exclusive male drinking and rearticulates a structural association (albeit not a causal relationship) between drunkenness in women and infertility. He celebrates, indeed insists upon, drinking but then condemns absolutely the effects of drunkenness; demanding of the drinker a self-regulation far more onerous than that demanded by the prohibitionist – to still drink and yet not to get drunk. Hemingway's complex semiotics of drink, his intricate structures of space, place, and conversational rules all serve, in the end, to produce a highly specific representational and ethical structure which is simultaneously a product of his time, a comment on it, and a quasi-utopian response to it.

As well as providing an image of the drinking culture of the 1920s, Hemingway also, along with but in a different manner to F. Scott Fitzgerald, popularly defined a particular set of relations between drink and American modernist literature. His close association with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound – an association which at the time led Wyndham Lewis sardonically to describe Hemingway as a 'dumb ox' who '*Steins* up and down the world, with the big lustreless ruminatory orbs of a Picasso doll-woman' – in fact did much to promote Hemingway's modernist credentials.⁶² Hemingway's later assertion that his greatest influence was James Joyce, and his self-mythologizing memoirs *A Moveable Feast*, can be seen in many ways as Hemingway's attempt to consolidate his position at the heart of the modernist literary scene as it existed in and around the bars of Montparnasse in the 1920s – much as George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* placed the Irish writer at the heart of Parisian avant-garde café society half a century earlier.

The status of Hemingway as a 'modernist' writer in the sense that it was understood in the 1920s was, however, questioned by no less a modernist luminary than Virginia Woolf. In an otherwise generous review of *Men Without Women* Woolf addressed the question of whether Hemingway could properly be described as a modernist writer, concluding that 'Hemingway is not modern in the sense given; and it would appear from his first novel that this rumour of modernity must have sprung from his subject matter and from his treatment of it rather than from any fundamental

⁶² Wyndham Lewis, 'The Dumb Ox: A Study of Ernest Hemingway' (1934), in ed. Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 186-209 (p.197).

novelty in his conception of the art of fiction.’⁶³ The observations of both Woolf and Lewis show that, certainly in the opinions of two of the most self-consciously avant-garde writers in English at the time, Hemingway could not be considered an experimental modernist writer in any real sense of the term. Looking again at Andreas Huyssen’s summary of definitive tendencies in modernist literature would seem to confirm the opinion of Virginia Woolf. Hemingway’s literature is by no means ‘totally separate from the realms of mass culture and everyday life’, it is not ‘rigorously experimental’ in a self-conscious and self-referential way, it certainly does not attempt the ‘repudiation of likeness and verisimilitude’ in the sense of a putatively ‘objective’ realism.⁶⁴ Considered within the parameters of this study, the formal aspects of Hemingway’s writing can be placed outside the modernist trajectory I have described to the extent that Hemingway does not engage in an aesthetics of intoxication such as was described in Chapter Four, nor does a textual phenomenology of intoxication serve to facilitate literary experimentation as I have argued it does in *Ulysses*.

For Hemingway, drunkenness is not a cognitive condition which either provides a metaphor for modernity or out of which a set of aesthetic practices can be formed. Rather it is something that runs parallel to both activity and representation. Apart from the very occasional detour into modes of intoxicated narration (such as the conversation between Frederic Henry, Lieutenant Rinaldi, and the hospital major quoted above), the narrative voice in Hemingway’s fiction is that of a sober third party; or, when writing in the first person, that of the sober recollection. Hemingway’s narrative style consciously rejects all the attributes of the aesthetics of intoxication that I have previously identified. It rejects the irrational, the expansive, the artificially transcendent and the carnivalesque – which is not to say that Hemingway doesn’t depict such things, but that there is a detachment in his mode of depiction that separates the object and forms of representation when that object is intoxication. Where the artificial transcendence of Stephen Dedalus’ drunkenness is transformed in *Ulysses* into the overcoming of artistic limitations through its homologous textual representation, the effect of absinthe on Robert Jordan is rendered tersely and soberly in the text as ‘it only changes the ideas’ (FBT p. 52).

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, ‘Review of *Men Without Women*’ (1927) in *ibid.*, pp. 101-107 (p. 103)

⁶⁴ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, pp. 53-4

Hemingway's representation of drink can be understood as modernist in the sense that Woolf understands Hemingway as modernist; that is, in terms of his subject matter and treatment of it. What is notable is that while Hemingway insists on celebrating drink, his association of urbanity with intoxication, drunken women with infertility and child mortality, drunken men with culpable financial irresponsibility, and intoxication as equating to dangerous and incoherent politics, rearticulates many of the fundamental discursive strategies of the temperance movement. At the same time, his celebration of drink bears little resemblance to a modernist aesthetics of intoxication which finds in the synthetic transcendence and artificially deracinated cognition of drunkenness both a means to and metaphor for the comprehension of modern life. For Hemingway, neither the abandonment of instrumental reason, the withdrawal into an intoxicated and intoxicating aestheticism, nor the celebration of the dynamics of the crowd are appropriate responses to the conditions of modernity. Not unlike Jack London, Hemingway does seek to establish a practical philosophical stability as a bulwark against the uncertainty, anomie and potential nihilism of modern life. However, unlike Jack London and unlike the temperance movement as a whole, Hemingway refuses to construct an aetiology of either poverty, violence or despair in which drink is the causative factor. Instead, Hemingway's love of both order *and* alcohol forces him to construct an idiosyncratic discourse of drink which can negotiate the apparent contradictions in that very position.

What Hemingway constructs in his fiction is an *idea* of drinking as a social practice within modernity. His notion of controlled, adept drinking places an entirely new slant on the modernist aesthetics of intoxication. Hemingway's representations of drinking retain its role as an inescapable and necessary means of surviving and comprehending modernity, while insisting that this is not a function of intoxication as bacchic, carnivalesque, transgressive, excessive or as a mode of secular spiritual transcendence. Rather than providing the drinker with an ironic means of overcoming anomie and alienation, Hemingway sees these aspects of intoxication as simply re-enacting the very worst aspects of modernity. What Hemingway privileges instead is a return to a sympotic and masculine notion of drinking. In what is a profoundly unmodernist response to modernity, Hemingway rejects entirely plunging into what Wyndham Lewis once described as 'the everyday drunkenness of the normal real'.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Quoted in Nicholls, *Modernisms*, p. 269

He rejects in other words both the Baudelarian celebration of the intoxication of everyday life and Benjamin's call to follow surrealism in 'harnessing the energies of intoxication for the revolution'. He also effectively rejects the Nietzschean idea of the Dionysian superman; Hemingway's feats of endurance, strength, courage, and other superficially Nietzschean attributes are fixed absolutely in a structure of moral good and evil, of hierarchical discipline, that is absolutely antithetical to Nietzsche's philosophical project; art, for Hemingway, is not there to transcend Judeo-Christian morality, but to reconfirm it. Rather than look to a secular and ironic re-imagining of the biblical transubstantiation of wine – that is, rather than look to wine as a synthetic mode of spiritual transcendence – Hemingway reinvents a symposium in which Dionysus is materialised as cognitive effect: the power of alcohol to 'change ideas'. Hemingway's response to modernity is not, in the end, to find through art ways of constructing new modes of consciousness equal to the chaotic and disorientating experience of the new but to represent in literature forms of idealised pre-modern male social relations which have the integrity and strength to resist the carnivalizing conditions of modern life.

In contradiction to a progressive identification of the avant-garde artist with Gin Lane; that is with either a willing immersion into the urban irrational or, at the very least, with the arch and *déclassé* superiority of the Beer Street signpainter, Hemingway seems to propose a return to Beer Street itself. A pre-temperance return, that is, to drinking as communal, as pleasurable, as a reward for hard work, as a signifier of venerable cultural traditions. Against the experience of modernity, Hemingway constructs a myth of tradition in which drinking transcends, rather than defines class and in which communal drinking can represent a transcendence of the divide between the town and the country. At the same time, however, this very conception is undermined by his regulatory insistence on self-control and by the formation of a select hierarchy of drinkers who prove capable of this. Indeed, while rejecting the temperance insistence on sobriety, what Hemingway seems to propose is an even more rigorous forms of self-surveillance rooted in an identical fear of the irrational, economically unproductive and politically dangerous mob. Rather than an injunction to abstain, what Hemingway insists on is an injunction to drink but still maintain a degree of rational self-control. What starts out looking like a democracy of drink, becomes on closer inspection a rigorously policed hierarchy in which the

criteria of success is measured in one's ability to drink like Hemingway's alcoholic oligarchs: his Robert Jordans, Jake Barneses and Bill Gortons.

At the back of Hemingway's idea of drinking, then, can be seen many of the same anxieties that lay behind the temperance movement – a fear of the irrational, of the demoralising influence of urban life, of political upheaval, of the collapse of a work ethic. However, in its simultaneous idealised vision of communal drinking, its celebration of the carefully self-regulated private experience of intoxication, and its condemnation of the irrationality of drunkenness, Hemingway's conception of drinking rejects the temperance bifurcation of the sober and the drunken in a way that a celebratory aesthetics of intoxication does not. The symbolic association of drink with a consciousness-shifting intoxication and the drinker with an inherent resistance to bourgeois conformism, paradoxically, rearticulates the temperance equation of drink with being drunk, and the drinker with the drunkard. To this extent at least, the aesthetics of intoxication is consistent with temperance discourse. Hemingway's modern, but not modernist, representation of drink points, in a way, to the rediscovery of drink after Prohibition as the work of neither Bacchus nor Beelzebub, but as an everyday part of everyday life. At the same time, it constructed a paradoxical modern myth of drink as something which, through practice in both senses of the word, could negate its own carnival nature and become instead a mode and index of control.

It has been taken as the task of numerous subsequent commentators to point to the detrimental effects of Hemingway's mythic drinking on both would-be writers seduced by its promise of machismo, productivity and sheer pleasure, and on broader drinking cultures, particularly in America.⁶⁶ Hemingway's myth of drinking as creative, accessible, controllable, authoritative and ritualised emerges out of his idiosyncratic synthesis of the discourses of Victorian temperance and those of an avant-garde celebration of intoxication. It is a masculine myth bound up with the idea of the role of the modern writer. By drinking the right things in the right places the writer can alternately associate himself with the literary avant-garde, the urban proletariat, and the rural peasantry. By drinking with Hemingwayesque control, he can superficially transgress in proper post-Romantic style, the privileging of sobriety – while actually reconfirming the injunction to self-regulation that the idea of sobriety

⁶⁶ See, Room op. cit.; Kazin op. cit.; Crowley op. cit.; Dardis op. cit.; and Stephen King, who describes the 'Hemingway Defense' for alcoholism as 'as a writer I am a very sensitive fellow, but I am also a man, and real men don't give in to their sensitivities. Only *sissy*-men do that. Therefore I drink.' (Stephen King, *On Writing* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000], p. 54)

neatly signifies. Furthermore by drinking sympotically, he can affirm his masculinity while reaffirming the symbolic association between the male drinker and the synthetic fertility of literary production. Equally, by learning the rituals and culture of drinking he can metaphorically affirm his necessary status as perennial insider; the successfully *déclassé* commentator on the social worlds upon which he turns his ideally omniscient gaze.

This complex construction, while differing in the ways I have identified from James Joyce, shares with *Ulysses* the mythic notion of the heroic male modernist writer both confronting and reimagining his world through the medium of intoxication. However, in the following chapter I shall consider the other side of this perspective; the experience of the writer who is the perennial outsider, whose drinking is always already a signifier of pathology, who cannot be Hemingway's perennial insider because his definition of what that insider is excludes her implicitly. Jean Rhys' fiction, in many ways, can be seen as a return of Hemingway's repressed and at the same time a problematisation of an aesthetics of intoxication that was predicated on a myth of literary paternity which necessarily constructed the drunken woman as the other of intoxicated creativity.

Chapter 7

Drink, Gender and the Production of Literature: Jean Rhys' Early Fiction

The opening text of this study – William Hogarth's *Gin Lane* – has as its central figure a grotesque image of a drunken mother. This image, I have argued, reflects the beginning of a process in which cultural anxiety over the consumption of alcohol was articulated around the fear of distorted fertility among women. Anxieties around the effect of alcohol on poverty, disease, criminality, and economic dysfunctionality, were gendered in the dual images of the sober woman as the guarantor of domestic well-being, and in the drunken mother as endangering the health of the population through the perversion of her own fertility. In other words, while fears around the social effects of male drinking became in one trajectory focussed on the disruption of domesticity by drunken men, the locus of fears over hereditary degeneration became, in one of its important trajectories, women who drank.

This pathological association of drink and fertility is rearticulated both in the images of sterile female drinkers in Hemingway and in its metamorphosis into an image of the perverse fertility of the intoxicated text in *Ulysses*. Joyce's analogous usurpation of female reproduction rearticulates in many ways the 'myth of literary paternity' that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify as a dominant feature of nineteenth century fiction.¹ Even more so, however, it supports Nina Auerbach's gloss on Gilbert and Gubar's theory: that the history of modern Western literature reveals an 'even more oppressive metaphorical equation between literary creativity and childbirth.'² In other words, Joyce's obsession with the act of literary production as analogous to that of generation suggests not so much that the pen is the sublimated penis as that, in Elaine Showalter's words, 'the process of literary creation is

¹ Gilbert and Gubar's thesis is that in 'patriarchal western culture ... the text's author is a father, a progenitor, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis.' (Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 6).

