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AA and the Redeployment of Temperance Literature

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This essay is an examination that, primarily comparativist in its approach, links publication materials from the temperance and Prohibition periods with the Big Book to show how AA's narrative antidotes to the traumas of modernity (sited in alcohol abuse) were as much the product of premodernist and turn-of-the-century hysteria as they were an attempt to write a new chapter in America's relationship with alcohol based on contemporary medical and social research.

In 1939 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) published the first organizational literature on alcohol and alcoholism in over a century that had not been generated directly by American temperance movements (from 1826) or the drive resulting in national Prohibition (1920–34). However, the influence that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century temperance narratives, variously couched in religious terminologies of damnation (for the drinker) and salvation (for the reformed drinker), had on the group's output is unavoidably apparent when the AA "Big Book"[1] is read in tandem with pro-temperance/Prohibition literature. AA's narratives, which recycle central motifs of temperance-era stories, appropriating the vocabulary of later manifestations of the form, were produced against the backdrop of post-Prohibition approaches to alcohol control. Repeal reconstituted the view that it was the individual drinker, not alcohol, that was at issue within American society. AA's evolution, at precisely the same moment that Repeal was taking effect, exemplified this change of emphasis in America's understanding of alcohol, but did not mark a revolution in writing about the subject. Linking the Big Book materials directly to temperance and Prohibition literature resituates critical understanding of the AA recovery process that is, more often than not, cloaked in a necessary anonymity and withheld from public scrutiny in the private storytelling arenas of AA's closed groups. How AA members recover from alcohol addiction is not a new American story; rather, AA's narrative antidotes

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1 *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism*, 3rd edn (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.; York: Hazell Books, Ltd, 1976).

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to the traumas of modernity are firmly rooted in the nation's temperance past. Repeal changed the focus and the defining terms of the nation's alcohol debate; what it did not usher in was a new lexicon of the effects of drinking on the individual alcohol-dependent. The stories that AA compiled in the first and subsequent editions of the Big Book are the direct product of premodernist and turn-of-the-century hysteria, not a new, post-Repeal chapter in America's complex relationship with alcohol. As original as the Fellowship may have wished to appear in the wake of Prohibition's failure, basing its disease concept of alcohol addiction on a highly selective range of scientific research from the Depression era and after, its closely marshaled stories of recovery and the apparent universality of its message mask AA's genesis in the maelstrom of temperance America. Where the Big Book, through a range of different personal experiences, propounds a unified, coherent and modern recovery narrative, its reliance on and repetition of temperance materials ensures that its mid-twentieth-century message is contaminated by the complexities of class, gender, race, and religious conflicts that helped define temperance literature and which proliferated in antialcohol writing throughout the century leading up to national Prohibition.

TEMPERANCE BEGINNINGS

Temperance, "the most widespread and enduring reform movement in American history,"[2] first gained prominence with the formation of the American Temperance Society (ATS) in February 1826 in Boston, Massachusetts. The ATS succeeded the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance (MSSI, which had emerged at the conclusion of the War of 1812), and gave coherent leadership to the first of three waves of temperance fervor to sweep the American nation during the 1800s. A religiously inspired and locally based temperance movement, the ATS was a distant precursor of later variants of the reform movement that, in reconceptualizing the drinker, simultaneously developed a literature (depicting the depravity and vice of the alcohol user) that reached far beyond the religious roots of American temperance thought. The ATS held regular meetings and received reports from other temperance groups, and it produced a series of papers on matters as diverse as the legal, medical, or agricultural impact of licensing laws and alcohol use; specialist testimony on the beneficial effects of temperance from doctors, scientists, Protestant clergy and miscellaneous figures both living (the secretary for war, the President) and dead

2 Holly Berkley Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 8.

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(Thomas Jefferson); and accounts of temperance action in Europe and Asia.[3] These detailed and extensive reports served as the foundation documents of temperance campaigns across the US throughout the nineteenth century.

Tracing the complex evolution of temperance is not the primary aim here, yet it is important to note how, as Fletcher indicates, temperance before and after the American Civil War represented "a mutable and complex set of ideas, assumptions, rationales, and sources of identity, shaped and claimed by diverse, often competing groups and individuals over time, in different contexts, and for different purposes."[4] Intricately interwoven with the main social issues of the century (namely abolition, women's rights, labor reform, industrialization, and immigration), temperance first developed out of a rural, Protestant ethos.[5] While late temperance is credited with the medicalization of the issue, perceiving the drinker as the victim of an addictive compulsion, it was Benjamin Rush who first developed the disease model to explain alcohol abuse in *An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Mind and Body* (1784).[6] The momentum of the reform era, coupled with the disease labelling of the alcoholic within more vociferous temperance texts,[7] propelled what began as a movement based in religious concern for the salvation of America's drinkers toward a culturally inbred damnation of the individual drinker as an un-American alien capable of destabilizing a materially aspirational, but morally conservative, Protestant society. To structure a climate of change in which the existing power base would not be radically (if at all) altered required new vocabularies of reform that trumpeted the benefits of Protestant morality

3 Justin Edwards, *Permanent Temperance Documents of the American Temperance Society*, Volume I (Boston: Bliss, Perkins, Marvin and Co., 1835).

4 Berkley Fletcher, 5.

5 Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 4–5. W. J. Rorabaugh also notes Quaker concern regarding America's alcohol use in the Revolutionary War period, citing Anthony Benezet and John Wesley's 1774 pamphlet *The potent enemies of America laid open: being some account of the baneful effects attending the use of distilled spirituous liquors, and the slavery of the negroes*. See W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 36. The direct correspondence between temperance and abolition would remain a clear, if contested, issue throughout the 1800s.

6 Harry G. Levine, "The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 39, 1 (1978), 151–2; Herbert Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989), 17; David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal, "Introduction," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, eds., *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 4.

7 "The habitual temperate drinker ought to open his eyes and take the alarm. We remark, then, the habit is a dangerous one: when the taste is formed, and the habit established, no man is his own master and with all his prudence the temperate drinker is liable to die a sot." *Western Temperance Journal*, 1, 5 (15 March 1841), 38.

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while simultaneously offering a level of social equality for the disenfranchised sections of the Protestant population. The temperance lexicon necessarily restricted the access of immigrant, Catholic, or alien others to the benefits of such social engineering. Key to successful temperance narratives was the redemption of the individual drinker: where previously he had exhibited compulsive behavior typical of an un-American mass, he reforms to become a law-abiding citizen marked by his humility, respectability, and sobriety.

Before the Civil War, American society was awash with competing brands of reform literature, the tangible by-product of an exponential growth in reform societies dedicated to social change. By 1836, a decade after its inception, one in every ten Americans was a member of the American Temperance Society.[8] Figures indicating the volume of publications issued highlight the scale of the reform enterprise. A central publishing outlet was the American Tract Society, formed in 1825 following the merger of the New York Religious Tract Society and the Boston-based American Tract Society. Between 1829 and 1834 the American Tract Society produced four million publications; by 1851 almost five million of the pamphlets it had published had temperance as their subject.[9] An extensive and prolonged propaganda campaign ensured temperance's domination of the reform era while its characterization of the drink question as the central issue in a wider social nexus of debates concerning class, gender, and race maintained this status. By reading the behavior of the lower classes, immigrants, and the nation's black population (the latent racism and xenophobia of particular regional temperance campaigns added to the variable character of this particular reform movement) as deviant and subversive, temperance promoters succeeded in bolstering the central ethos of an American, Protestant success story: that an industrious and sober capitalism provided for Earthly and Heavenly reward, while simultaneously excluding unregenerate "others" from such visions of visible and valued social identity. While an "ideological congruence" existed between abolition and temperance,[10] rifts between the two movements in the South were significant and were highlighted by the wet/dry divisions within the Democratic Party:[11] northern members tended to focus on the importance of the abolition of slavery, while their southern counterparts were more excised by the drink question, defending its preeminence

8 James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 284.

9 Robert S. Levine, "Fiction and Reform I," in Emory Elliott, ed., *The Columbia History of the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 130–54, 137; Rorabaugh, 196.

10 John W. Crowley, "Slaves to the Bottle: Gough's *Autobiography* and Douglass' *Narrative*," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, 115–35, 121.

11 Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 284, 290–3, 306–27.

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through recourse to racial-purity arguments.[12] For black writers, the double-edged nature of the paralleled campaigns proved an intractable if compelling source of debate. By the 1890s, Frances Harper would argue that temperance was an enslaver of anyone, irrespective of race: "bad as was American slavery the slavery of intemperance is worse. Slavery was the enemy of one section, the oppressor of one race, but intemperance is the curse of every land and the deadly foe of every kindred, tribe and race."[13] However, such elision of the racial complexities underwriting the temperance movement was not the policy of the preeminent black campaigner of the antebellum period. Frederick Douglass, while an active voice in support of temperance, "denounce[d] the bigotry of the temperance movement."[14] In a speech delivered in New York on 11 May 1847, Douglass highlighted the fact that if "seven [slaves] were found together at a Temperance meeting or any other place, [they] would be scourged and beaten by their cruel tyrants." Continuing this theme he referenced an attack on a predominantly black march against temperance in Philadelphia in 1842:

> that procession was not allowed to proceed far, in the City of Philadelphia – The American City of Brotherly Love, the city of all others loudest in its boasts of freedom and liberty – before these noble-minded men were assaulted by the citizens, their banners torn in shreds and themselves trampled in the dust, and inhumanly beaten, and all their bright and fond hopes and anticipations in behalf of their friends and their race blasted by the wanton cruelty of their white fellow citizens. And all this was done for no other reason than that they had presumed to walk through the streets with Temperance banners and badges, like human beings.[15]

12 Alabama Congressman and author on race degeneracy, Richmond Pearson Hobson, speaking in the House of Representatives in an early version of the Eighteenth Amendment in December 1914, observed, "Liquor will actually make a brute out of the Negro, causing him to commit unnatural crimes. The effect is the same on the white man, though the white man being further evolved it takes longer to reduce him to the same level." *Congressional Record*, 63rd Congress, Third Session, 1914, 507. The Hobson Resolution Debate failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority, winning by 197 votes to 190. Sinclair, 175.

13 Frances E. Harper, "Temperance," in *A.M.E. Church Review*, 7 (1891), 373. Cited in Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E. W. Harper, 1825–1911* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 75. 14 Crowley, 128.

15 Frederick Douglass, "Country, Conscience, and the Anti-slavery Cause: An Address Delivered in New York, New York, on 11 May 1847," in *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, Volume II, *1847–54*, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 57–68, 64–5. Crowley (at 128) cites this attack on the black temperance march as one instigated by an Irish immigrant mob. The racial politics of later, more militant temperance thought are evident in the writings of Congressman Hobson. In 1911 he published *The Great Destroyer*, in which he made clear the racial stakes at the heart of southern temperance: "In America we are making the last stand of the great white race and substantially of the human race. If this destroyer cannot be conquered in young America, it cannot in any of the old and more degenerate nations. If America fails, the world will be undone and the human race will be doomed to go down from

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A complex mix of local, regional, racial, and gender politics, temperance plotted a fluctuating graph of incremental advance as the moral suasion of the early nineteenth century gave way to demands for legislative action ultimately realized in national Prohibition. By distributing vast quantities of literature continually reinforcing "the eminently middle-class" temperance message to schoolchildren, churchgoers, workers and homeowners alike, temperance advocates helped establish and maintain it as "the largest enduring mass movement in nineteenth-century America."[16] The bombardment of the population with anti-drink propaganda messages in depictions of acceptable and unacceptable social behavior allowed temperance campaigners to dominate America's alcohol debate until the middle of the twentieth century. By inscribing alcohol use as immoral and by simultaneously encoding the concept of guilt at the centre of the nation's attitude to drinking, temperance literature instituted culturally embedded attitudes that structured the responses to alcohol of succeeding generations. The caricature of the drinker's deviancy became a constant common denominator in writings about and approaches to solving alcohol misuse in America. If basic statistics on the amounts of pro-temperance writing produced are any indication, the increasing quantities of literature on the alcohol question and its remedies through temperance marked the campaign as a textual phenomenon of significance and longevity within US society.[17] American writers as diverse in their literary approaches and social or political allegiances as Emerson, Melville, Stowe, Douglass, Hawthorne, Poe, and Whitman all contributed to or commented on temperance reform in their works.[18] An American tradition of writing about

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degeneracy to degeneracy till the Almighty in wrath wipes the accursed thing out." Richmond Pearson Hobson, *The Great Destroyer* (Washington, DC: n.p., 1911), 10.

16 Levine, "The Discovery of Addiction," 165.

17 Frick details how other formats, in particular stage melodramas based on temperance and anti-slavery novels, were a significant feature of both the temperance and abolition campaigns. Stage versions and touring productions of Timothy Shay Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-room and What I Saw There* (1854) "joined other popular nineteenth-century stage favorites" such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in dramatic cycles that reflected the "cyclical nature of American temperance reform." John W. Frick, *Theatre, Culture, and Temperance Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148, 11. Such was its success that "*Ten Nights* rivaled its abolitionist counterpart [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*] in popularity on the road and no theatrical season was complete without at least one production of it coming to the local town hall or opera house." Ibid., 148.

18 Not all such commentaries supported the temperance message, however. In an 1851 letter to Hawthorne, Melville subversively declares, "It is a rainy morning; so I am indoors, and all work suspended. I feel cheerfully disposed, and therefore I write a little bluely. Would the Gin were here! If ever, my dear Hawthorne, in the eternal times that are to come, you and I shall sit down in Paradise . . . and if we shall by any means be able to smuggle a basket of champagne there (I won't believe in a Temperance Heaven) . . . how shall we pleasantly discourse of all the things manifold that now so distress us." Herman Melville, "Letter to

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alcohol use and misuse had been initiated: the AA Big Book, a collection of personal, though necessarily anonymous, stories of problem drinking, would be one twentieth-century addition to that narrative.

Temperance's ability to maximize a nationwide message through its literature, combined with its implication within other reform movements, guaranteed its success. Women's suffrage and abolition would at different times and to varying degrees in the nineteenth century vie for prominence with the campaigns that culminated in national Prohibition. Indeed, women's voting rights only came with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, in August 1920, nineteen months after the ratification of Prohibition. Each wave of temperance zeal (first in the 1820s, followed in the 1850s and 1880s; another immediately preceded Prohibition) provided new momentum to the crusade and ensured ever further saturation of US society with temperance materials. By 1912, the Anti-saloon League was issuing forty tons (or 250,000,000 book pages) of temperance literature per month in 1912.[19] Indeed, between October 1909 and January 1923 the Anti-saloon League disseminated 114,675,431 leaflets, 1,925,463 books, 2,322,053 placards, 5,271,715 pamphlets, and 157,314,642 copies of weekly or monthly magazines, as well as 21,553,032 miscellaneous pro-Prohibition items.[20] Temperance was promulgated as the acid-test social issue that, once resolved, would clear the way for subsequent social reforms. Leading women's rights campaigners, attempting to secure the economic as well as constitutional rights of American women, involved themselves in temperance work: Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), two prominent figures in the women's suffrage movement, began as temperance advocates. In the wake of organized women's rights conventions, most prominently the July 1848 meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, came later campaigns dedicated to temperance: for example, the 1873 Hillsboro crusade mobilized Ohio women to march on Hillsboro's saloons, kneeling outside to pray for the reformation of the men inside. In 1874 the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed under its first president, the poet and writer Annie Wittenmyer (1827–1900); in 1879 Frances Willard (1839–98), educator and women's suffrage campaigner, replaced her. The work of the WCTU, in tandem with the organized agitation of the Prohibition Party (formed in 1869, and still the oldest third party in US politics), gave new and sustained impetus to the campaigns for temperance and national Prohibition.

Nathaniel Hawthorne," 1? [*sic*], June 1851, in Jay Leyda, ed., *The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville 1819–1891* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), Volume I, 412–13.