² Quoted in Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', in Elaine Showalter ed. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women Literature and Theory* (London: Virago, 1993), pp. 243-70 (pp. 250-1)

analogically much more similar to gestation, labor, and delivery than it is to insemination.’³ I will return to this problematic later in this chapter.

The gendered representations of drinking and intoxication are produced along four axes: the figure of the drunken mother as against that of the addicted, violent and economic useless man; the female domestic sphere of sobriety and moral regeneration as against the male public sphere of economic progress and its possible disruption through intoxication; the appropriation of reproduction in the sphere of the text through the aesthetics of intoxication; and the idealisation of drinking in the categories of the sympotic and the bacchanalian. In Hemingway’s fiction, the sympotic appears in the male scenes of social drinking set in the hybrid spaces where town and country overlap. Conversely, the bacchanalian appears primarily in and around the gender inclusive drinking places of the urban scene. The expatriate Paris which Hemingway depicts as always potentially sympotic, but all too often bacchanalian, is the same place in which Rhys’ sets three of her first four novels. Hemingway’s ambivalent depictions of 1920s Paris have produced in the idea of the ‘lost generation’ a mythos whose name has become a byword for the age; conversely Rhys’ early fiction slumped swiftly into an obscurity graphically realised in the fact that in 1956 (two years after Hemingway had received the Nobel Prize for literature) a BBC producer hoping to produce a radio production of *Good Morning, Midnight* had to place an advert in a national magazine to ascertain the whereabouts of an author that many in British literary circles thought was dead.⁴ By way of beginning this study of Rhys, I will look at some of the critical comparisons that have been made between the work of these two authors; one of whom came to be seen as delineating the exact contours of the ‘lost generation’, while the other came to be precisely that: lost.

While many contemporary reviewers were quick to highlight stylistic similarities between Hemingway and Rhys, later critics have tended to look more closely at the biographical parallels between the two writers. In the reviews of Rhys’ first four books, there is a tendency to compare both the subjects of Rhys’ work and her literary technique to Hemingway – albeit in such a manner as generally to suggest that Rhys’ is always ‘almost as good’ – but never better than – the agreed master of the

³ *ibid.*

⁴ See Carol Angier, *Jean Rhys: Life and Work* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1990), pp. 470-3

style.⁵ Following the critical rediscovery of Jean Rhys after the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 – a rediscovery that led the poet Al Alvarez to describe Rhys as ‘the best living English novelist’ in 1974⁶ – critical comparisons of her work with Hemingway have positioned Rhys less as a derivative producer of Hemingwayesque fiction than a writer with some shared concerns but an identifiably different vision from Hemingway.⁷ Despite this, however, dedicated critical comparisons between the novels and short stories of two authors are rare.⁸

Biographical discussions of the relationship between Rhys and Hemingway have been a more common feature of recent studies of Rhys’ fiction. This is undoubtedly due partly to the fact that both writers’ first novels, published only one year apart, can be read as *romans à clef* of literary Paris in the mid-1920s. Central to this critical concern has been the shared, and in some ways parallel, relationship that both Hemingway and Rhys had with Ford Madox Ford. Ford knew, and was influential in establishing the literary career of, both Hemingway and Rhys. Ford employed Hemingway as an editor of his *Transatlantic Review* in 1924 and wrote an introduction for Jean Rhys’ first collection of short stories *The Left Bank* in 1927. Rhys became part of a *ménage à trois* with Ford and his wife Stella Bowen between 1925 and 1926.⁹ Irene Thompson draws a conclusion from the two writers’ relationships with Ford which suggests they serve as a metonymy for the position of the female writer:

⁵ *Quartet* is ‘not as good as *The Sun Also Rises*, but it is quite as ruthless.’ (Herber Gorman, ‘The Unholy Four’, *New York Herald Tribune* [10th February, 1929], in Elgin W. Mellown, *Jean Rhys: A Descriptive and Annotated Bibliography of Works and Criticism* [London: Garland, 1984], p. 9); ‘Miss Rhys does not always achieve Hemingway’s harsh silences, by her restraint and economy she often manages to get the same effect of inevitability.’ (T. S. Matthews, ‘The Cocktail Hour’, *New Republic* [April, 1929], in *ibid.*, pp. 10-11); As late as 1939, a *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Good Morning, Midnight* opined ‘there is not a lot of it, but what there is goes a little in advance of, say, Mr Hemingway, the father of all such as wear a hard-boiled heart on their sleeve.’ (Anon, *Times Literary Supplement* [15th July, 1939], in *ibid.*, p. 55)

⁶ A. Alvarez, ‘The Best Living English Novelist’, *New York Times Book Review* (17th March, 1974)

⁷ See, for example, Diana Trilling, ‘The Odd Career of Jean Rhys’, *New York Times Book Review* (25th May, 1980)

⁸ See Nancy Hemmond Brown, ‘Aspects of the Short Story: A Comparison of Jean Rhys’ “Sound of the River” with “Ernest Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants”’, *Jean Rhys Review*, Vol. 1., Pt. 1 (1986), pp. 2-13; and Irene Thompson, ‘The Left Bank Aperitifs of Jean Rhys and Ernest Hemingway’, *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 35, Pt 1. (1981), pp. 94-106.

⁹ Ford would go on to suffer at hands of both Rhys and Hemingway in their writing. The apparent similarities between the character Hugh Heidler in Rhys’ *Quartet* (or *Postures* as it was originally called) and Ford Madox Ford led to Jonathan Cape refusing to publish it for fear of facing a libel trial (Angier, p. 230). Hemingway would repeatedly claim he had disliked Ford and would draw a particularly unflattering picture of him in *A Moveable Feast*. (‘Ford Madox Ford and the Devil’s Disciple’ in *A Moveable Feast*, pp. 61-8). The biographical basis of *Quartet* is widely taken to be the affair Jean Rhys had with Ford between 1925 and 1926, just as the character Lola Porter in Ford’s *When the Wicked Man* (1932) is taken to be his retaliatory depiction of Rhys (Angier, p. 155).

Ford genuinely liked Jean Rhys' writing; in exchange for its publication she became his mistress simultaneously with Stella Bowen. Ford also liked Ernest Hemingway's writing; in exchange for its publication he became sub-editor of the *Transatlantic Review*. The striking difference between these two rewards for literary merit calls to mind Virginia Woolf's speculations about "Shakespeare's Sister."¹⁰

This observation, while superficially illuminating, is problematic in that it both reduces the motivation for Ford employing Hemingway and embarking on an affair with Rhys to one of reward, and in that it rests on an unproven implication that Ford helped Rhys get published directly in exchange for sexual favours. What it also illustrates, however, is a tendency in much of the critical analysis of Jean Rhys to read her work through, or even as, her biography. Moreover, the biographical approach to readings of Rhys' work almost invariably constructs a causal nexus between Rhys the writer of fiction and Rhys the woman engaged in problematic sexual relationships. The debate over the relative merits of imposing a biographical reading on Rhys' fiction is one that recurs throughout the critical work on her fiction and must be dealt with here before going on to a close reading of her early novels.

Biographical readings of Rhys' fiction range from the frankly patronising (such as Jack Byrne's observation that it is as well for the history of literature that Jean Rhys was 'chosen to be "little girl blue"'),¹¹ to Carol Angier's consistent and comprehensive reading of Rhys' fiction as self-portrait, to Nancy Harrison's reading of Rhys' fiction as women's text through the category of what she calls [auto]biography.¹² I will discuss Harrison's analysis of Rhys' writing and the use of biographical reading as a critical strategy in feminist readings of women's literary texts in more detail below. Firstly, however, I will consider some of the critical responses to what Cheryl and Alexander Malcolm have described as 'the Carol Angier school of critics, for whom all Rhys' writing is rehashed autobiography.'¹³

¹⁰ Thompson, p. 103

¹¹ Jack Byrne, 'Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight: The Boulevard of Broken Dreams*', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (Summer, 1985), pp. 151-159 (p. 158)

¹² Nancy Harrison, *Jean Rhys and the Novel as Women's Text* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990)

¹³ Cheryl Alexander Malcolm and David Malcolm, *Jean Rhys: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 20

Helen Carr points out that ‘like Sylvia Plath, Jean Rhys has suffered from having her life and work read against one another, fused into a myth of feminine distress.’¹⁴ There are two problematic outcomes of such a tendency. The first is that it allows critics to question the technical rigour and quality of Rhys’ writing. In his introduction to *The Left Bank*, Ford Madox Ford described Rhys’ technical faculties in terms of a kind of pre-intellectual feeling, what he described as ‘an instinct for form.’¹⁵ This idea reappears in Thomas Staley’s 1979 study of Rhys in which he asserts that Rhys’ ‘art developed out of an intensely private world – a world whose sources of inspiration were neither literary nor intellectual.’¹⁶ This assertion explicitly assumes that, unlike Hemingway whose style has been analysed and debated over decades, or Joyce whose techniques and allusions have provided endlessly fertile ground for acceptable academic study, Jean Rhys need only be studied as the naïve chronicler of her own problematic emotional states. In other words, the realm of the cerebral remains firmly that of the male writer, while the female writer – against all the evidence of her own literary allusions and documented technical perfectionism – sits properly in the realm of the senses and the feelings. Judith Kegan Gardiner provides an articulate critique of this position in which she also highlights its inherent pathologization of the female writer:

Certain critical myths and sexist attitudes have obscured Jean Rhys’ close though ambivalent connection with [the modernist] literary tradition. When a writer like Joyce or Eliot writes about an alienated man estranged from himself, he is read as a portrait of the diminished responsibilities of human existence in modern society. When Rhys writes about an alienated woman estranged from herself, critics applaud her perceptive but narrow depiction of female experience and tend to narrow her vision even further by labelling it both pathological and autobiographical.¹⁷

This observation could equally be applied to critiques of male modernist writers which place the aetiology of their literary production in the addictive consumption of alcohol.

¹⁴ Helen Carr, *Jean Rhys* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996), p. 1

¹⁵ Ford Madox Ford, Preface to Jean Rhys, *The Left Bank & Other Stories* (1927; Salem, NH: Ayer Company, 1984), pp. 7-27 (p. 24). Further references to be given in text as LB

¹⁶ Thomas F. Staley, *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 36

¹⁷ Judith Kegan Gardiner, ‘Good Morning, Midnight: Good Night, Modernism’, *Boundary 2: A Journal of Postmodern Literature and Culture*, Vol. 11, Pt. 1-2 (1982-3), pp. 233-51 (p. 247)

What is shared in both cases is an assumption of a direct relationship between pathology, confession and recovery.

That a biographical approach is the dominant critical tendency in works looking at the representation of drinking in literature reflects the fact that the majority of such studies claim to identify a relationship between the literary text and alcoholism as a pathological condition. As such, the biography of the writer as the subject of an addiction, i.e. alcoholism, is understood as informing the literary text at every level. In critical studies such as Tom Dardis' *The Thirsty Muse*, Edmund O'Reilly's *Sobering Tales*, and John Crowley's *The White Logic*, the drive to a fictionalised biography is seen as an effect of the pathological subjectivity of the author and the need for this to find a rationalising outlet in literature. It is this implied relationship between the pathological and the biographical that critics such as Gardiner have identified as undermining the biographical tradition in the critical work on Jean Rhys.