19 Sinclair, 106, 131.

20 Charles Merz, *The Dry Decade* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1970), 10.

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ENCODING DAMNATION WITHIN SALVATION

The opening moves of a century of temperance campaigns resulting in antialcohol legislation were made by men from Methodist or Calvinist backgrounds who initiated the debate as primarily a religious matter. Temperance campaigners such as the Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), author of *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance*,[21] father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and founding member of the American Temperance Society, initially emphasized the ungodly and irreligious aspects of alcohol that transformed the drinker into an inhuman individual who has turned away from God and is redeemed by a return to faith complemented by a refusal to drink. Included among the first volume of the American Temperance Society papers, in its fourth report, is "testimony" from Beecher advising that drunkenness "is a sin which excludes from heaven. The commerce in ardent spirits, therefore, productive only of evil in time, fits for destruction, and turns into hell, multitudes which no man can number."[22] Thirty years later, another Presbyterian minister, Theodore Cuyler (1822–1909), delivered his "Sermon on Christian Recreation and Unchristian Amusement" to the Cooper Institute in New York (24 October 1858), inveighing against immorality whether it be found in the theatre, in fiction, or as a direct consequence of drinking: the "wise man, for instance, drinks for refreshment. Of course he drinks pure water, or something that will not stimulate. On the other hand, the sensualist drinks for stimulation. He goes to the bottle which maddens and intoxicates."[23] For Cuyler, the impetus has already shifted to witnessing the sinful nature of the individual drinker in a society offering at every turn vices designed to tempt the mind away from God and the path of righteous faith:

> Everything that rests my body or mind; improves my health and elevates my soul is commendable. Everything that stimulates this nervous system of mine, until I become a walking maniac; everything that debauches my body, weakens my conscience, excites impure thoughts, and makes my soul a terrible house of imagery; and everything that makes me forget God and eternity is dangerous and in the last damnable.[24]

As an enthusiastic supporter of the Maine Law (a prototype of Prohibition legislation that lasted for five years between 1851 and 1856, and was adopted by eleven other states[25]) and citing biblical passages from Ecclesiastes,

21 Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1828).

22 Justin Edwards, *Permanent Temperance Documents of the American Temperance Society*, 20.

23 Theodore Cuyler, "Sermon on Christian Recreation and Unchristian Amusement" (New York: E. D. Barker, 1858), 12.

24 Ibid., 12–13.

25 Christine Sismondo, *America Walks into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies and Grog Shops* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 132. Sismondo notes

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Proverbs, and the first epistle of St. Peter, Cuyler notes, "We have already seen that God's word does not forbid rightful enjoyments. This book is not a teacher of Popish penances, it was not written by monks, or to turn the world into a stupendous convent."[26] Cuyler's argument capitalized on the fluid and overlapping nature of the century's social and reform issues, absorbing a developing strain of anti-Catholic sentiment readily detectable in the 1830s and 1840s as immigration into the US from Catholic countries in Europe escalated.[27] Two anti-Catholic newspapers dedicated to "disseminating effective propaganda," the *American Protestant Vindicator* published in New York and the weekly *Downfall of Babylon* out of Philadelphia, first appeared in August 1834.[28] Beecher, "whose books and speeches were directed to arousing [his] fellow countrymen to the foreign Catholic menace," believed that an anti-Catholic agenda could be deployed "as a device to end Protestant disunity in America."[29] As Billington highlights in relation to the burning of the Charlestown convent in Massachusetts in August 1834, "a current of popular enthusiasm created by the writers and speakers against Rome and intensified by a religious revival which then had Boston in its grip" was notably supplemented by Beecher, who delivered "three violent anti-Catholic sermons in as many churches in Boston, exhorting overflowing audiences to action against popery" on the night of 10 August 1834.[30] While advancing the cause of temperance, one of its leading agitators explicitly supported campaigns of vitriolic anti-Catholicism. In addition, increasingly licentious novels, purporting to expose the hypocrisy of the Roman Church and containing hysterical depictions of cavorting priests and nuns that verged on pornography, fueled the growing ferment in the Northeast. Among the more notable examples here, and with specific relevance to the Charlestown incidents, was Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent*.[31] Indeed, excerpts from Reed's unfinished

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that Maine's "radical solution" to alcohol control, particularly among immigrant populations and most notably the Irish, was "inspired in part by Beecher." Ibid., 132.

26 Ibid., 6.

27 Jon Butler et al., *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 247, 249. Levine records that in 1850 alone, 200,000 Catholics immigrated into the US. Levine, "Fiction and Reform I," 147.

28 Ray Allen Billington, "Maria Monk and Her Influence," *Catholic Historical Review*, 22, 3 (Oct. 1936), 283–96, 283.

29 Ira M. Leonard and Robin D. Parmet, *American Nativism, 1830–1860* (Huntington, NY: R. E. Krieger Pub. Co., 1979), 54.

30 Ray Allen Billington, "The Burning of the Charlestown Convent," *New England Quarterly*, 10, 1 (March 1937), 4–24, 9, 12.

31 Rebecca Reed, *Six Months in a Convent; or, the Narrative of R. T. Reed* (Glasgow: John Roberstson, 1835). Reed had attended the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown in 1831 (as a student) and 1832 (as a would-be novice) before departing and beginning work on what would later become *Six Months in a Convent*. Her accounts appeared to confirm "stories of barbarities" in the convent; when a real nun, Elizabeth Harrison, briefly left the convent due

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work were circulating prior to the razing of the Ursuline convent. Arguably the most controversial was Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836),[32] which detailed the illicit sex, illegitimate pregnancy, infanticide, and drinking apparently typical of convent life. Monk was uncovered as a fraud shortly after publication: the *Awful Disclosures* had been produced by four evangelical ministers from New York in collaboration with the disreputable Monk; nevertheless, it sold over 300,000 copies before the Civil War brought a hiatus to the gathering fanaticism and overlapping passions of the non-abolition reform movements.[33]

It was the evangelicals within temperance, first prominent in New York in the late 1820s, that infused temperance literature with a focus on the depravity of vice rather than the rewards of virtue and reform. As the 1800s progressed and immigration rates increased exponentially, drinking symbolized the growth of an urban, non-Protestant underclass that threatened the social hegemony of white, middle-class settlers. In response, evangelical temperance campaigners stigmatized the drinker as a social deviant, a subversive and alien presence implicated within the capitalist order to be rooted out and isolated as a harmful factor within American society. In certain cases, through the ministrations of temperance, the drinker could be systematically educated in the benefits of a sober and industrious life. Conversion away from the vices that characterized their un-American lifestyles was preached in temperance sermons and narrated in multiple tracts: adherence to the social security and economic success implicit in the Protestant, capital-based ethos of white, middle-class American society was the core message. Consequently, favorite Protestant and bourgeois ethics such as thrift and self-denial were promoted, alongside abstinence, as the essential cornerstones of individual betterment. Social deviance was read, and written, in conjunction with moral deviance: salvation in the next life depended upon acceptance of the dominant forces of capitalism and Protestantism within nineteenth-century society.

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to exhaustion in July 1834, various rumours behind her temporary departure did the rounds in Boston: "It was generally believed that she had been forced to return and cast into a deep dungeon in the cellars of the convent for punishment." On 11 August 1834, a mob burned the convent to the ground. Billington, "The Burning of the Charlestown Convent," 10, 11, 15–16.

32 Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk; or, The Hidden Secrets of a Nun's Life in A Convent Exposed* (1836; rept. London: Canova Press, 1971). Billington notes that one Reverend J. J. Slocum acted as the principal writer of the tale that also attracted the attention of the editors of the *American Protestant Vindicator*, who later supported the unfounded allegation that Monk's "second pregnancy had been arranged by the Jesuits to discredit her exposures." Monk thereafter declined into drink and dissipation, dying an imprisoned pickpocket in 1849. Billington, "Maria Monk and Her Influence," 286–87, 295–96.

33 David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 65.

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Such combinations of revivalist ideology, "organized anti-Catholicism," and capitalist work practices allowed nineteenth-century business owners to promote temperance alongside "industrialization as a civilizing mission."[34] Indeed, late-century temperance texts promoted the benefits of capitalist success in advance of any moral reformation. Temperance narratives evolved in terms of style and content, adapting to the demands of an industrializing nation and reflecting more militant voices calling for alcohol reform. Where some examples of early temperance literature, such as *Edmund and Margaret; or, Sobriety and Faithfulness Rewarded* (1822),[35] resolved the problems created by drink with readings from the Bible and virtuous deeds in the home, mid- and particularly late-century temperance writing concentrated on the underside of the debate, dwelling on the deviant or economic results of vice before any reference was made to the rewards of virtuous action.