While biographical readings of texts by authors who drink pathologize the text (inasmuch as it becomes a document of a pathological condition), biographical readings of Rhys' fiction, it has been argued, risk a pathologization of the woman writer *per se*. Judith Kegan Gardiner complains that too many critics have discussed Rhys' representation of alienation 'out of her historical context as an individual and pathological voice, the voice of a female victim.'¹⁸ Arguing from a similar position, Cheryl and David Malcolm write that 'to see [Rhys'] work as confession and therapy must be judged finally as demeaning, for it suggests that was all she, and by implication, perhaps, all women writers, could do.'¹⁹ Molly Hite further argues that 'to make biography the principle that governs the interpretation of her works is to make Rhys unable to control the form and ideology of her own text.'²⁰ This is to suggest that by placing the life story of the writer as the heart of her literary project, the biographer usurps the critical agency of the novelist by reconfiguring the text as a therapeutic enunciation – the effect of lived experiences – whose meanings are not extrapolated by the reader but imposed by her from a hermeneutic position akin to that of the analyst. Rhys, despite expressing in a letter her infuriation at readers who appeared unaware that '“I” is a literary device',²¹ is positioned in a biographical reading as intellectually

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 233

¹⁹ Malcolm and Malcolm, p. 117

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 126-7

²¹ Letter to Maryvonne Moerman (22nd June, 1960), in Jean Rhys, *Selected Letters, 1931-1966*, ed. Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly (London: Andre Deutsch, 1984), p. 187

determined by her existential condition – just as in biographical analyses alcoholic authors are positioned as intellectually determined by their addiction. In the critical writing on Jean Rhys, this process of biographical pathologisation is usually constructed around a nexus of the emotionally dysfunctional, sexually promiscuous woman, and the woman as writer. In the case of Carol Angier it is also constructed around Rhys' personal drinking; discussing *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* Angier writes – 'The more the heroine drinks, the more she loses control of her anger. And this was simply a self-portrait.'²²

Nancy Harrison's notion of [auto]biography reconfigures the quasi-autobiographical as a positive literary strategy. While for critics such as the Malcolms, to say Rhys' work is autobiographical is to diminish both her and possibly all women writers, for Harrison the category [auto]biography is precisely what men can't or won't do. It is the means by which women writers, through depicting the directly experienced in literature 'make a spectacle of the commonplace, the ordinariness of the "common woman."²³ The analytical focus of this study does not allow for a detailed discussion here of the debate around the potential merits and demerits of employing what Mary Jacobus calls the 'biographical phallacy' as a tactic by which feminist critics can reclaim the writing of women from the categories of patriarchal critical models.²⁴ However, I would suggest that my analysis of the emergence of confessional modes of narration within the discourses of the temperance movement illustrates the problems concerning biographical and confessional modes of writing, and their relationship to the technologies of power in which a pathological self is constructed through the injunction to confess. To add my own twist to Pam Morris's observation, the history of alcoholics and problem drinkers has been similar to that of 'women [who] have been the object of the most intense and elaborated discourses aimed at producing female sexuality as a 'problem' to be minutely observed pathologised and

²² Angier, p. 219. A tangential discussion around pathologization in Rhys' fiction emerged following Elizabeth Abel's 1979 study 'Women and Schizophrenia: The Fiction of Jean Rhys' (*Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 155-77). Abel argues that Rhys' characters display schizoid tendencies and that these can be understood as illustrative of the psychopathological effects of patriarchal power relations on women. Sheila Kineke argues that Abel 'pathologizes not just Rhys and her characters, but potentially all women. Rather than destabilizing the categories that marginalize and pathologize Rhys (and, by implication, all women), Abel reifies them.' (Sheila Kineke, "'Like a Hook Fits an Eye': Jean Rhys, Ford Madox Ford, and the Imperial Operations of Modernist Mentoring', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Fall, 1997), pp. 281-301 [p. 289])

²³ Harrison, p. 40

²⁴ Quoted in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.

articulated.’²⁵ Morris argues that for feminist critics ‘This might make us pause before we celebrate all such writing as a liberating form of self-expression’.²⁶ In other words, a close critical engagement with the discursive practices of confession must inform any critical project predicated on the reading of literary fiction as autobiography.

One aspect in which Jean Rhys’ texts are definitely not autobiographical is in the fact that her heroines are not writers – or if they have attempted to write, as Sasha Jensen in *Good Morning, Midnight* has, it is only in the most cursory and unsuccessful manner. What Rhys does deal with from her very earliest fiction, however, is the position of women in the literary and artistic milieu of Montparnasse in the mid and late 1920s. This study will consider Rhys’ depiction of the female drinker’s relationship to the drinking culture of expatriate Paris as the depiction of a process of exclusion which constructs the woman drinker as deviant and dangerous. What is implicit in Joyce’s depiction of social drinking as exclusively male, and in Hemingway’s depiction of it as ideally male – that is, the deviant status of the female drinker – is depicted as a primary experiential condition in the work of Jean Rhys. For her heroines, the bars of Paris and London are not sites of more or less sympotic exchange, but sites of observation, judgement and exclusion. Beginning with her first novel *Quartet* and ending with her fourth, *Good Morning, Midnight*, I will trace the emergence of what I will later discuss as Rhys’ impossible *flâneurs* – rootless wanderers for whom the streets are not extensions of the interior, but who experience private space as disturbingly public; women for whom the café is not where they observe and describe, but where they are surveyed, judged, and silenced.

Surveillance and exclusion in Quartet and After Leaving Mr Mackenzie

Jean Rhys’ early short story ‘In the Rue De l’Arrivée’ describes an hour in the life of a woman living in the heart of expatriate Paris. Its description of the heroine’s experience of public drinking adumbrates much of Rhys’ subsequent fiction. Here, the woman sits in the ‘Zanzi-Bar’ halfway up the Boulevard Montparnasse:

²⁵ Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 142

²⁶ *ibid.*

One evening at eleven o'clock, sat a Lady drinking her fourth *fine à l'eau* ... For it was her deplorable habit, when she felt very blue indeed, to proceed slowly up the right-hand side of the Boulevard, taking a *fine à l'eau* – that is to say a brandy and soda – at every café she passed. There are so many cafés that the desired effect could thus be obtained without walking very far, and by thus moving from one to the other she managed to avoid both the curious stares of the waiters and the disadvantage of not accurately knowing just how drunk she was. (LB, pp. 113-4)

Published in 1927, this story is set in the Montparnasse of Hemingway's conspicuously drunken 'lost generation', the same Paris which F. Scott Fitzgerald ruefully recalls as a place of endless and apparently magical drunkenness in 'Babylon Revisited'. How is it then that Rhys depicts such a profoundly different experience? For the female drinker in this story the boulevard cafés are not places of display, but of concealment; drunkenness is not a badge of expatriate rebelliousness, but a humiliating mark of weakness and failure; here she does not join the frivolous synopticon of jealous and desiring glances on the terrace of the Dôme or the Rotonde, but becomes subjected to the 'curious' and judgemental stares of the waiters in half deserted cafés off the main square. Looking in more detail at how Rhys describes this exclusionary and regulatory process reveals this experience to be an effect not just of specific gender relations, but of a moral economy in which wealth and poverty become indices of the acceptable and unacceptable, and of a structure of concentric identity relations in which the mythology of the expatriate is exposed as an exclusionary and alienating realm of insiders and cliques which essentially relocates a series of secure local identities to the hyperreal world of Montparnasse.

Quartet initially announces itself as the story of an expatriate insider. Its opening sentence depicts the heroine Marya Zelli leaving 'a dignified and comparatively expensive establishment on the boulevard Montparnasse.'²⁷ She goes on to meet the local artist Miss De Solla and begins a relationship with Hugh Heidler, a famous patron of Montparnasse artists and writers, and his wife Lois. Early in the book, Marya looks out from her hotel balcony towards Montmartre and thinks how 'significant, coherent and understandable it all became after a glass of wine on an

²⁷ Jean Rhys, *Quartet* (1928; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 7. Further references to be given in text as Q

empty stomach.’ (Q p. 20) This mythic idea of Paris is at one with George Moore’s depiction of Paris half a century earlier as an open field of intellectual dreams in which the outsider, crucially through at least some engagement with the indigenous drinking culture, can experience for himself the rich and liberating world of cultural modernity.

George Moore’s notion of Montmartre cafés as the vanguard universities of the new intellectual culture assumes a open handed meritocracy within the drinking place; one in which ‘anyone could enter and each man paid for his own beer.’²⁸ George Moore’s Montmartre clearly differed from the expatriate Montparnasse of the 1920s in the degree to which the visitor in George Moore’s Paris could feel himself very much part of an indigenously French intellectual and social world. Conversely, the social and intellectual society which gravitated around the interchange of the boulevard Montparnasse and the boulevard Raspail in the 1920s was an ambiguous combination of English speaking avant-garde writers and artists, dilettante tourists, and ex-military ‘doughboys’ living it up on the high exchange rate. Hart Crane wrote to a friend in the 1920s describing Montparnasse as ‘Dinners, soirées, poets, erratic millionaires, painters, translations, lobsters, absinthe, music, promenades, oysters, sherry, aspirins, pictures, Sapphic heiresses, editors, books, sailors. *And how!*’²⁹ Jean Rhys was more sceptical about the degree to which the expatriate culture of Montparnasse represented a truly bohemian lifestyle. In ‘In the Rue de l’Arrivée’, she describes the heroine’s ‘illusions’ as including the beliefs that:

Gentlemen were Different and to be trusted, that Ladies must not make a Fuss – even when drunk – and that the Lower Classes were the Lower Classes. She believed that Montparnasse, that stronghold of British and American middle classes, was a devil of a place and what Montmartre used to be. (LB, p. 116)

Montparnasse, Rhys suggests in this story, is not such a devilish place as to undermine either traditional class or gender relations.

It is characteristic of Hemingway’s attempt to depict drinking cultures as transcending traditional class and national boundaries that his male heroes are depicted as insiders in both the Anglo-Saxon expatriate bars and the Francophone drinking dens

²⁸ Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, p. 9

²⁹ Quoted in Allan, *Paris: The Glamour Years*, p. 95

off the boulevard Montparnasse. In this sense, he marks his characters as the true inheritors of George Moore's example, rather than part of the mendacious Greenwich Village 'scum' frequenting the big commercial cafés. Hemingway's sympotic ideal, then, depicts adept drinkers as insiders on two counts – men equally at home with fellow expatriates and with 'real' Parisians. Rhys, on the other hand, depicts women as doubly excluded from intellectual Parisian drinking culture. Rhys' heroines experience both indigenous and expatriate drinking places as problematic on the grounds of both gender and economics. In Rhys' fiction, precisely those idealised social relations that Hemingway depicts as ritualised modes of inclusion instead operate as powerful modes of exclusion.

Quartet can be read as the story of a trophy mistress of a Montparnasse bigwig who talks back, and in doing so is rejected by that society. Having been adopted by Heidler and paraded around the local cafés and clubs, Marya finds herself the object of a network of gossip in which she is positioned as the home wrecker. To this extent, Marya Zelli enters the world of literary Montparnasse through one of the two routes that Shari Benstock argues were available to women in the 1920s – 'as lovers or literary patrons'; not, that is, as writers.³⁰ As the relationship spirals out of control (essentially through Marya's inability to 'play the game' properly), Heidler becomes, in the public eye, the assumed victim of an uncontrollable outsider – a woman of dangerous habits and sexual appetites. However, while Marya is aware that 'everybody' (by which she means everybody who is anybody in the expatriate community) 'cuts [her] dead along the Boulevard Montparnasse' (Q p. 94), it is primarily in the cafés and bars that this regulatory process takes place. As with all Rhys' early fiction, the fundamental narrative spaces around which *Quartet* is constructed are the semi-private room (usually a hotel room, but in this case Heidler's apartment) and the public spaces of the bar, café and restaurant.

Rhys depicts the drinking place as a space in which surveillance, observation and regulation are inscribed in both the physical structure and the hierarchical networks of specularities which are at work within it. The bars of Paris are sites of reflexive and regulatory speculation mediated through a ubiquity of mirrors. These spaces also produce a hierarchy of the gaze in which the dominant look is that of the *patron*. When, for example, Hugh, Lois, and Marya finally confront the fact of their sexual

³⁰ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 381

triangle in a local café, the proprietor adjudges the situation as one in which Marya is the sexual predator: ‘Monsieur Lefranc cast one astute glance at [Lois’s] deeply circled eyes, another at Marya’s reflection in the glass and told himself: ‘Ça y est. I knew it! Ah, the *grue!*’ (Q p. 95) An almost identical structure of observation appears in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* when Julia Martin interrupts her ex-lover as he eats at his local restaurant. Here, the proprietor Monsieur Albert approaches Mackenzie’s table as Julia takes a seat:

Monsieur Albert was a fair man, an Alsatian. His eyes telegraphed, ‘I understand; I remember this woman. Do you want to have her put out?’

Mr Mackenzie’s face immediately assumed a haughty expression, as if to say, ‘What the devil do you mean?’ He raised his eyebrows a little, just to put the fellow in his place.

Monsieur Albert moved away. When he had gone a little distance, he turned. This time Mr Mackenzie tried to telegraph back. ‘Not yet, anyhow. But stand by.’³¹

In both cases the heroine is subjected by the regulatory gaze of the *patron* as a problem and an unwelcome intrusion on the semi-public space over which he presides. In both cases Rhys’ heroines are disempowered by a specular structure in which the woman is subjected as the observed and the men as the observers. In these two examples, this relationship of power serves to delimit the contours of the acceptable within the privileged, expatriate community. It also serves to delimit the contours of respectability within which a woman and a man may be seen together in public. Both Julia Martin and Marya Zelli are seen by the *patrons*, waiters and customers of the bars they enter as recognisable types whose assumed relationship with their eating or drinking partners are those of the prostitute, the *femme fatale* or unrelenting ex-lover. When Marya Zelli faces the prospect of a final and severing encounter with Heidler towards the end of *Quartet*, she is fully aware that she will be prejudicially disempowered by the social space in which the meeting will take place:

³¹ Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 22. Further references to be given in text as ALM

When and where? In some café, of course. The unvarying background. Knowing waiters, clouds of smoke, the smell of drink. She would sit there trembling, and he would be cool, a little impatient, perhaps a little nervous. Then she would try to explain and he would listen with a calm expression. Top dog. (Q p. 136-7)

The café is a public space in which the woman is always already alienated, disempowered, and disciplined; one which functions as the social arm of the protected culture of male privilege – what, in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, Julia Martin calls that ‘organized society, in which she had no place and against which she had not a dog’s chance.’ (ALM p. 17)

If a woman seen drinking with a man is all too often assumed to be either wife or predator, then the woman drinking alone is assumed to be either desperately lonely or a prostitute. The symptomatic notion of an intellectual and artistic café society falls down when the very fact of entering a café places the drinker in a sexual and economic nexus which *a priori* disbars her from entering into the dispassionate relations of the intellect by which the symptomatic is defined. By entering the specular space of the café or bar, the woman in Rhys’ fiction is subjected within a logic of sameness in which she becomes at best a curious other to the idealised male drinker. The more or less implicit truth expressed by Joyce and Hemingway – that the drinking place is a male space – becomes the epistemological standpoint of Rhys’ drinking women who are always already positioned not as drinkers, but as drinkers who are not men. This process of othering is overlain with a process of moral judgement articulated in the sphere of sexuality. The women drinkers in Rhys’ fiction are not simply perceived as odd inversions of the male drinking norm, but also as women of questionable sexual morality and history, if not prostitutes outright.

The representation of the bar in Rhys’ fiction reconfigures the bar chronotope as discussed in the previous two chapters. There I suggested that the bar functioned as a space of heterogeneous social encounter and an inherently transgressive space that was other to a temperance discourse which had structured the bar as a site of non-economic activity and irrational social relations. What Rhys’ fiction re-emphasises is that this heterogeneity and this transgression are profoundly gender specific. This is evident in the division in temperance fiction between the domestic sphere and the bar, as much as in Jack London’s would-be valedictory celebration of the exclusive

masculinity of the saloon. However, it is an issue which is effaced in both Joyce and Hemingway to the extent that the masculine gender privilege of the bar remains largely a given. In Rhys' fiction it is foregrounded to the degree that the bar takes on a sharply different chronotopic structure. In Rhys' fiction the bar is fundamentally a surveyed space, a space in which power is dispersed through the visible. It is a morally judgemental space, a place where, as Angier puts it, 'looking is judging'.³² It is also an exclusive and exclusionary space. While the bar functions for George Moore, Ernest Hemingway and Jack London as a symbolically universal space which represents a comparable and interchangeable zone of intercourse wherever it is physically situated (Walter Benjamin writes that 'the ale-house is the key to every town'),³³ this is predicated absolutely on its being a space of *male* intercourse precisely because it is *not* the domestic sphere. Finally, it ceases to be a transgressive space *per se*, but becomes instead the site of gendered transgression, a site of contestation between the woman who drinks and the established mores of the bar as a predominantly male institution.

Although the exclusionary function of the bar as a male institution is crucial to Rhys' fiction, the exclusion of Rhys' heroines from the mythically idealised drinking culture of modernist Paris is not predicated entirely on gender. Rhys' heroines are alienated not only because they are women, but because they are poor, and because they have no identifiable cultural background from which to ground their expatriation. A number of critics have pointed out that Rhys' fiction articulates issues of gender through the economic and vice versa. Shari Benstock argues that, for Sasha Jensen, the heroine of *Good Morning, Midnight*, 'capitalist and patriarchal values are inseparable, each supporting each other in a parasitical economy.'³⁴ For Rosalind Miles, 'Jean Rhys was one of the few women writers able to make explicit the link between the sex war and the class struggle.'³⁵ Helen Carr argues that in Rhys' fiction 'money and morality are inseparable terms.'³⁶ For Irene Thompson, Sasha Jensen 'was the outsider less as a foreigner than as *la vielle*, and an impoverished one as well.'³⁷ Carol Angier, on the other hand, suggests that Rhys saw 'morality as Marx saw religion – as an instrument

³² Angier, p. 380

³³ Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, p. 101

³⁴ Benstock, p. 440

³⁵ Rosalind Miles, *The Female Form: Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 135

³⁶ Carr, p. 80

³⁷ Thompson, p. 101

of control, one more way the powerful have of oppressing the weak.’³⁸ I would agree broadly with Shari Benstock. Morality and moral judgements are not shown by Rhys to be a tool to which the powerful have access, an autonomous zone of cultural power and practice to which those with wealth can appeal. Rather, for Rhys, morality is part of patriarchal structures of power; structures which in turn cannot be abstracted from economic relations.

Where bars are, for Hemingway and Joyce, places where men engage in the simultaneously transgressive and utopian economic rituals of drink exchange, they are for Rhys’ heroines all too often the very places where the negotiating processes in the humiliating economy of the kept mistress are carried out. The ‘knowing stares of the waiters’ that Marya Zelli dreads are those which will overlook the meeting in which she will hammer out the price of her severance from Hugh Heidler. The concerned glance of Monsieur Albert intervenes on Julia Martin’s confrontation with Mr Mackenzie over his decision to cease the allowance that, paid in dribs and drabs, served to keep Julia Martin caught in the web of Mr Mackenzie’s economic power long after their sexual relationship had collapsed. Indeed, the affairs Rhys depicts in *Quartet* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* essentially represent asymmetrical exchange economies in which the woman’s capital is her looks, her desirability. In Rhys’ subsequent novel, *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna Morgan’s friend, Maudie, suggests the degree to which this economy of desire is one in which men with money assert their self-conscious position of power:

‘My dear, I had to laugh,’ she said. ‘D’you know what a man said to me the other day? It’s funny, he said, have you ever thought that a girl’s clothes cost more than the girl inside them?’³⁹

The public spaces of *Quartet* and *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* are also places in which men assert the power afforded them by wealth. Bars and the restaurants function in

³⁸ Angier, p. 178

³⁹ Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), pp. 39-40. Further references to be given in text as V. Alicia Borinsky emphasises the relationship between economy and ethical hierarchies in her study of Rhys’ fiction. Discussing the role of clothing as a signifier of wealth and social success, Borinsky writes that for Rhys ‘Each of the garments acquired tells the story of who paid for them. No piece of clothing is neutral.’ (Alicia Borinsky, ‘Jean Rhys: Poses of a Woman as Guest’, *Poetics Today* Vol. 6, Pt. 1-2 [1985], pp. 229-243 [p. 230]). I would suggest that this applies equally to drinks in Rhys’ novels.

these novels as a marketplace in which men always are, or are assumed to be, the buyers – and not only of the drinks. Furthermore, in this economy wealth buys moral authority; it is the good customer who pays the *patron*'s wages, and it is he who the *patron* will protect. In the intimate, public space of the bar, the wealthier customer is always the most right, both practically and morally.

The second locus of Rhys' heroines' alienation – their 'lack of solidity and of fixed backgrounds' (Q p. 14) – problematises the mythology of the expatriate as exile and footloose bohemian. Cheryl and David Malcolm have pointed out that for Rhys 'outsiderdom does not exist in a political, social, or cultural vacuum. It is historicized and located in specific times, places, and types of social organisation.'⁴⁰ In other words, Rhys' heroines are not excluded or ostracised in some vague cosmic sense, nor can they be read as a transcendental image of the alienation and oppression of women under patriarchy. Rather, they are particular women excluded from the particular social and cultural world of the expatriate community living in Montparnasse in the 1920s. They are excluded on the grounds of their gender, lack of independent financial means, and their implacable foreignness.

V. S. Naipaul emphasises the position of Rhys' heroines as deracinated subjects in a mythic expatriate culture. Describing her heroines as 'inexplicably bohemian, in the toughest sense of the word', Naipaul argues that Rhys 'was outside that tradition of imperial-expatriate writing in which the metropolitan outsider is thrown into relief against an alien background. She was an expatriate, but her journey had been the other way round, from a background of nothing to an organized world with which her heroines could never come to terms.'⁴¹ What Naipaul identifies in Rhys' fiction reveals the cultural specificity hidden behind the mask of expatriation in 1920s Paris. If the American Paris of the 1920s can be considered a hybrid culture to some extent, then it was a hybridity located specifically in the social and economic conditions of its time. The drinking culture made famous by writers and journalists such as Ernest Hemingway was dependent upon an economic set of relations which meant that Americans whose sources of income were in dollars could live incredibly cheaply. It was also dependent upon the political and legislative environment in which the predominantly masculine institution of the saloon had been outlawed by the 18th

⁴⁰ Malcolms, p. 97

⁴¹ V. S. Naipaul, 'Without a Dog's Chance' (1971), in Pierrette Frinckey ed., *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys* (Washington: 3 Continents Press, 1990), pp. 54-6 (p. 54)

Amendment, and a cultural milieu in which the artistic and literary representation of modernity had become intimately linked with the city of Paris, with its drinking culture, and with a residual idealisation of the *flâneur* as the true chronicler of the experience of modernity. Rhys' early fiction interrogates the limits of representations of modernity predicated on the above. What do the novels of authors living on an absurdly high exchange rate say about the experience of those with no access to the dollar? What does the depiction of drinking culture say about those whom it excludes? How does an aesthetic tradition rooted in the epistemological standpoint of the *flâneur* speak to those whose gender always already places them in the position of the observed rather than the observer?

The exclusion of women from the myths of modernist drinking can be seen at the start of Julia Martin's relationship with George Horsefield in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. George Horsefield first introduces himself to Julia after witnessing an altercation between her and Mr Mackenzie at Monsieur Albert's in which, characteristically, Mr Mackenzie's paramount concern is whether anybody has seen the altercation take place. Despite his relieved conclusion that 'nobody had noticed anything' (ALM p. 27), we soon find out that unknown to either party, George Horsefield had been, again characteristically, observing the affair in a mirror, thinking to himself that there 'had been something fantastic, almost dreamlike, about seeing a thing like that reflected in a looking-glass.' (ALM p. 28) Just as Sasha Jensen will become the object of René's fantastic desire when he sees her across the terrace of the Dôme in *Good Morning, Midnight* (albeit in this case a fantasy based on a mistaken assumption of Sasha's wealth), so George Horsefield projects onto Julia Martin his erotic fantasy of the wronged, exotic female.

Later that evening they return to Horsefield's room to drink whisky. Here, he watches Julia from his window as she removes her hat:

She was certainly rather drunk. Her eyes were fixed as if upon some far-off point. She seemed to be contemplating a future at once monotonous and insecure with an indifference which was after all a sort of hard-won courage.

For want of anything better to say, Mr Horsefield made a remark about Paris being a difficult place for Anglo-Saxons to be sober in.

She said: 'Oh, no place is a place to be sober in. That's what I think.'

This struck Mr Horsefield as being an extremely pathetic remark.
(ALM p. 37)

George Horsefield begins by projecting onto Julia a fantasy culled straight from the pages of Hemingway, that of a heroic indifference which amounts to ‘hard-won courage.’ However, this image slips from fantasy to reality when Julia responds to his faintly Hemingwayesque observation with a more properly Hemingwayesque response; and in doing so produces an entirely different set of meanings. Rather than articulating the romantic and heroic language of the Hemingwayesque drinker – with all its connotations of existential resistance, of a *carpe diem* desire to wrest from the empty meaninglessness of everyday life a spirit of fraternity and Dionysian joy – the celebration of intoxication for its own sake becomes, in the mouth of a woman, merely ‘extremely pathetic’. What this suggests is that the synthetic transcendence of the modernist drinker, rather than speaking to a universal human condition, is in fact a specifically male discourse – a way of speaking that reflects and reinscribes a culture of consumption over which men doggedly preserve their dominion. In other words, notions of transcendent drinking are, in fact, inextricably bound up with the specific economics of male drinking culture. What is heroic pathos in a culture in which fraternity is mediated through symbolic exchange, becomes simply pathetic when consumption is assumed to be a signifier of isolation and hopelessness.

The exclusion of women from the symposium of the bar and the heroism of glorified intoxication operates on various levels: through a gaze which situates women as observed, and through an economy which disempowers them financially and morally. At the heart of these exclusionary practices is the location of female intoxication in the sphere of sexuality. Excluded from the social and the symptomatic, the woman who drinks is instead constructed as perverse, predatory and promiscuous. This reflects the construction of the female drinker as transgressive in the discourses of temperance; the drunken woman as the antithesis of an idealised domesticity. Equally it reflects the ideological association of drunkenness with disrupted fertility. Jean Rhys’ third novel *Voyage in the Dark* addresses last this issue directly. As such, it facilitates further consideration of the relationships between intoxication, sex, and power that Rhys addresses throughout her early fiction.

Intoxication and Fertility: Voyage in the Dark

The central figure in William Hogarth's *Gin Lane* presents a dual image of the female drinker: both grotesque mother and whore. The drunken woman, as depicted by Hogarth, presents a moral threat on two fronts: firstly in the realm of sexual practice – she is inescapably promiscuous; but secondly in the realm of reproduction – she creates death where she should produce life. This image of the drunken woman persists throughout the discourses of temperance and re-emerges in characters such as Brett Ashley in *Fiesta* and Jig in 'Hills Like White Elephants'. Jean Rhys' third novel takes the reader back in time to 1914 and across the channel to London. Rather than a depiction of the drinking culture of between the wars Paris, *Voyage in the Dark* is, in V. S. Naipaul's terms, a novel describing 'the full apparatus of Edwardian seduction.'⁴² Central to this sexual apparatus is the buying of drinks. While *Voyage in the Dark* is in some ways a traditional morality tale in which a young girl loses her virginity early, falls into prostitution and finally into the tragedy of a sordid abortion, it is one in which the final tragedy is not the inevitable punishment for the moral decline of the heroine, but the effect of a set of economic and social relations which allow men to buy their way into and out of positions of moral responsibility while condemning women for their role in sexual relationships. In *Voyage in the Dark*, then, Rhys gives the moral of her modern subject a radical twist.