Moral reformers such as Mason Weems (1759–1825), an Episcopalian clergyman and biographer of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, practiced just such a fascination with the purported obscenities committed by the drinker that had begun to infiltrate temperance narratives. Accounts that had primarily discussed the redemption of the alcohol user were quickly superseded by sensational accounts of an individual's inevitable fall into vice, degradation, violence, and, in some cases, death due to drinking. Reynolds marks this altered language of temperance as signaling the advent of the "dark reformers" who were "largely responsible for transforming a culture of morality into a culture of ambiguity."[36] Central to such redefinitions was the Washingtonian movement, a short-lived and controversial abstinence organization begun by six Baltimore men in 1840 that had recruited 100,000 members within a year, and 500,000 by 1843.[37] A clear precursor of AA, "confessional narratives . . . were the heart of the Washingtonian meetings."[38] Pledged to refrain from alcohol,[39] they were led by John Bartholomew Gough,

34 Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 6. For more detailed connections between these issues see ibid., 55–61 and 79–135; and John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 4, 37, 184.

35 A.H., *Edmund and Margaret; or, Sobriety and Faithfulness Rewarded* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1822). 36 Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 55, 59.

37 David S. Reynolds, "Black Cats and Delirium Tremens: Temperance and the American Renaissance," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, 26.

38 Crowley, "Slaves to the Bottle," 116.

39 "We, whose names are annexed, desirous of forming a society for our mutual benefit, and to safeguard against a pernicious practice injurious to our health, standing and families, do pledge ourselves as gentlemen, that we will not drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider." Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, 40. In his book *Sobering Tales: Narratives of Alcoholism and Recovery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 115, Edmund O'Reilly celebrates the structuring trichotomies within AA practice: imposing "a dynamic trinary

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"ex-actor and reformed drunkard,"[40] who divided the group both by his call for Prohibition and by his own failure to keep to the society's pledge.[41] Ambiguity was part of the vehicle of the temperance message and also characterized the effects that temperance campaigning had on American culture.

Temperance's oscillation between virtue and vice in the nineteenth century destabilized the vocabularies available to pro-temperance authors (and, for that matter, the linguistic registers of their literary counterparts): the shared pool of themes and images became increasingly informed by Calvinist theories of predestination and damnation and were central to the writing of sensationalist accounts of violence, abuse, and murder due to alcohol use. By accommodating styles and storylines depicting human debasement or monstrosity more in common with horror fiction than with the literature of moral reform, it fell to the evolving (sub)literary genre of temperance to exploit and expand the "terrible house of imagery" to which Cuyler referred. A narrative reservoir of sexual or violent debauchery, shared with the writers of anti-Catholic narratives, had developed informing temperance tales, whether written by established authors (Poe, "The Black Cat," 1843[42]), new writers (Whitman, *Franklin Evans*, 1842[43]), or those dedicated to the dissemination of temperance "truths" (Timothy Shay Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, and What I Saw There*, 1854[44]). Indeed, Donald Koch notes in his introduction to this last that it is "crowded with all the lurid propaganda vocabulary and devices that give Temperance literature its peculiar stamp."[45] Arthur, whose previous work *Six Nights with the Washingtonians: A Series of Original Temperance Tales* (1842) was written in support of the moral suasion efforts of that group, shifted to calls for legislative action in his most famous work. His novel pivots on the death of the daughter of Cedarville's renowned drinker Joseph Morgan during a fight between Morgan and the owner of the Sickle

structuring process on the relentless binary alternation of alcoholic hopelessness creates the possibility for new patterns of cognitive practice to develop through accustomed linguistic channels, primarily the narrative modes" of AA storytelling. However, as the Washingtonian pledge indicates, such tripartite formulations ("our health, standing and families"; "malt liquors, wine or cider") structured temperance methods of recovery, most specifically this predecessor of AA practice, a century before the Big Book narratives were compiled.

40 Reynolds, "Black Cats and Delirium Tremens," 27.

41 Crowley, "Slaves to the Bottle," 134–35.

42 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Black Cat," in *The Complete Poems and Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Dorset Press, 1989), 476–83.

43 Walt Whitman, *Franklin Evans; or, The Inebriate. A Tale of the Times*, in *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley, Volume II, *The Early Poems and Fiction*, ed. Thomas L. Bresher (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 124–239.

44 Timothy Shay Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-room, and What I Saw There* (1854; rept. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964).

45 Ibid., xliv.

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and Sheaf tavern, Simon Slade. Struck by a glass thrown by her father, Mary Morgan consequently dies; her father, penitent by her deathbed, resolves to stop drinking, successfully reforming himself to become a prosperous advocate of sober capitalist enterprise in the town. In fulfillment of the demands of the formula narrative, it is left to Morgan to call for the removal of alcohol from Cedarville:

> The accursed traffic must cease among us. You must cut off the fountain if you would dry up the stream. If you would save the young, the weak, and the innocent – on you God has laid the solemn duty of their protection – you must cover them from the tempter. Evil is strong, wily, fierce, and active in the pursuit of its ends. The young, the weak, and the innocent can no more resist its assaults, than the lamb can resist the wolf. They are helpless, if you abandon them to the powers of evil.[46]

At the base of the social order within temperance literature stands the individual citizen's moral duty to his fellow citizens allied to the protection of future generations. The audience for these works was raised on magazines and other mass-produced publications filled with such stock narratives and characters. One of the main sources of social, as well as moral, education within American homes and schools was the McGuffey *Readers* series. First produced in the 1830s, some 122,000,000 copies had been sold by 1920.[47] Based heavily on Protestant tradition, they taught the ways of virtuous Christianity: attention to the laws of God, the laws of the land and the merits of capitalist enterprise. From its earliest editions, the *Readers* contained numerous stories of families brought to economic ruin by alcohol, while favourite and revisited themes were the saving of a drinker through the death of an innocent child or the redemption of an alcohol-dependent immigrant by accepting the Protestant work ethic. By eradicating intemperance, the 1835 edition contends, American society could achieve the promised utopia of prosperity:

> "My child will not be a drunkard!" Cheering thought! How it swells the heart with emotions too big for utterance! What animating prospects does it open to the mind! Almshouse, and jails, and penitentiaries, and state-prisons, will then stand only as so many monuments of the vices of an age gone by.[48]

Prefacing this edition dedicated to the promotion of temperance is "testimony given against the use of ardent spirits . . . given by the president of the United

46 Ibid., 238. Once again, as with the Washingtonian pledge, note the trichotomies deployed here by Arthur ("the young, the weak, and the innocent"; "strong, wily, fierce") in his characterizations of alcohol misuse and its victims. 47 Sinclair, *Prohibition*, 63.

48 Charles Yale, *Temperance Reader: Designed for the Use of Schools* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1835), 68. Also quoted in Richard D. Mosier, *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Issues in the McGuffey Readers* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1965), 216. Mosier mistakenly attributes the quotation to Beecher.

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States and the two surviving ex-presidents," namely James Madison, Andrew Jackson, and John Quincy Adams, who

> satisfied, from observation and experience, as well as from medical testimony, that ardent spirit, as a drink, is not only heedless, but hurtful … hereby express our conviction, that, should the citizens of the United States, and especially all YOUNG MEN, discontinue entirely the use of it, they would not only promote their own personal benefit, but the good of our country, and the world.[49]

In extension of the mission undertaken by the *Readers*, the WCTU, courtesy of Mary Hannah Hanchett Hunt, superintendent of the Union's Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction, successfully campaigned for compulsory temperance education in the nation's schools. This policy remained until the 1940s, when the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies assumed responsibility in this area. In 1884, the WCTU published *A Temperance Physiology*, a primer for schools providing a basic grounding in the biology and anatomy of humans, interlaced with typical late-century temperance-literature motifs:

> The drinker looks well and feels well, till suddenly comes a "dropped stitch," or pain in the side. Then follow difficulty of breathing and vomiting of blood; then a rapid passage to the grave; for medicine, food, change of air, all prove useless.[50]
>
> …
>
> Many men and women are insane, because they inherit disordered bodies and minds, caused by the drinking habits of their parents; and the descendants of "moderate drinkers" suffer in this way, as well as those of the drunkard.[51]
>
> …
>
> The taking of a single glass of liquor, the eating of brandy sauce or wine jelly, may rouse this inherited desire, though its possessor may not have discovered that the taint is in his blood; the appetite, becoming uncontrollable, may bring its owner to a drunkard's grave.[52]

By appropriating the terminology and tone of more militant temperance authors, the WCTU bolstered the cultural conditioning of schoolchildren through its state-supported temperance agenda. The *National W.C.T. U. Annual Leaflet* of 1886 underscored this educational strategy: "We hope to meet the dawning intellect of the next generation with the voice of Science so simplified that its truths may grow into the mind of the youngest child."[53] The simplifications involved, labeling drinkers "insane" and genetically predisposed to alcohol dependence and early death, would serve as lasting markers in the nation's attitude to alcohol.