For Anna Morgan, the heroine of this novel, drinking is acceptable so long as it is presumed to act as the precursor to a sexual encounter, but not when it becomes a pleasure in and of itself. On her first date with Walter Jeffries, Anna is plied with wine and liqueurs before being led, unexpectedly for her, into a bedroom where it is assumed she will sleep with her new partner. Although she refuses to have sex on that occasion, Walter continues to use drink as an aphrodisiac, while, as provider, keeping his hand on the bottle both physically and morally:

'All right, I'll have a whisky,' I said. 'No, not wine – whisky.'

'You've learnt to like whisky already, haven't you?' he said.

'It's in my blood,' I said. 'All my family drink too much. You should see my uncle Ramsay – Uncle Bo. He can drink if you like.'

⁴² Naipaul, p. 56

‘That’s all very fine and large,’ Walter said, ‘but don’t start too early.’
(V p. 45)

Here Walter simultaneously adopts the role of father and lover; encouraging Anna to drink while at the same time asserting his right to define the limits of what is acceptable in her drinking. Later that evening he reasserts his right to define the appropriate times for drinking and for sex, while neatly rearticulating Anna’s position in the relationship as drinker, daughter and lover:

‘You sound a bit tight,’ he said. ‘Well, let’s go upstairs, you rum child, you rum little devil.’

‘Champagne and whisky is a great mixture,’ he said.

We went upstairs.’ (V p. 48)

Throughout his seduction of Anna, Walter uses drink both as a signifier of his economic superiority, his paternal moral authority (through both of which he implicitly justifies the essentially exploitative nature of their relationship), and as a precursor to sex.

If drink functions in the first section of the novel as an agent in the process of seduction – as a lubricant in the shift from innocence to experience – then it figures at the end of the novel as the grotesque inducement to and commemoration of an abortion that Anna undergoes after becoming pregnant to one of her clients. During the abortion itself, Anna is given brandy as an anaesthetic. Her surprised response to being offered brandy – ‘I thought it was rum they had’ (V p. 150) – echoes Walter’s previous description of her as both rum child and devil. Just as absinthe, Guinness and wine function symbolically in Joyce and Hemingway, so rum here becomes a polysemic signifier. Not only does Walter Jeffries’ pun introduce a notion of strangeness into his construction of Anna as an object of desire, but it specifically locates that strangeness in her exotic Caribbean background. To find an inversion of the phrase ‘demon rum’ in the words ‘rum devil’ may be expeditious; however, the association between rum and the demonic and deadly can be fairly said to lie behind Anna’s assumption that rum is in some way, if not an abortifacient itself, then the proper anaesthetic of induced miscarriage.

If whisky and champagne function as the precursors to sexual intercourse at the start of the novel, then gin and champagne become the grotesque accompaniment to abortion at the end:

‘I’m a bit giddy,’ I said. ‘I’m awfully giddy. I’d like a drink. There’s some gin in the sideboard.’

‘She oughtn’t to have anything to drink now,’ Mrs Polo said.

Laurie said, ‘You don’t know anything about it. A drink won’t do her any harm. Champagne – that’s what they give them; champagne’s what she ought to have.’ (V p. 155)

Both here and in the earlier scene of seduction, champagne fulfils its symbolic function as the most phallic of drinks; the drink whose explosive – and expensive – associations serve both as the aphrodisiac prelude to sex, and as the symbolic celebrant of fertility and prosperity in birth. However, in an action that in some ways brings the narrative of this thesis full circle, it is gin that Anna drinks.

The symbolic association of gin and distorted fertility clearly creates a parallel here between Hogarth and Rhys. As Anna gets progressively more drunk and delirious, her dead baby becomes, in some senses, a modern image of Fielding’s ‘child conceived in *gin*’. However, if this passage deploys an image born in the Gin Epidemic, it does so in such a way as to turn the aetiological relationship between gin and distorted fertility on its head. If Hogarth, Fielding, Defoe and other eighteenth century commentators were the first to formulate – specifically through a relationship between gender and gin – a discourse in which poverty and problematic childbirth were seen to proceed from drunkenness, then Rhys deconstructs that discourse from its inside. In the image of Anna’s abortive birth – which superficially mirrors Hogarth’s image of drunken motherhood – gin is not the cause of the tragedy but simply the final anaesthetic which eases the tragic result of one person’s experience of a set of exploitative economic and gender relations in which drink is always instrumental, but never an autonomous prior cause.

The final chapter of *Voyage in the Dark* can also be read alongside the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ section of *Ulysses* and the final section of Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* as a problematisation of carnivalesque images of the relationship between drinking, fertility and literary creativity. The final section of *Voyage in the Dark* mirrors that of

A Farewell to Arms in that both depict the death of a baby in intoxicated childbirth. It would have also echoed the death of the mother had the publishers not asked Rhys to change the ending from what was initially considered too bleak a conclusion. Discussing this change of ending in the manuscript stage, Deborah Kloepfer argues that ‘the male literary establishment’s insistence upon Anna’s affirmation at the end of the novel is not a way of saving her but of killing her textually.’⁴³ I would disagree that Anna’s bleak repetition at the end of the novel (‘I lay and watched it and thought about starting all over again [...] about starting all over again, all over again ...’ [V p. 159]) can be read as an affirmation of anything other than the absurd inevitability of existence – echoing her words earlier in the book: ‘I’m nineteen and I’ve got to go on living and living and living.’ (V p. 94) In many ways, in fact, the revised ending saves Anna Morgan from joining the long list of dangerous literary heroines who achieve immortality only through the questionable event of their diegetic death. However, rather than discuss in depth the possible narrative merits of allowing Anna Morgan to survive her abortion, I will consider here the relationship between images of death and fertility on this final passage – and the degree to which they can be understood as producing a form of renewal at the level of the text – through a consideration of Rhys’ deployment of carnival images.

While the death of Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* is implicitly carnivalesque in terms of its imagery of birth, death, and the grotesque body, the abortive birth of Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* is explicitly associated with an actual carnival. As she slips into delirium, Anna vividly recalls the Easter Masquerade in her childhood home of Dominica. Throughout this final passage, the remembered images of the delirious carnival are interspersed with Anna repeating the words ‘I’m giddy!’ The giddiness of the carnival and the giddiness of Anna, drunk on gin and half-conscious, create two overlapping images of intoxication – neither of which are productive, joyful or regenerating; two carnivalesques neither of which signify life or rebirth. The Dominican Masquerade is remembered by Anna as an alienating display of resistant festivity by the black population of the town which she watches, simultaneously enthralled and horrified, from behind the jalousies of her family home. As Sylvie Maurel points out, the Dominican Masquerade acts for Anna as ‘an occasion for deep-seated racial antagonisms to come to a head ... Far from abolishing distance

⁴³ Deborah Kloepfer, *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and HD* (London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 78.

between men and in spite of the carnivalesque status reversal, Masquerade builds up a wall between the two communities.’⁴⁴ At the same time, what links these two experiences, at least in Anna’s consciousness, is not some symbolic notion of inversion or transgression, but the experiential conditions of dizziness and nausea. In other words, Rhys employs here a technique that she employs in all her depictions of intoxication; one in which intoxication is articulated at an experiential level rather than being sublimated into the signifier of a transcendent meaning, whether that be universal fraternity, a synthetic numinous, or the rebirth of the word.

Theresa O’Connor highlights the negation of temporal images of renewal that punctuate this passage; the Masquerade celebrates Easter, and the abortion takes place in spring – both temporal markers that would be expected to point towards images of rebirth, not death.⁴⁵ Looking back at Bakhtin’s definition of the carnivalesque, we see in these final scenes the ‘three main acts in the life of the grotesque body: sexual intercourse, death throes ... and the act of birth.’⁴⁶ Here, however, they produce an image of abjection and despair. As with Hemingway, in Rhys the carnivalesque tends towards death; however, where Hemingway attempts to construct a regulation of the carnivalesque through the masculine ritualisation of both violence and drunkenness, Rhys provides no such closure in the sphere of cultural practice. In this instance, Anna does not transcend or defeat the carnivalesque, she merely survives it.

Nevertheless, it has been argued, in contradiction to Deborah Kloepfer’s reading, that the bleak, modern carnival the Rhys creates at the end of *Voyage in the Dark* is indeed textually regenerative. Maurel argues that

While Anna has just had an abortion, she gives birth to regenerated discourse. If the haemorrhage that is responsible for her giddiness and mental confusion drains her body of life, her bleeding seems to be, simultaneously, what allows for the emergence of this carnivalesque text. Thus Anna’s diegetic journey towards this exhausted, fruitless condition is itself yeast for discursive renewal.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Sylvie Maurel, *Jean Rhys* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 99

⁴⁵ Theresa O’Connor, *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels* (London: New York University Press, 1986), pp. 126-7. O’Connor goes on to highlight the inverted parallel between this and the final section of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in which, also in April, Stephen Dedalus achieves a creative rebirth.

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 353

⁴⁷ Maurel, pp. 100-1

Understood in these terms, the final pages of *Voyage in the Dark* mirror Joyce's analogous depiction of drunkenness, childbirth and literary creativity in 'Oxen of the Sun'. However, this is a mirror in which the relations of power are reversed. In Joyce the act of childbirth becomes the metaphorical background to the textual appropriation of the generative process in the production of a simultaneously creative and intoxicated literature on the part of the putative male author. In Rhys, drunkenness provides a metaphorical parallel to – and material element of – an act of fruitless generation out of which is produced the closure of a putatively female novel. While Joyce corrals the image of childbirth to assert his right to redefine the male literary canon, Rhys employs an image of abortion to render into literary form a uniquely female experience. Looked at from Maurel's perspective, the act of discursive renewal is one in which a cluster of discursive images – intoxication, childbirth, the literary text as product of creative process – which have been appropriated by male authors are rearticulated in a text both authored by a woman, but also narrated from a woman's point of view.

However, if Anna's narrative journey into abortive birth provides the grounds for a self-conscious production of a women's text, then it does so by rearticulating a central element in the exclusionary discourses of male literary tradition: the female sterility that Gilbert and Gubar identify as 'the necessary converse of the metaphor of literary paternity.'⁴⁸ It also does so by rearticulating, albeit with a restructured aetiology, the traditional fate of the fallen woman in temperance literature. The degree to which *Voyage in the Dark* can be read as producing a discursive renewal ultimately depends on the degree to which this reversed aetiology deconstructs its master narrative in a real and effective sense. In other words, it depends on to what extent re-presenting a traditional image of female moral and physical decline from a woman's point of view threatens in itself the discursive foundations of that image.

Susan Gubar identifies the origins of the nineteenth century myth of literary paternity in 'Christianity [which] as feminist theologians have shown us, is based on the power of God the Father, who creates the world of generation out of nothing.'⁴⁹ However, as Nina Auerbach has argued, the more pervasive myth has been not the pen as penis, but the male creative mind as womb. When the author can no longer mould

⁴⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, p. 60

⁴⁹ Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity", in Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, pp. 292-313 (p. 293)

himself in the image of a dead God, he can instead mould himself in the image of the mother – whether that be sublimated into the transcendent appeal to nature in Nietzsche’s notion of the Dionysiac, or analogously derived from the labouring Mrs Purefoy hidden in an upper room of Joyce’s textual maternity hospital. Jean Rhys’ fourth novel, *Good Morning, Midnight* – the last she would produce before being resurrected, as it were, with the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* two decades later – confronts head on the mythology of male literary fertility. As the only book in which Rhys explicitly addresses the position of women as involved in literary production, *Good Morning, Midnight* turns its narrative imagery and its intertextual allusions towards interrogating the assumptions upon which the mythic idea of literary fertility is based.

Drink, gender and the production of literature: Good Morning, Midnight

Drinking in a Paris restaurant, talking to a young would-be gigolo who is pursuing her on the grounds that her old fur coat has given him the impression that she is a wealthy single woman, Sasha Jensen tries a different approach to putting the gigolo off by warning him that she is a ‘cérébrale’. As she says this, she is:

Thinking how funny a book would be, called ‘Just a Cérébrale or You Can’t Stop Me From Dreaming’. Only, of course, to be accepted as authentic, to carry any conviction, it would have to be written by a man. What a pity, what a pity!⁵⁰

René, the young gigolo responds angrily that

A cérébrale is a woman who doesn’t like men or need them. Oh, no. The true cérébrale is a woman who likes nothing and nobody except herself and her own damned brain or what she thinks is her brain.’

So pleased with herself, like a little black boy in a top-hat. ...

‘In fact, a monster.’

⁵⁰ Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 135. Further references to be given in text as GMM.

‘Yes, a monster.’ (GMM p. 136)

Contained in this brief exchange are a number of fundamental issues in Rhys’ representation of the gender politics of literature: the monopoly of male writers on the apparently ‘authentic’ representation of women’s experiences; the association of female intellectual activity and a kind of narcissistic and perverse asexuality; the construction of a sympathetic parallel between the position of women and the position of non-whites in European patriarchal society; and the notion of the thinking woman as essentially monstrous. In a letter written in 1936, Rhys angrily confronts the construction of women writers as perverse and monstrous:

I think that the anglo-saxon idea that you can be rude with impunity to any female who has written a book is utterly *damnable*. You come and have a look out of curiosity and then allow the freak to see what you think of her.⁵¹

Notably, Rhys describes the critical deprecation of women’s literature as a process through which the woman writer is constructed not just as a freak, but a freak show; is not just silenced, but is silenced as spectacle.

Women in Jean Rhys’ fiction are always already subjected as spectacle; such attempts as may be made to assert an intellectual independence invariably come up against a wall of condemnatory observations predicated on the woman’s superficial appearance. A woman who enters a bar alone is immediately either presumed to be a prostitute or ‘a mad old Englishwoman wandering around Montparnasse’ (GMM p. 36) in search of sexual gratification. A woman who wears a fur coat is a rich old woman in search of sexual gratification. A woman who drinks too much is pathetic. A woman who thinks too much is a freak. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss in detail the emergence of the idea of the intellectual woman as monstrous. They argue that the kind of obsession with physical adornment and the control of, for example, ageing that Sasha Jensen displays are practices that occupy one end of a polarising continuum in which cerebral women are constructed as monstrosities:

⁵¹ Letter to Evelyn Scott (August 10th, 1936), in *Selected Letters*, p. 32

The “killing” of oneself into an art object – the pruning and preening, the mirror madness, and concern with odours and aging ... all this testifies to the efforts women have expended not just trying to be angels but trying *not* to become female monsters. More significantly ... the female freak is and has been a powerfully coercive and monitory image for women secretly desiring to attempt the pen, an image that has helped enforce ... injunctions to silence.⁵²

Sasha Jensen has briefly ‘attempted the pen’, having been previously employed by a woman in Antibes to write short, fantastic stories. She was sacked after her employer’s husband objected to her insufficient use of polysyllabic words. Beyond her brief employment in the south of France, Sasha is not obviously engaged in writing; nevertheless, throughout the book, she is subjected to the same injunctions to silence, the same regulatory gazes, the same exclusion from the world of the observer who *could* attempt the pen as the heroines of Rhys’ earlier novels.

In *Good Morning, Midnight* the drinking place – which along with the hotel room is the dominant narrative space of the novel – is, in fact, more regulated, more specular, and more frightening than it is in any of the previous novels. The book begins with Sasha Jensen recalling starting to cry while having an after dinner drink the previous night, only to be upbraided by a woman on the next table who complains ‘Sometimes I’m just as unhappy as you are. But that’s not to say I let everybody see it.’ (GMM pp. 9-10) The topography of the book is marked out by cafés whose proprietors are either ‘neutral’ or ‘hostile’ (GMM p. 40), and Sasha’s perambulations by the ‘avoidance of certain cafés’ (GMM p. 14) and the use only of cafés where she has ‘a perfectly clean slate’ (GMM p. 34) In *Good Morning, Midnight*, furthermore, the moral policing of the heroine is not carried out by men alone: in one bar a woman asks the proprietor ‘Tu connais, la vielle?’ (GMM p. 35), in another an English girl asks the proprietor ‘Qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, maintenant?’ (GMM p. 43) – two condemnatory questions which Sasha conflates as ‘What is she doing here, the stranger, the alien, the old one?’ (GMM p. 46).

I have suggested previously that the alienation of Rhys’ heroines is not solely an effect of their gender but of their economic and cultural disempowerment. Nancy

⁵² Gilbert and Gubar, p. 34

Harrison argues that in Rhys' fiction 'there are essentially and emphatically two positions: people with a place – both women and men, especially those whose place is "at the top" – and people with no place, who are likely to be "at the bottom."⁵³ Sasha Jensen is judged as being poor, alien, and old as much as she is condemned for being a single woman drinking alone. Rhys' heroines are emphatically 'placeless';⁵⁴ inherently marginal characters who do not find their marginality in the city, but rather interrogate modernist notions of the urban marginal. Helen Carr emphasises the fundamental difference between the rootless heroines of Rhys' fiction and the archetypal modernist artist as 'the flâneur, the figure who chooses, indeed seeks out, marginality, who constructs an ironic difference from which to interrogate the metropolis'.⁵⁵ While I would not follow Carr in going on to assert that this leads Rhys to produce an identifiably postmodern literature, the appearance of a nascent postcolonial voice in Rhys' fiction does problematise crucially that trajectory of modernist aesthetics which privileges a spectatorial viewpoint first codified in the figure of the *flâneur*. What Rhys interrogates, then, are the limits of the marginality which the idea of the *flâneur* actually allows.

In *Good Morning, Midnight* and in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* both Sasha Jensen and Julia Martin are approached and speculatively seduced by men for whom they have been the object of a chance look in a public drinking place. In the short story 'The Grey Day', Jean Rhys describes a young poet sitting at a café in Montparnasse on a miserable afternoon awaiting the inspiring sight of 'a pretty woman – a useless creature with polished nails, expensive scent and the finest of silk stockings – marked and warranted – For Ornament Fragile' (LB, p. 141) which he hopes will spark his poetic imagination. This is the image of the poet as *flâneur* and the unknown, unnamed woman as *passante* – the fleeting, anonymous muse, the flashing jewel in the chaotic monochrome of the city street.⁵⁶ In 'Mannequin', another short story in the same collection, Rhys describes a group of young women working as mannequins for a

⁵³ Harrison, p. 55

⁵⁴ In a review of Rhys' fiction, Paul Theroux wonders whether her 'placelessness' was the essential cause of Rhys' lack of international recognition. Joyce and Hemingway, he points out, had nationalities, but with Rhys it was unclear whether she was Welsh, West Indian, or English (*Book World [Chicago Tribune and Washington Post]* [13th Feb. 1972]) in Mellown, pp. 31-2

⁵⁵ Carr, p. 25

⁵⁶ Baudelaire's poem 'A Une Passante' describes the fleeting and inspiring glimpse of a unknown woman who passes by the poet. Baudelaire depicts the highly auratic moment of intimacy and distance at which their eyes momentarily meet in a language of intoxication: 'Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant, / Dans son oeil. ('And I, tense as a man out of his wits, drank from her eye'). (Charles Baudelaire, *The Complete Verse, Vol. 1*, trans. Francis Scarfe, [London: Anvil, 1986], p. 186)

fashionable clothes manufacturer. Here Rhys writes of the various 'genres' of femininity the models act out. Again, Rhys presents an image of woman as fantasy, spectacle and type: the 'petite femme', the 'blonde enfant', and the 'femme fatale' who was silent even when off the catwalk as it was 'her type, her *genre* to be haughty.' (LB, p. 67) In Rhys' fiction, women – as artist's models, as mannequins, as drinkers, as passers-by – are both potentially and actually the objects of a network of gazes that not only objectify, categorise and judge them, but in which they are transmuted into the raw material of creative production. The role of women in the imaginative exchanges that Rhys describes are limited to that of facilitators, whether triggering the writing of a poem, the sale of a dress suit, or the embarkation on some fantastic emotional affair.

While subjected as *passantes* by the male gaze, Rhys' heroines – cerebral, ambulatory, marginal, frequenters of cafés and bars – are, in many ways, female *flâneurs*. Rachel Bowlby, however, has pointed out that 'the woman is ... excluded [from *flânerie*] a priori. For *flânerie* involves a certain conception of the woman as being herself part of the spectacle, one of the curiosities in which the *flâneur* will take an interest in the course of his walking.'⁵⁷ If the privileged perspective on urban modernity is that of the *flâneur* (or at least that of the relatively marginal and more or less leisured observer), and the privileged site of this process of observation is the drinking place (as both forming a liminal space between the boulevard and the interior and facilitating the intoxication which is the appropriate cognitive condition from which to assimilate and recreate the modern experience), then Rhys reveals that these privileged epistemological and aesthetic standpoints are implacably male. If the cafés are places where men observe and women are observed, then women are structurally excluded from a discourse predicated on this very process of observation. At the same time, if the observer must necessarily be leisured, then the poor are equally silenced.

Of course, this is not to suggest that the modernist writer, through private wealth or patronage, remains aloof from the market. As Walter Benjamin argues, the journey of the *flâneur* into the marketplace of the boulevards, while being one apparently in search of objects of detached observation, is in reality a journey in search of a buyer.⁵⁸ The *flâneur*, in other words, is as implicated in the production and sale of commodities (in this case, his writing) as the urban populace he narcissistically depicts.

⁵⁷ Rachel Bowlby, *Still Crazy After all These Years: Women, Writing & Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6

⁵⁸ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 34

But what of this economic condition if, to write literature accepted as authentic, or carrying any conviction, you have to be a man? What if by making your capital your mind, you make yourself a monster? The silencing of the woman as modernist writer operates on three levels: firstly an exclusion from the space out of which literature is produced – an exclusion enforced by the specularisation of the female drinker; secondly an exclusion from the public engagement with intellectual work necessary to produce literature – an exclusion enforced by the dehumanisation of the female intellectual and the institutional and critical dismissal of the female writer; and thirdly an exclusion on the grounds that the epistemological standpoint of the modern writer as *flâneur* always already constructs woman as spectacle, not spectator.

Jean Rhys engages at a tangential level with Virginia Woolf's argument that women are excluded from the production of literature by the economy of male privilege. Sasha Jensen describes her life in London as having amounted to attempting to drink herself to death on only 'Two-pound-ten every Tuesday and a room off the Gray's Inn Road'. (GMM p. 37) Both Helen Carr and Judith Kegan Gardiner have pointed out that this can be read as a rejoinder to Virginia Woolf's argument that a woman writer needs £500 a year and a room of her own in order to write. Gardiner argues that Rhys highlights Woolf's experience of money as being that of the possessor, for whom it is always a means and never an object of desire.⁵⁹ Woolf's argument does not problematise the assumption that wealth and leisure are necessary for art – only the fact that not enough women have access to that wealth. To this extent, Woolf's position validates the literary epistemological standpoint of Rhys' heroines as women, but excludes them as poor, as rootless, and as unsettled. Parenthetically, it is notable that the image Woolf presents in *A Room of One's Own* as the ideal conditions for cerebration is a sympotic one; a party at Oxbridge in which the glasses 'flushed yellow and flushed crimson, had been emptied; had been filled. And thus by degrees was lit, half-way down the spine, which is the seat of the soul, not that hard little electric light we call brilliance, as it pops in and out upon our lips, but the more profound and subterranean glow which is the rich yellow flame of rational intercourse.'⁶⁰

Under an objectifying gaze in which a woman who drinks, particularly alone, particularly if she is not young, becomes a certain genre (*'la vielle'*, the monstrous

⁵⁹ Gardiner, p. 245

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929; London: Granada, 1981), pp. 12-13

cérébrale), drink is emptied of many of the transcendent qualities ascribed to it by Hemingway and Joyce. A combination of the acute experience of the problematics of *flânerie* and the consciousness of the inherently privileged and exclusionary economics of alcoholic consumption leads to the constant undermining of the auratic in Rhys' representation of drinking. I have discussed above the degree to which Rhys depicts sexual relations as a form of commodity exchange. Drink, however, has been seen throughout this study to function as an idealised medium in which commodification is dissolved – or transcended – in two ways. Firstly, expenditure on drink acts as a form of waste expenditure. In this sense, to drink to excess is a performative act which rejects the economy of thrift and accumulation while identifying the drinker as outwith the social and economic tentacles of bourgeois capitalism. Secondly, the economy of drinking for its own sake becomes an idealised economy of use value: so much money buys so much drink achieves so much drunkenness. In this alchemy of alcohol, money is distilled into experience and lifted out of the cycle of exchange.

But as Jack London makes abundantly clear, this privileged, quasi-utopian economy belongs exclusively and structurally to men; indeed, as James Joyce makes clear it belongs only to men who pass as insiders – Leopold Bloom's ejection from Barney Kiernan's pursued by the Citizen's biscuit tin providing ample evidence of this. In a sense, the auratic qualities of alcohol can be seen, at least in Hemingway, as an epiphenomenon of the economy of treating. From the sympotic qualities of wine on the bus to Burguete to the devastating power of absinthe in Pablo's cave, the magical properties of drink arise from its role as a medium of symbolic exchange. Rhys – excluded from a literary discourse which seeks to produce the auratic, albeit artificially, beyond the commodity, as much as she is excluded from a drinking culture that finds the auratic in the objects of its own consumption – punctures the assumptions of an aesthetic hierarchy of alcohol. The symbolic hierarchisation of alcohol is, arguably, a luxury of membership of a society among whom such rituals and significations can have a shared meaning.⁶¹ In the isolated and isolating drinking of Sasha Jensen, therefore, it is the banality and everyday materiality of each drink that is emphasised.