49 Yale, *Temperance Reader*, 8.

50 *A Temperance Physiology: for Intermediate Classes and Common Schools*, with a preface and endorsement by A. B. Parker, M. D., LL.D. (New York and Chicago: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1884), 123. 51 Ibid., 160. 52 Ibid., 162.

53 *National W.C.T. U. Annual Leaflet* (Illinois: n.p., 1886), 14.

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Interfused with such textual campaigns were other social and political ones, defined inevitably by the oppositional terms, central to the temperance movement, that were to characterize its activities as predominantly representing rural interests and being consequently antiurban in focus, as predominantly middle-class in its aspirations and therefore anti-working-class as a consequence, as predominantly a movement organized by and in support of the white settler population and therefore anti-immigrant, and as a movement led predominantly by Protestants and therefore anti-Catholic. Temperance mobilized each of these fears and divisions at different times and in different contexts for pragmatic if conflicting reasons. "Throughout the nineteenth century, temperance served as a language for other matters of concern,"[54] consciously exploiting these in texts that merged social elitism with an increasingly perverse interest in the consequences of vice. The Prohibition Party, augmented by the formation of the Anti-saloon League in 1893, similarly deployed whatever tactics it saw fit to secure national Prohibition. Extremist opinions, which in the southern states merged with the anti-immigration appeals of the Know-Nothings and the racist outcries of the Ku Klux Klan, were voiced on the national political stage. Indeed, politicians, whether Democrat or Republican, were publicly forced to state their position on Prohibition.[55] Under the guidance of Wayne B. Wheeler, the Anti-saloon League's influential leader in Washington, the Prohibitionists successfully influenced the outcome of presidential elections up to and including Hoover's victory in 1928.[56] Coercive anti-drink political efforts, that were to tie the Republican Party to Prohibition and subsequently lose them the 1932 election, were twinned with the educational and pamphleteering campaigns of groups such as the WCTU. By any means necessary, including the exploitation of rural Protestant fears about race purity and immigration, the importance of nationwide legislation against alcohol was promoted:

> Besodden Europe, worse bescourged than by war, famine and pestilence, sends here her drink-makers, her drunkard-makers, and her drunkards, or her more temperate but habitual drinkers, with all their un-American and anti-American ideas of morality and government; they are absorbed into our national life, but not assimilated; with no liberty whence they came, they demand unrestricted liberty among us, even to license for the things we loathe; and through the ballot-box, flung wide open to them by foolish statesmanship that covets power, their foreign conquest has become largely an appalling fact; they dominate our Sabbath, over large areas of the country; they have set up for us their own moral standards, which are grossly immoral; they govern our

54 Berkley Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century*, 5.

55 Sinclair, 150.

56 Sinclair, 293, 316–27; Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 52; James A. Swartz, *Substance Abuse in America: A Documentary and Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2012), 32.

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great cities, until even the Reform candidates accept their authority and pledge themselves to obey it; the great cities govern the nation; and foreign control or conquest could gain little more, though secured by foreign armies and fleets.[57]

For Hopkins, the coalition of all that is "un-American," represented by the polluting poison of alcohol, is an imbricated amalgam of social, legal, moral, religious, and cultural tensions that threatens Protestant hegemonic definitions of American identity. A century of demonization, initially of the dissolute drinker, then of any denomination of drinker, finally encompassing all alcohol use, was completed with the passing of the Prohibition Amendment, "the high point of the struggle to assert the public dominance of the old middle-class values. It established the victory of Protestant over Catholic, rural over urban, tradition over modernity, the middle class over both the lower and the upper strata."[58]

REPEAL AND THE FOUNDING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

In 1932 the Democratic Party campaigned in support of Repeal, a measure ratified by the Twenty-First Amendment to the Constitution on 5 December 1933. Repeal, it was argued, would offset the social ills of the period (most notably bootlegging, gangsterism, and corruption), alleviate financial pressures caused by the Depression by taxing legal liquor sales, and institute a new period of alcohol control within the United States.[59] Prohibition's demise, a significant event in American culture, marked "the repudiation of old middle-class virtues and the end of rural, Protestant dominance."[60] It also brought the more immediate problem that, if outlawing the manufacture and sale of alcohol had proved unfeasible, it was necessary to focus once more on the figure of the individual drinker. The enforcement of Repeal corresponded with the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1934, a group that was officially launched in 1935 and produced its first major publication, the Big Book, four years later. AA not only accepted the "alcoholic" label that society had provided for the problem drinker but reinforced it with medical evidence that supported the widespread opinion, itself a vestige of temperance ideology, that the alcoholic was the victim of a disease.[61] Further, emergent AA philosophy

57 Alphonso Alva Hopkins, *Profit and Loss in Man* (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909), 234–45. 58 Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, 7.

59 Harry G. Levine, "The Birth of American Alcohol Control: Prohibition, the Power Elite, and the Problem of Lawlessness," *Contemporary Drug Problems* (Spring 1985), 63–115.

60 Gusfield, 126.

61 Warner notes that the Washingtonian leader John Gough had also argued that intemperance was both a disease and a sin. Nicholas O. Warner, "Temperance, Morality, and Medicine in the Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, 136–52, 138–39.

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recognized the need to reeducate the diseased drinker about their condition while simultaneously adopting aspects of the stereotyped alcoholic figure generated by temperance and Prohibition propaganda. Rather than accommodating this individual within regular society to prompt new approaches to the treatment of alcohol misuse, AA concealed him (and typically "alcoholics" were male) behind a structuring cloak of anonymity.[62] The foreword to the first edition of the Big Book claims that this anonymity was essential from the outset because, "Being mostly business or professional folk, we could not well carry on our occupations" if individual identities were revealed.[63] This originating confession of the middle- and upper-middle-class status of the organization highlights central aspects of the Fellowship's profile, replicating temperance's class concerns about social standing. Although the group's literature claimed a widespread membership from all sections of the community, which would thus enable it to speak for the average American problem drinker ("We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds"[64]), AA developed from and reinforced a secure middle-class, white, male base. This is reflected in the members' stories in the Big Book's first edition: nineteen out of twenty-eight clearly indicate middle- and upper-middle-class status. Predominantly characterized as the true stories of salesmen and male business entrepreneurs who, having benefited during the 1920s boom years, now wish for anonymity to safeguard their social and economic position, these foundational AA narratives embedded an acute class consciousness within the individual's recovery story. Allied to such status concerns, directly echoing nineteenth-century temperance preoccupations, is a

62 A 1981 study by Ogborne and Glaser concluded that "affiliates of A. A. are more likely to be men, over 40 years of age, white, middle or upper class and socially stable". Cited in William R. Miller and Reid K. Hester, "Matching Problem Drinkers with Optimal Treatments," in R. Miller and N. K. Heather, eds., *Treating Addictive Behaviors: Processes of Change* (New York: Plenum, 1986), 182. Miller and Hester conclude elsewhere in this text, "In spite of the fact that it inspires nearly universal acclaim and enthusiasm among alcoholism treatment personnel in the United States, Alcoholics Anonymous (A. A.) wholly lacks experimental support for its efficacy." William R. Miller and Reid K. Hester, "The Effectiveness of Alcoholic Treatment: What Research Reveals," *Treating Addictive Behaviors*, 121–74, 135. The fact that AA has proven to be successful for some individuals is not in question, but, as Fingarette argues, "The vast majority of heavy drinkers never try AA, and most who do join drop out." Indeed, he notes, quoting Shaw *et al.*'s *Responding to Drinking Problems* (1978), "the AA programme of recovery is simply not acceptable or attractive to the majority of people suffering problems from drinking." Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking*, 89. Furthermore, Miller notes, "uncontrolled studies reveal a high dropout rate, perhaps as high as 80% to 90%." William R. Miller, "Controlled Drinking: A History and a Critical Review," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 44, 1 (1983), 68–83, 73.

63 *Alcoholics Anonymous*, xiii.

64 Ibid., 17.

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prevailing attitude of disdain toward the drinker within US society, inculcated by decades of anti-drink and anti-drinker propaganda.

AA's demand that its members must accept the existence of a Higher Power, step back from "playing God," and undertake the "destruction of self-centeredness" initially appears to counter the spirit of enterprise and individualism that had been fostered during the increasingly consumerist 1920s.[65] Membership begins with a "desire to stop drinking,"[66] as outlined in the Fellowship's Twelve Traditions, but folded within this is a requirement to admit powerlessness over alcohol and a concomitant submission to a Higher Power. A religious dimension, a shared inspiration for the temperance movement, is located in the new centre ground of American efforts to deal with alcohol dependence in a group that had emerged in the wake of the Oxford Group (later renamed Moral Rearmament), itself "a conscious attempt to return to primitive, fundamental Christianity."[67] While initially appearing to offer a lay theory of alcoholism, the Big Book operates (and is referred to) as the Fellowship's Bible, and the Twelve Steps exist as "a group of principles, spiritual in nature, which if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."[68] The first decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the immediate aftermath of World War I, chart a somewhat bifurcated picture of the role of religion in American society. A decline in church attendances before the Depression was offset by public acclaim for evangelical revivalist preachers,[69] most notably Billy Sunday, whose popularity and media presence maintained "religion [as] central to the culture," ensuring that "its proper role in public life was highly contested."[70] AA's philosophy counterbalanced these respective secular and spectacular turns by transplanting the era's individualism with a pietist faith in the essentially subordinate existence of man in relation to God. The relocating of the individual drinker within an anonymous society in which the group itself functions as a surrogate community for the recovering alcohol-dependent produced one method of restructuring the identity of the drinker that captured the public imagination and came to dominate that public's perception of mid-twentieth-century approaches to and representations of

65 Ibid., 62, 14. Lawrence B. Glickman, "Rethinking Politics: Consumers and the Public Good during the 'Jazz Age,'" *Magazine of History*, 21, 3 (July 2007), 16–20.

66 *Alcoholics Anoymous*, 564.

67 Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1979), 50.

68 *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 15.

69 See "Why One Man Out If Nine Goes to Church," *Literary Digest*, 31 Aug. 1929, 24; Robert T. Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925–1935," *Church History*, 29, 1 (March 1960), 3–16.

70 Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, The Roaring Twenties and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 19.

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alcohol users in the United States. In novels such as Charles Jackson's *The Lost Weekend* of 1944,[71] released the following year as a film by Paramount Pictures directed by Billy Wilder;[72] Stuart Heisler's *Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman* (1947);[73] *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962);[74] and both versions of *A Star is Born* (1954 and 1976),[75] the staple AA motifs of losing control, hitting rock bottom, and finding redemption only through the ministrations of the Twelve Step program monopolized the cultural imaginary. Where temperance had created its own set of stereotypes for depicting the excesses of alcohol in the nineteenth century, AA offered post-Prohibition America an updated variation on that approach, again marginalizing the nation's stigmatized alcohol users. This tallied with the constraints imposed by the Hollywood Production Code of 1930 (ineffectual until the establishment of the Production Code Administration in 1934),[76] which stated that the "use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown."[77] Into the social and cultural vacuums around alcohol use created by the end of Prohibition and this tighter regulation of Hollywood cinema, for instance, AA stepped, filling the breach with an apparently new set of terms with which to encode America's drinkers.

AA's dominance of the field left vacant by the demise of Prohibition was given controversial medical support by the American physiologist Elvin Jellinek (1890–1963).[78] In studies undertaken in 1946 and 1952, which led to the publication of *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism* (1960),[79] Jellinek gathered information from questionnaires compiled and answered by ninety-eight male AA members that validated many of the group's attitudes toward

71 Charles Jackson, *The Lost Weekend* (1944; rept. Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1989). 72 *The Lost Weekend*, dir. Billy Wilder (Paramount, 1945).

73 *Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman*, dir. Stuart Heisler (Universal-International, 1947).

74 *Days of Wine and Roses*, dir. Blake Edwards (Warner Bros., 1962).

75 *A Star Is Born*, dir. George Cukor (Transcorn Enterprises for Warner Bros., 1954); *A Star is Born*, dir. Frank Pierson (Warner Bros., 1976).

76 "No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin." Quoted in Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), 284. 77 Ibid., 284.

78 Ron Roizen summarizes concerns over the bona fides of Jellinek's medical qualifications and notes, "The great Jellinek, hero of an emergent alcohol science field – with or without a doctorate – appears to have been a rather marginal figure with respect to his academic & scientific background & certification." See www.roizen.com/rin/rr11.htm.

79 Elvin Jellinek, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism* (1960; rept. New Haven: Hillhouse, 1972). It should be noted that even Jellinek, the man credited with formulating a medical model that accords with AA practice, sounded a note of significant caution with regard to AA's evolving monopoly of alcohol treatment: "there is every reason why the student of alcoholism should emancipate himself from accepting the exclusiveness of the picture of alcoholism as propounded by Alcoholics Anonymous." Ibid., 38.

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alcohol dependency and its treatment.[80] The identity created by AA and subsumed almost immediately within mainstream culture was centred on the need to accept that a drinker can never drink again if he wishes to stay alive. The concept of the social drinker was as alien to AA thinking as it had been to temperance campaigners. Rather, one socially constructed label, that of "alcoholic," is replaced by another, the lifelong appellation "recovering alcoholic," a definition rooted in both positive and negative images that tie AA members to a commitment to the Fellowship's program while continually reminding them of their former self. The AA group and its literature impose a specific discourse,[81] rooted in the belief that alcoholism is a disease, that indoctrinates members in the only acceptable way of understanding and speaking about both their past and present identities:

> Then and only then, after a thorough indoctrination by eight or more individuals, was I allowed to attend my first meeting.[82]
>
> . . .
>
> Talking things over with them, great floods of enlightenment showed me myself as I really was and I was like them. We all had hundreds of character traits, of fears and phobias, likes and dislikes, in common. Suddenly I could accept myself, faults and all, as I was – for weren't we all like that?[83]

The commonalities purportedly acknowledged by members are also underwritten by distinct similarities between AA literature and its temperance forerunners. The AA declension of the alcoholic as someone who is powerless over alcohol is a central operating stereotype that adopts wholesale the truisms provided by generations of conditioning in the pages of temperance literature,

80 Fingarette notes that Jellinek dispensed with sixty other questionnaires, many returned by women, because the responses differed greatly from the data provided by the men. Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking*, 21. Denzin's *The Alcoholic Society* also based its research on A. A. members, premised on the assumption "that each alcoholic is a universal singular." Norman K. Denzin, *The Alcoholic Society: Addiction and the Recovery of the Self* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1987), 1.

81 "The rigid three-part structure of the A. A. narrative forces a restriction of scope and limitation of focus upon the narrator; benevolent but austere confinement to a particular form and direction is imposed. The structure encourages an evocation of A.A.'s utopian ideology without concession to any alternative narratorial designs." Edmund O'Reilly, "'Bill's Story": Form and Meaning in A. A. Recovery Narrative," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, 180–204, 193. Elsewhere, O'Reilly highlights how Bill's story "falls into three parts, anticipating and enacting the narrative formula that Wilson will provide in chapter 5 of the Big Book ('How It Works'), and establishing the pattern for almost all stories of addiction and recovery to come." Edmund O'Reilly, *Sobering Tales*, 112.

82 "He Sold Himself Short," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 291. Denzin notes how, "Transformed into a storyteller, the member learns how to talk about the self of the past from the standpoint of humor and tragic irony. By radically transforming himself or herself, the alcoholic transforms the world he or she lives in." This particular AA language "permeates, as a threatening presence, every interaction that occurs between patients and their counselors." Denzin, *The Alcoholic Society*, 177, 198.

83 "Women Suffer Too," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 229.