This puncturing of the symbolic hierarchisation of alcohol can be seen in Rhys' depiction of absinthe. On the one occasion in which absinthe drinking takes place in

⁶¹ A society which, while identifying its members in *Fiesta* as 'one of us', asks of Sasha Jensen 'who are you anyway? Who's your father and have you got any money, and if not, why not? Are you one of us?' (GMM pp. 76-7)

the early novels, Sasha Jensen, not unlike Jig in 'Hills Like White Elephants', recalls absinthe not as the signifier of some mythic social and artistic world, nor as the gateway to a unique cognitive experience, but as a faintly unpleasant drink she and her husband had been given in Calais once, the sole effect of which was to make her 'feel quarrelsome'. (GMM p. 102) The one occasion on which Sasha does drift towards the imputation of the auratic to a drink is during a remembered conversation with a rich stranger whose absurd ambition was to be rich enough to have his own photograph on a brand of cigars. As he offer her more drink, Sasha thinks, 'Will I have another Pernod? I certainly will have another Pernod. (Food? I don't want any food now. I want more of this feeling – fire and wings.)' (GMM p. 73) Momentarily, Pernod, the next best thing to absinthe, calls up the mythic, magical and inherently transcendent image of the phoenix. Unfortunately, as soon as they leave the café Sasha's drunken legs take on a staggering life of their own. Her suitor storms off in a cab when she explains that her excessive drunkenness is due to her not having eaten for three weeks. Here, as with the depiction of absinthe drinking in Calais, the pathos of synthetic transcendence is drowned in the bathos of crude and comic drunkenness. If Rhys' carnivalesque comic episodes puncture social hierarchy, then it is not only that in which women are excluded from public, social drinking, but equally that of an increasingly established literary discourse in which male drunkenness is figured as the gateway to potentially transcendent meaning and, by extension, the production of authentic, convincing, and revolutionary literature.

While Rhys problematises the male aesthetics of intoxication through comic depictions of banal and embarrassing drunkenness, she uses the dark conclusion of *Good Morning, Midnight* to interrogate the representation of women as archetypal figures in male literature, specifically in *Ulysses*. If the final pages of *Good Morning, Midnight* begin as bleakly humorous drunken bedroom farce, then the violent sexual assault of Sasha by René and the subsequent intrusion into her room by the grotesque and insulting salesman next door preclude all but the most hollow laughter. The final words of the book are a sardonic echo of the final line of *Ulysses*:

He doesn't say anything. Thank God, he doesn't say anything. I look straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time ...

Then I put my arms around him and pull him down on to the bed,
saying: 'Yes – yes – yes...' (GMM p. 159)

Inasmuch as Joyce appropriates notions of fertility on behalf of the male writer through an aesthetic of intoxication in 'Oxen of the Sun', so the 'Penelope' chapter of *Ulysses* sees Joyce staking his territorial claim on the literary representation of the female psyche through a sober but quasi-delirious sexuality. While intoxication opens up for Joyce's male characters the possibilities of fraternity, political dispute, exaggeration, self-contradiction, cerebration, profanity, violence, and hallucination, Joyce's female character's, most famously Molly Bloom, are discursively foreclosed by their sexualised bodies. Molly Bloom's monologue, Joyce explained, revolves around the four great cardinal points of her 'breasts, arse, womb, and sex.'⁶² In the final scene of *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys calls into question this representation of the female body as a constant and voracious site of sexual pleasure and desire, and undermines the construction of women as unendingly intoxicated by sex and their own innate fertility.⁶³

Sasha Jensen is not intoxicated by sex in the final scene of *Good Morning, Midnight*, but by the numerous drinks she has consumed that evening, and most specifically the by whisky that she drinks in order to delay René's inevitable attempt to initiate sex with her. The whisky Sasha pours herself acts here not as an aphrodisiac

⁶² Quoted in Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1937), p. 269

⁶³ Allusions to Molly Bloom's yeses appear throughout Rhys' fiction – and always by way of undermining a unified and unproblematic construction of female sexuality. Repeated yeses first appear in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*, when Julia Martin allows a stranger who is pestering her on the tube to believe she will meet him for a date later. (ALM p. 102) They appear twice in *Voyage in the Dark*: initially when Walter Jeffries first touches Anna's knee at the start of their affair, (V p. 31) and secondly as Anna is undergoing her abortion. (V p. 151) Sasha Jensen repeatedly says yes to her bullying boss Mr Blank when he tells her she is 'Just a hopeless, helpless little fool.' (GMM p. 24). There has been some degree of critical debate as to how to read the yeses at the end of *Good Morning Midnight*. Arnold Davidson argues that they represent Sasha's discovery of an altruistic form of love in which social victims (in this case the salesman) can be rehumanised through sex (Arnold Davidson, 'The Dark is Light Enough: Affirmation from Despair in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning Midnight*', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 24, Pt. 3 [1983], pp. 349-364); Frank Baldanza sees them as an example of a 'Dostoevskian reversal' comparing Sasha's behaviour to the anti-hero's humiliation of a prostitute in *Notes from Underground* (Frank Baldanza, 'Jean Rhys on Insult and Injury', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. 11, Pt. 2 (1978), pp. 55-65); Thomas Staley suggests that 'as [Sasha] open her body to a man at the novel's end, she has at least acknowledged the need of union beyond its simple erotic dimension.' (Staley, p. 98). Mary Lou Emery, on the other hand, argues that by asserting her agency in having sex with the salesman, Sasha Jensen 'creates a metaphor for sexual oppression that gives formal order to her experience. By shaping the symbol, she undermines the image of the marginal victim it creates.' (Mary Lou Emery, 'The Paradox of Style: Metaphor and Ritual in *Good Morning Midnight*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction* [Summer, 1985], pp. 165-70 [pp. 169-70])

but as a distraction. Agency is asserted here not through affirmation, but refusal: Sasha refuses to stop drinking (noticing that ‘It’s funny how some men try to get you to swill as much as you can hold, and others try to stop you.’ [GMM p. 150]); and she refuses to succumb to René’s sexual violence. Finally, as Gardiner argues, when ‘Rhys ends her novel “Yes – yes – yes ...”, she says *no* to Joyce’s idea of women while closing the circle of her own fictional structure. Sasha is not at one with nature. She is not an archetype.’⁶⁴

Hélène Cixous sees Molly Bloom’s affirmative enunciation precisely as an archetype of the feminine word, writing that ‘What is feminine (the poets suspected it) affirms ... and yes I said I will Yes, says Molly (in her rapture), carrying *Ulysses* with her in the direction of a new writing; I said yes, I will Yes.’⁶⁵ Jean Rhys, on the other hand, radically undermines the assumption that Molly Bloom’s rapture represents anything other than an example of literary discourse foreclosing women in the fantastic identity of the overcharged erotic body. Rather than liberating the feminine text, Rhys suggests, ‘Penelope’ expropriates femininity in and for the male text. While the repetition of the word ‘yes’ may appear to be an assertion of agency and power, in the context of Joyce’s depiction of Molly Bloom as a sexualised somatic consciousness it becomes instead an essentialising enunciation of woman as blind nature. Arnold Kettle’s critical assessment is a typical example of the questionable conceptions of femininity that ‘Penelope’ produces: ‘[Molly’s] yes ... is the yes of the Eternal Feminine, no more an act of volition than the journey of the river to the sea.’⁶⁶ Jean Rhys uses the repeated yeses to illuminate and problematise this kind of presumption, employing them invariably at moments of her heroines’ most pronounced and problematic subjection as pliant, helpless and sexually available.

My reading of ‘Oxen of the Sun’ posits a further problematic for an understanding of Joyce as writing a form of *écriture féminine*. In *Ulysses* the two main female characters, Gerty MacDowell and Molly Bloom, embody both naïve cultural childishness and wilful cultural ignorance, while the female drinker of the novel –

⁶⁴ Gardiner, p. 248

⁶⁵ Hélène Cixous, ‘Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks / Ways Out / Forays’, in Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore eds., *The Feminist Reader: Essay in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 101-6 (p. 105)

⁶⁶ Arnold Kettle. ‘The Consistency of James Joyce’, in Boris Ford, ed. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. 7: From James to Eliot* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 378-90 (p. 385). The danger of this kind of reading as applied to Rhys can be seen in Thomas Staley’s assessment of the end of *Good Morning, Midnight* (see note 64 above) in which he implies that an unwelcome and brutal act of sex, for a female literary character, is better than no sex at all.

Martin Cunningham's wife – remains hidden and silent. At the same time, the self-conscious textual experimentation in 'Oxen of the Sun' is achieved through the conflation of images of intoxication and of childbirth. Taken together, what Joyce presents is a narrative field in which only men get creatively (rather than monstrously and silently) drunk, and in which only men have access to the reservoir of high culture. As a consequence, only the male author can engage in the intoxicating and fertile process of recreating literature. To this extent, a modernist *écriture alcoolique* is not only not a form of *écriture féminine*, but a specifically masculine and exclusionary literary practice. What Jean Rhys' sobering deconstruction of Joyce highlights is that in harnessing the energies of intoxication for a revolution in poetic language, Joyce simultaneously replicates and reinforces a range of profoundly exclusionary discourses. While Joyce mocks the temperance tale in 'Nausicaa', his valorisation of the male drunken consciousness as exceptional, his structural association of sobriety with female reproduction, and his construction of the drinking place as a dangerous discursive space owes much to the idea of drink and drinking produced in temperance discourse.

However, despite its many problematisations of male representations of drink and femininity, a similar argument can be applied to Rhys' fiction. In both *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Voyage in the Dark*, Rhys' fictional structure rearticulates a number of patriarchal, and traditionally moralising narrative forms. While the first-person narration of *Good Morning, Midnight* is radical in that it speaks from the position of the drunken woman, the narrator remains other, victimized and sexually perverse. Sasha Jensen's journey, like that of Anna Morgan, ends in a scene of drunken sexual violence; in both cases the diegetic trajectory – at least in its most basic aspects – is that of a cautionary moral tale. Taken as an isolated and autonomous text, in other words, the upshot of *Good Morning, Midnight* could be read as simply reiterating the erstwhile notion that drunkenness in women leads to sexual promiscuity, sexual violence, and a distorted and disturbed fertility.

However, the intertextuality of the novel positions it self-consciously within and against the great texts of the literary canon; albeit the emergent modernist canon.⁶⁷ In finally succumbing to – or explicitly highlighting – the power of discourse to construct women as both victims and as helplessly subject to their own somatic desires,

⁶⁷ The title and epigraph are taken from Emily Dickinson. Within the story Rhys alludes directly to Oscar Wilde, Rimbaud, Verlaine and, characteristically, to William James's description of money as a 'bitch-goddess' (GMM p. 41)

Rhys illuminates the proximity of Joyce's avant-garde literature to precisely that moralising pulp which he himself parodies in 'Nausicaa'. Intoxicated and intoxicating as the project of experimental modernist literature may be, Rhys reveals that it cannot be read outside of its discursive culture. What Rhys' fiction suggests is that as transcendent as the synthesis of intoxication may appear, it remains a literary trope born out of identifiable and asymmetric social and economic relations. In reappropriating the drunken narrative, Jean Rhys simultaneously illuminates the gender specificity of both its narrative processes and its discursive roots. Perhaps most radically, what she reveals is that if the aesthetics of intoxication amounts to an attempt celebrate the possibility of synthetic transcendence through a transgressive practice, then in doing so it comes dangerously close to rearticulating some of the central tenets of the discourse it sets out to undermine. By paradoxically revealing in her modernist texts the contradictory position of the thinking and drinking woman in Paris – the mythical intellectual home of a modernist café society and drinking culture – Rhys interrogates the limits of the structures of meaning that drink accrues in modernist fiction. What she reveals is the extent to which, in this regard at least, the radical work of modernism is foreclosed by the discursive structures of modernity. Drink in modernist fiction may produce alterity, but it is an alterity that was already produced, largely by the discourses of temperance, as more or less exclusive to men.

Conclusion: Thinking About Drinking, or ‘Go on, Just One More ...’

In Sinclair Lewis’s novel *Babbitt* – published in the same year as *Ulysses* – we follow Lewis’s equally unheroic hero through his daily round of salesmanship, domestic stagnation, and more or less successful social climbing in Prohibition America. During one of his more fruitful periods of social networking, George F. Babbitt is invited to a party at the house of the wealthy local banker William Washington Eathorne. Among the surprises Babbitt encounters at the select gathering is the ease with which the guests accept and consume their drinks. It is not that Babbitt has been successfully kept away from alcohol by the legislative influence of the Eighteenth Amendment – indeed, his alcohol consumption throughout the novel reflects, if anything, the observation made by a character in John Dos Passos’ *Manhattan Transfer* that ‘the difficulty under prohibition is keeping sober.’¹ Rather, we are told that he had not ‘since prohibition, known anyone to be casual about drinking. It was extraordinary merely to sip his toddy and not cry, “Oh, maaaaan, this hits me right where I live!”.’² It is, in many ways, this very lack of casualness, this need to shout out about drink, the need – in narrative terms – to not simply show the sipping of drinks, but to make each such image a way of saying ‘this hits me where I live’ that I have documented here.