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by the national WCTU-inspired education policy, and by extended periods of robust political campaigning for Prohibition. To counter the powerlessness the drinker experiences, the AA Fellowship posits a movement toward the reconfiguring of identity which, from the outset, however, defeats the possibility of ever creating a new, complete identity for the problem drinker: "We know that no real alcoholic *ever* recovers control . . . We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones."[84]

As Crowley indicates, a somewhat serendipitous combination of factors placed the disease concept of alcoholism at the forefront of public opinion and, therefore, AA as the principal method of treatment. The National Committee for Education on Alcoholism (NCEA), founded in 1940 by Marty Mann (the first female member of AA to remain sober[85]) was supported by Jellinek's sponsorship of NCEA operations from the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies.[86] In conjunction with the AA-inspired ethos of these two agencies, AA was the third and most visible component in a triangular network that comprised "a relatively small band of dedicated campaigners" who held key positions in the formation of public opinion.[87] The moving center stage of AA doctrine indicated a significant shift, tempering the previous intensity of America's alcohol debates and attenuating the intricate complexities and discord that had marked the temperance and Prohibition eras. The conflicting politics of race, gender, regional, and religious issues of altogether more militant periods of antialcohol agitation within American society had now been silenced, at least in the public's perception of alcohol issues in the mid-twentieth century. Part of AA's success was that it offered a single, indeed singular, solution to America's drink question:

> it can be argued that there is only one recovery story, the story that is given in the Twelve Steps of A. A. and in A.A.'s *Big Book*. That is, alcoholics who recover through A. A. learn and tell the same basic recovery story, the one that is given in the basic texts of A. A.[88]

84 Ibid., 30, original emphasis.

85 John W. Crowley, "'Alcoholism' and the Modern Temper," in Reynolds and Rosenthal, *The Serpent in the Cup*, 165–79, 172.

86 Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia*, Volume I (California: ABC-Clio, 2003), 436.

87 Crowley, "'Alcoholism' and the Modern Temper," 172.

88 Denzin, *The Alcoholic Society*, 349. Following his belief that AA members are representative of all alcohol dependents within US society, for Denzin and supporters of the disease model of alcohol addiction, AA is the only method of recovery, despite scientific evidence to the contrary. See Fingarette; Stanton Peele, *Diseasing America: Addiction Treatment out of Control* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989); Stanton Peele and Archie Brodsky, *The Truth about Addiction and Recovery: The Life Process Program for Outgrowing Destructive Habits* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); see the Stanton Peele addiction website at http://peele.net.

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The presumed universality of this shared AA narrative occludes any particular gender, race, or faith concerns of the individual problem drinker, while it simultaneously effects a sublimation of the conflicted legacy of pre-Repeal attempts at alcohol control. A marker had been laid down, a veil drawn across America's tumultuous attempts to legislate for, and educate about, problem drinking: alcoholics could now be quietly accommodated within the AA formula narrative, no longer the responsibility of wider US society and no more the subject of propaganda campaigns in support of alcohol reform.

That the similarities in the histories presented in the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* are significantly more numerous than the differences is critical: the Big Book enacted the substitution of one set of stereotypes for another, filling the void left by the end of Prohibition with a revamped template for writing about alcohol misuse and recovery. AA's acceptance that alcohol dependency is a progressive disease which, if not checked, will lead to inevitable death was a straight transposition of later temperance propaganda. In the organization's own section in the Big Book, before the personal stories of the members are recorded, reference is made to the unidentified and affluent drinker who descends into dissipation and death:

> He tried to regulate his drinking for a while, making several trips to the hospital meantime. Then, gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found he could not. Every means of solving his problem which money could buy was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man at retirement, he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years.[89]

Such anecdotal evidence resurrects the ideology of temperance-era narratives: inevitable death is once again the only outcome offered to the drinker who does not reform their behavior, this time by joining AA. Elsewhere, the terror, isolation, and despair of the drinker's experience that had marked nineteenth-century variants of temperance writing is rebooted in the most recognized organizational material dealing with alcohol use post-Prohibition:

> The less people tolerate us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subjects of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did – then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen – Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand![90]

89 "More about Alcoholism," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 33.

90 "A Vision for You," ibid., 151. The phrase "King Alcohol" was one familiar from numerous temperance tracts; to take just one example, from the 31 December 1841 edition of the *Western Temperance Journal*, 192: "The last knell of King Alcohol is tolling and the valley is echoing with the sound of the temperance hymn."

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It is the insanity of drinking (recall the 1884 WCTU *Temperance Physiology* as one example) that had underwritten significant portions of temperance representations of the drinker that returns, apocalyptic and unameliorated: "This chapter refers to alcoholics, sick people, deranged men;"[91] "He does absurd, incredible, tragic things when drinking. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk."[92] Such portraits are verified by the medical foreword to the volume supplied by William D. Silkworth, from whose work AA concludes that "the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind."[93] The repetition of central conceptions of drinking as evidence of insanity or abnormality that had characterized mid- to late nineteenth-century temperance literature is continued in, and indeed ratified by, AA's first, longest-lasting, and most significant publication.

AA's indoctrination of its members is encoded within linguistic repetitions, the recurring metaphors of the stories of the individual members, and the narratorial restrictions to which Edmund O'Reilly refers. Control over the recovery narrative is ceded to the AA format. For example, Dr. Bob, cofounder of AA, writes of how the process of recovering from a hangover equates to emerging from a "fog": "When I got the fog out of my brain."[94] This metaphorical use of fog returns in two other stories: "I had been drinking heavily from one state of semi-coma to another and it was several days before I got 'defogged;'"[95] another member relates how he altered his day so that he could eat earlier "to help me get out of the fog of the night before."[96] These histories repeatedly refer to the common factors and experiences of the problem drinker – "I had all the usual experiences of the alcoholic"[97] – without actually detailing them. Either oblique, metaphorical references are made, or a silenced but shared and readily recognized history, revealed only in the closed sessions of A. A. members, is inferred: a reader familiar with the associated traits would not require that they be spelt out, while one not privy to the despair of addiction is kept outside the alcoholic circle, not forming part of the intended audience. This apparent need to avoid the overzealous approach of temperance times is counterbalanced by the incorporation of temperance metaphors, presenting a double front to the first readers of AA literature. Culturally conditioned by pamphlets, McGuffey *Readers* and WCTU propaganda in their schools, the temperance-infused introduction establishes familiar ground before giving way to more personal and restrained discussions of individual members' recoveries through AA. By offsetting the ardent rhetoric of temperance, such ameliorated

91 "To Employers," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 141. 92 "There Is a Solution," ibid., 21.
93 'The Doctor's Opinion," ibid., xxiv. 94 "Dr. Bob's Nightmare," ibid., 173.
95 "The Newshawk," ibid., 258. 96 "Home Brewmeister," ibid., 299.
97 "The European Drinker," ibid., 233.

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narrative techniques act as an incentive to accept the Fellowship's message, adopt its strategies, and begin the recovery process.

AA's method of facilitating recovery through personal witness and storytelling recalls the Washingtonians' methods and marks another mode of textualization within America's narrative of alcohol use, this time incorporating autobiographical confessions to an audience of similarly conditioned problem drinkers: "recovery becomes a story-telling process involving socialization into the language and lore of A.A."[98] Generated via the necessary code words (denial, selfishness, playing God), these autobiographies are repeated within groups and inscribed in AA literature for two reasons. First, they acknowledge the shared common identity of the AA-prescribed alcoholic; second, they bear witness to the miraculous salvation that adherence to the Twelve Step message can produce. "The Man Who Mastered Fear," published in the first and subsequent editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, conforms to the narrative requirements of the AA formula. An upper-middle-class salesman, who drank as "a crutch on the one hand and a means of retreat from life on the other,"[99] is put in touch with AA members after his admission to hospital, a meeting that inspires him to pray for the first time in years: "Immediately a great feeling of peace descended upon me, intermingled with a feeling of being suffused with a quiet strength. I lay down on the bed and slept like a child. An hour later I awoke to a new world."[100] The conversion narrative, through faith and sobriety, a central structuring element of temperance fictions and pamphlets, is retooled for the AA generation. The man in question has been sober for sixteen years, a fact he acknowledges as "only the first of a series of miracles."[101] This road-to-Damascus awakening motif features in a number of the Big Book narratives, indicating how the Twelve Step program rehabilitates the problem drinker within a micro-culture of religious faith and salvation. In his 1966 study of therapeutic methods in the era of psychoanalysis, Philip Reiff notes how "[r]eligion is where therapy leads when it takes on hope."[102] The immediate post-World War II period saw a marked increase in the membership of registered churches in the US: figures for the 1945–55 decade show that there were 30 million new churchgoers by 1955, a rise of almost forty-three percent on the 1945 level.[103] This revival of religious faith and

98 Denzin, *The Alcoholic Society*, 349.

99 "The Man Who Mastered Fear," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 277.