A quarter of a century later – fifteen years after the repeal of Prohibition, and just three years after the end of World War Two – two novels would be published which, on the one hand, would represent a culmination of the tendencies I have outlined in this study, and on the other a deconstruction of those ideas in the light of a revived notion of alcohol consumption as a disease. In Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano* (1947), alcohol doesn’t just hit the hero where he lives; intoxication dominates the text as a narrative device throughout, and drunkenness moves from being a metaphor for the experience of modernity to the leading metaphor of global modernity itself. Lowry’s epic tale of descent and destruction takes us simultaneously to the heart and the edge of a ‘drunken revolving world’, that, were it to ‘sober up for

¹ John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 254

² Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (1922; London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 209

a couple of days ... would die of remorse on the third.’³ Two years earlier, however (much to Lowry’s horror),⁴ Charles Jackson produced *The Lost Weekend* – a very different narrative of drunkenness. Here, Jackson repeatedly punctures the idea of the heroic drunken writer, not least in the absurd image of the hero staggering through upper Manhattan clutching his unwieldy typewriter which he unsuccessfully attempts to pawn for more drink.⁵ While Lowry depicted in his fiction, and in many ways lived out, the fantasy of the writer as sacrilegious hierophant, creating through intoxication a dangerous synthetic transcendence through which to produce a seminal reimagining of the world, Jackson depicted in his fiction the alcoholic as victim of a disease. Furthermore, Jackson depicted the notion of the heroic drunken writer as a bad and dangerous joke. In the novel, his hero Donald Birman oscillates from drunken fantasies in which he figures as the great drunk novelist, to soberly berating himself for letting ‘his intelligence permit him to blow himself up to such exaggerated proportions so great by contrast to the miserable fact of his piddling little spree ... Balls! He was a drunk, that’s all.’⁶ What for Lowry functions as a radical, if bathetic, alterity functions for Jackson as a specific and pathetic pathology with a specific and necessary cure contained in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I do not wish further to pursue here the representation of drinking in Lowry, Jackson, or in the vast range of other post-war novelists in whose fiction drunkenness functions as a foundational narrative element. As far as the large amount of research which could be carried out on representations of drink in later twentieth century fiction is concerned, the use of this study lies in its provision of specific critical tools with which to support such analyses. What Lowry and Jackson represent in terms of this specific study, however, is a qualitative move away from the characteristics of the fiction I have discussed. Both are published long enough after the repeal of Prohibition for the last vestiges of a temperance movement focussed on an economic and cultural pathologization of the drinking place as social institution to have been effectively replaced by a pseudo-clinical conception of alcoholism as a disease more

³ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947; London: Pan, 1990), pp. 194, 117. Lowry described his own times as ‘this period of the world’s drunkenness’ (Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters*, eds. Harvey Bright and Marjorie Bonner Lowry [1967; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985], p. 63. For a discussion of Lowry’s use of drunkenness as a narrative device, see Sue Vice, ‘The *Volcano* of a Postmodern Lowry’, in ed. Sherrill Grace, *Swinging the Maelstrom: New Perspectives on Malcolm Lowry* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), pp. 123-35

⁴ See Lowry, *Selected Letters*, pp. 62-4

⁵ Charles Jackson, *The Lost Weekend* (1944; New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 93-117

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 42-3

akin to that produced by the teetotal campaigners of the 1840s. At the same time, neither text substantively locates Paris as the hub of a modernity which can be navigated only through the social and geographical cartography of its drinking places. To this extent the manner in which these and subsequent drinking narratives construct meanings around drink is substantially – but by no means entirely – different from the texts I have analysed.

What I have shown to be characteristic of the fiction of Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys is that the meanings which drink acquires in their fiction can be traced back to the specific ways in which drink was constructed as a problem in the preceding century and a half. Without reiterating at length my preceding discussion, the salient features of this process of problematisation so far as the meanings of drink, drinking and drinking places are concerned are as follows: the emergence of intoxication as a form of irrational consciousness dialectically other to the idealised rational consciousness of the liberal humanist subject; the emergence of the bar as a problematic and contested social space both in terms of class and in terms of gender; the hierarchical semanticisation of different drinks in terms of national identity, degrees of potency, and approximation to specific cultural practices; and the structural association of drunkenness with ideas of perverted and distorted fertility primarily in the figure of the drunken mother, but also in the figure of the intoxicated male creative author.

Each of these categories can be considered specifically in terms the texts discussed in this study. Firstly, the construction of intoxication as a special type of irrationality informs the notion of synthetic transcendence which emerges in different aspects throughout this study. The alterity of consciousness which is figured in temperance discourse as demonic becomes in modernist aesthetics both dialogically othered as the poetic, but also valorised in the implacably ironic acknowledgment of the inaccessibility of the numinous. In Joyce, this emerges as the power of the mimetic depiction of intoxication to create new literary forms and, by extension, new possible modes of cognition and representation. In Hemingway, the synthetic transcendence of drink is, by contrast, located in the quasi-utopian potentialities of male social interaction structured around drinking. For Hemingway men may not be equal in the sight of a God who no longer exists, but they can be equal in the sympotic relations of shared drinking. It is precisely this relationship between the celebration of drink as a form of synthetic transcendence and the masculine rituals and,

importantly, economies of drink that Rhys foregrounds in her deconstruction of mythic modernist drinking. In other words, Rhys points out that the dialogical skirmishes over the cultural meanings of drink on both sides always already excluded the ascription of positive value to the female drinker.

The construction of the bar as a problematic space again foregrounds the gender specific parameters of the discursive meanings of drink. The idealisation of the bar, particularly in Hemingway, also highlights the degree to which negotiations over the relative value of the conflicting cultural practices of different social classes became embedded in the problematisation of drink. Of course, from the outset problematic drinking was a site of class conflict to the extent that it was again always already located in classes perceived as dangerous by those in positions of ideological dominance. While the early teetotal movement problematised this relation by adopting what had emerged as a signifier of class status to assert the right to class mobility, the reclamation of temperance as an implacably middle class movement in the late nineteenth century brought with it the very demonisation of the drinking place as a working class institution that led to its valorisation in writers such as Hemingway. Indeed, Hemingway's fundamental position on the relationship between drink and modernity can be seen as being predicated on a quasi-mythic notion of the drinking space as a site of ideally pre-capitalist social and economic relations. In Hemingway's fiction, drink, rather than providing a path into the heart of modernity, represents in many ways a bulwark against its worst aspects.

For Hemingway, the bar can be a site of idealised male creative expression. For Joyce, intoxication provides an analogy through which the distorted fertility which is the creative process of the male author is figured. While Hemingway's idealisation of the drinking place can be traced back to ancient cultural associations of the drinking space with male intellectual activity, Joyce's juxtaposition of intoxication and literary production can be seen as illuminating a structural relationship between the notions of idealised and sober female fertility and the intoxication and sacrilege of masculine creativity. On both counts, women are constructed as other both to the spaces of literary creativity and to the tropes in which it can be figured. As Rhys makes clear, the monstrosity ascribed to the woman who drinks – a monstrosity predicated on the dual sexual deviancies of promiscuity and infertility – is of a piece with the monstrosity ascribed to the woman who thinks. Thus, while Rhys depicts social structures in which women are excluded from the privileged cultural practice of

leisurely drinking, she also suggests that this – particularly in the context of modernist, expatriate Paris – reflects a broader exclusion of women from the sites of modernist literary production.

The narrative tropes and structures identified in the core literary texts of this study are fundamentally specific to a particular relationship between drink and modernism in an identifiable historical moment and geographical place. However, I would argue that in identifying these specific tendencies, I have further outlined a number of critical categories and exegetic tools which could equally be applied to further studies in this field. These, specifically, are: the analysis of the bar as a literary chronotope; a semantic typology of drinks; the use of the bacchanalia and the symposium as critical categories; and the idea of intoxication as synthetic transcendence.

Considering texts in the light of the notion of the bar as chronotope means looking in detail at how the bar is constructed in specific narratives as a meaningful space, and how that space shapes the narrative which houses it. This means, initially, considering the degree to which the bar functions as a primary or a secondary narrative space; that is, considering the degree to which the narrative and characters pass through the bar relatively unscathed, or the degree to which it profoundly informs the actions and events that happen not only in it, but around it. In considering the bar itself chronotopically, the reader must assess how time functions both in the bar and as a relation between bar-time and the temporal flow beyond its doors. How, it must be asked, is that time regulated? What social relations does that temporal regulation reflect? What are the spatial characteristics of the bar? Again, what social relations do these spatial formations reflect? What role do they play in the regulation of the activities that take place in the bar? In considering the bar as a chronotope, its existence both as a social institution and as a specific genre of narrative space can be reflected upon in terms of the broader social relations contained and reflected in the everyday practices of drinking.

The semantic hierarchisation of drinks is important in understanding the meanings of drinking in texts. Furthermore, the meanings ascribed to particular drinks in literature are not the sole province of the author. The possible meanings and values accrued by different drinks is equally a reflection of the cultural history contained and preserved in each beverage. Hence, the meaning of beer in Hogarth's *Beer Street* can only be fully understood not simply in its relation to gin, but in its

relation to French wine and brandy in the light of the ongoing wars between Britain and France and the profound Francophobia they engendered in the urban middle class at the time. Equally, the references to absinthe in Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys can only be fully understood in the light of its emergence as a drink predominantly associated with Parisian café culture – something which is further clarified by an understanding of the relationship between absinthe as a relatively new drink produced on an industrial scale and a rural wine industry both conspicuously conservative, but also reeling from the effects of phylloxera. While I would in no way claim to provide here a comprehensive typology of the meanings of various drinks, I would hope that what discussion I do provide would aid any subsequent attempt to expand upon not only the meanings of drink in literature, but the meanings of various drinks in everyday life.

My application of the categories of bacchanalia and symposium to twentieth century literary texts may have initially appeared as somewhat extravagant. However, I would assert that their usefulness lies not primarily as a means of identifying the arcane influence of classical texts on contemporary literature, but as a means of categorising two trajectories in the literary representation, and the everyday experience, of drink. The reason that the specific categories of bacchanalia and symposium are useful is that they illuminate deep representational and imaginative structures associated with the relatively mundane difference between a good night out with your friends and a disastrous drunken debacle. In the categories of bacchanalia and symposium, the gendered structure contained in depictions of drunken bonding can be foregrounded, as can the relationship between drink, sexuality and violence. Furthermore the bacchanalia and the symposium refer the analysis of literary representations of drinking back again to the idea of space and society, and foreground questions of how and why drink takes on different values according to the different spaces in which it is consumed.

Finally, the idea of synthetic transcendence produces a critical perspective which refers the reader back to the fundamental problem of how to assess the literary representation of drunkenness as a cognitive and phenomenological condition. In other words, it traces a matrix between intoxication, consciousness and representation. What the application of this category demands critically is a consideration of the relationship in the text between drunkenness and the transcendent: does drunkenness appear as a window through which higher truths are glimpsed? Does it serve as a

compensatory form of fake transcendence? Does it become a heroic mode of self-consciously ironic transcendence, an act which simultaneously confirms and exceeds its own limitations? Does it figure as a pathology, the reflection of spiritual or physical sickness on the part of the drinker? Or does it simply appear as banal and inconsequential? It should be remembered that a representation of drink that adheres to the last of these categories would not disprove the notion of synthetic transcendence, but would instead show that the narrative in question reflects a discursive moment in which it is possible to think outside of such an idea; a historical period in which one can be, like the guests at William Eathorne's party, casual about drinking.

My contention throughout this study has been that the period I identify, and the particular writers I discuss, reflect a moment in Western culture when such casualness was not possible; that is, a historical moment in which drink had assumed a vast range of heightened symbolic, cultural and political meanings the urgency of which were most prominently reflected in the fact of Prohibition, but of which Prohibition itself was only a particularly prominent symptom. The Gin Epidemic, occurring as it did at the moment in which an identifiably modern set of urban social relations and public spheres were forming throughout the nascent capitalist countries of the West, inaugurates the emergence of drink and drinking as a problem both *within* and *of* modernity. As drink became the locus of concerns ranging from the philosophical possibility of pure and self-interested rationality to the economic mismanagement of working class budgets in urban drinking places, so drink emerged as more than just a liquid suspension of ethyl alcohol in more or less diluted form. Instead, drink became the object of its own proliferating discourse and the object of a wide range of other social discourses. Drink became not a thing, but an issue; drunkenness not a state, but an idea. The representation of drink in literary texts produced self-consciously within, against, and at the vanguard of a modernity in which drink had acquired the ability to accrue meaning exponentially is inevitably imbricated in this process. By the 1920s, the discourses of modernity could not speak outside of the discourses of drink – certainly not if they at any point took drink as their object. To this extent, then, the complex and detailed depictions of drink and drinking in Joyce, Hemingway and Rhys can only be understood as reflecting on and contributing to this wider discourse. The great concerned, expanding, and disputatious conversation about drink that has accompanied our modernity can be

heard chattering loudly in the background of these texts, just as they themselves pitch their own contributions into it. The drunken conversation is not a modern phenomenon, but the discourse of drink is. For modernist literature, drink can never be semantically neutral; rather it comes to the text always already charged with complex meanings, conflicting values, and the intoxicating qualities of allusion and illusion. It is because of the emergence of drink as a discourse, because drunkenness couldn't but simultaneously confront and complement a social, economic and philosophical paradigm in which sobriety – as thrift, reason, self-knowledge, order, and domesticity – had become a dominant and dominating value, that drink becomes central to the texts discussed here. It is in understanding 'drink' as a construction of modernity that we can understand drink as crucial to modernism; and it is through the analysis of drink *in* modernism that we can gain crucial insights into that fascination with art, drink and intoxication which persists, with such seductive potency, to this day.

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