100 Ibid., 280.

101 Ibid., 280.

102 Philip Reiff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 176. Kurtz responded to this in relation to AA practice: "if *religion* is where therapy leads when it takes on hope, then effort expended to understand Alcoholics Anonymous as a religious expression of American hope in the therapeutic twentieth century is a worthy historical endeavor." Kurtz, *Not-God*, 169, original emphasis.

103 Daniel Snowman, *American since 1920* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 126.

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observance in wider society arguably parallels the instilling of key spiritual aspects within the anonymous precincts of AA's recovery program. Servicing the requirements of mid-twentieth-century American society with an ostensibly modern agenda for recovery, it is clear, however, that AA had derived its textual practice from the temperance and Prohibition eras.

1955 AND AFTER

1955 marked the twenty-first birthday of AA; its "Coming of Age" conference was held in St. Louis, the proceedings of which were released as *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A. A.*[104] The central event of this convention was the formal handover of control of the Fellowship's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions from Bill W. to the General Service Conference of AA. The second edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which attempted to present a more democratic and balanced reflection of class and gender issues, was released in 1955 when the group's gender ratio stood at 4:1, men to women.[105] Downplaying the employment and financial status of the personal profiles, the shame, guilt, and necessity of concealment that characterized the life of the "alcoholic" are underscored. Successive stories relate a shared "program of hidden alcoholism,"[106] while decades of training the American public to believe fatalistic myths about drinking ("I knew from my general reading that alcoholism was irreversible and fatal"[107]) are shown to have achieved their aim. The Big Book's evolution charts the development of AA's own formula narratives, supplanting a century of temperance and Prohibition rhetoric by folding the residual legacy of those eras into the group's storytelling procedures that persistently accentuate the alcoholic past.[108] The AA narrative requires this surrender to history, a programmatic need to acknowledge the alcohol-dependent backstory, to say it and/or to write it. Yet it also produces what are essentially hidden histories, maintaining the workings of the Fellowship within its own anonymous realm. The stories relate the individual's past just as *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* documents the organization's roots and growth. Absent from these testimonies is a formulated presentation

104 *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A. A.* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1957).
105 Kurtz, 132.
106 *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 331.
107 Ibid., 436.
108 O'Reilly, *Sobering Tales*, 98, discussing Donald Newlove's 1981 memoir *Those Drinking Days*, notes how, "Like most AA narratives, Newlove's story dwells on what happened before the onset of sobriety; stories about drinking seem to be more interesting than stories about not drinking, and certainly contain higher levels of dramatic contrast, abjection, violence, unpredictability, and, occasionally, euphoria." What such an observation overlooks is the long-standing temperance ethos within American writing that provided AA narratives of recovery with the template for such revelations.

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of the current AA experience: the focus is on personal history, on the retelling of the drinker's various past errors and deeds, the recovery narrative yielding to the demands of past misadventure just as dark temperance works focussed on the depraved results of alcohol-induced actions. While the onus is on the individual to enact personal reform in the present, the focus of the narrative is paradoxically rooted in the destructiveness of past actions.

Early signs of dissent from the AA message surfaced with the publication of *Alcoholism and Society* (1962) by Morris Chafetz and Harold Demone. Their review of treatment facilities provided for the alcohol-dependent criticized AA for putting the maintenance of its own group ethic before the individual drinker's needs: "In our opinion, A. A. is really not interested in alcoholics in general, but only as they relate to A. A. itself. By action and by rules, A. A. expresses more interest in strengthening and perpetuating Alcoholics Anonymous than in helping alcoholics."[109] AA's restructuring of the drinker's life and beliefs was based primarily on long-standing American conceptions, inherited from the Protestant ethic of the temperance and Prohibition periods, of the social ills of drinking that undermined the nation's industriousness and prosperity. For Chafetz and Demone, America's failure to accommodate and rehabilitate the problem drinker necessitated the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous: "because we failed the alcoholic, A. A. came into being."[110] Further criticism came in more public fora: Arthur H. Cain, a physician, published two articles, "Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?" in *Harper's* and "Alcoholics Can Be Cured – Despite A.A." in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Pulling no punches, Cain characterized AA as "a movement which is becoming one of America's most fanatical religious cults," pointing out its "intolerant," "dogmatic" nature and its "anti-science" agenda.[111] Indeed, "Because of its narrow outlook, Alcoholics Anonymous prevents thousands from ever being cured. Moreover, A. A. has retarded scientific research into one of America's most serious health problems."[112]

Nevertheless, popular cultural representations of alcohol issues have continued to endorse AA's monopoly of addiction treatment options. American television series in recent decades repeatedly legitimize the accepted AA profile of hitting rock bottom and the related need to adhere to the group's Twelve Step recovery program. Whether it is the character of Sue Ellen Ewing in the original incarnation of *Dallas* (1978–91), or Detective La Rue and Captain

109 Morris E. Chafetz and Harold W. Demone, *Alcoholism and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 165.

110 Ibid., 161.

111 Arthur H. Cain, "Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?" *Harper's*, Feb. 1963, 48, 49, 50, 51.

112 Arthur H. Cain, "Alcoholics Can Be Cured – Despite A. A." *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 Sept. 1964, 6.

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Furillo in *Hill Street Blues* (1981–87), or Detective Sergeant Christine Cagney in *Cagney and Lacey* (1981–88), or Detectives Sipowicz and Russell in *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005), or Dr. Abby Lockhart in *ER* (1994–2009), or Christopher Moltisanti in *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), AA features as the standard, indeed sole, method of dealing with drink (and, in Moltisanti's case, drug) problems. While each of the characters experiences variable success in their efforts to control their dependence on alcohol and/or drugs, the recurring inference is the validity of AA practice. Any extensive characterization of AA's methods is a notable and shared absence across the four-decade period covered by these series. The lack of any mediation of AA's role in the recovery processes of these characters or probing of the otherwise beneficent representation of the offices of AA is highlighted, for instance, in Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing* (1999–2006). In "Five Votes Down," episode 4 of season 1, Chief-of-Staff Leo McGarry is a known alcoholic, his membership of AA mentioned in passing by Vice President Hoynes, himself also a member of the Fellowship. McGarry, whose wife has just moments before walked out on their marriage, initially rebuffs Hoynes's question, "When was the last time you went to a meeting?", only to be informed that Hoynes, along with "three senators, two cabinet secretaries, one federal judge, and two agency directors" hold a regular 11 p.m. meeting in the basement of the "OEOB" (the Old Executive Office Building). With "an agent outside, the whole thing looks like a card game," Hoynes reassures a reticent McGarry. The episode closes on a brief, restricted glimpse through the meeting room's door, an obligatory coffee samovar near the entrance; once McGarry enters having duly claimed to the security agent he was there to play cards, the door closes.[113] No more is seen or heard about what occurs during this meeting: the silent observance of AA protocol is once more complete.

The changing nature of America's addictions, combined with the increased awareness of drug issues in recent decades, serves to highlight the anachronisms evident within AA discourse.[114] Across four editions, AA's Big Book articulates America's problem drinkers' relationship with alcohol, but accomplishes

113 "Five Votes Down," aired 13 Oct. 1999, dir. Michael Lehman.

114 However, despite prohibited drugs replacing alcohol as the focus of recent decades of American drug-enforcement policy, Levine and Reinarman have identified a similarity of approach between the temperance era and the present day: "the use of drinking as a scapegoat explanation for social problems, which was so prominent in nineteenth- and twentieth-century temperance and prohibitionist rhetoric, is reproduced today in antidrug campaigns." Harry G. Levine and Craig Reinarman, "From Prohibition to Regulation: Lessons from Alcohol Policy for Drug Policy," *Milbank Quarterly*, 69, 3 (1991), 461–94, 485. In terms of televisual representations, while highly successful series such as *The Wire* (2002–8) and *Breaking Bad* (2008–13) have confronted drug use in unequivocal and unprecedented ways, they perpetuate the Twelve Step approach to possible recovery through attendance at NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings.

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this via temperance attitudes first formulated in the nineteenth century. Maintaining that drinkers are genetically predisposed to the "disease" of alcoholism, that one drink can unravel a successful life and lead to almost certain death, the imprint of nineteenth-century temperance remains long after the initial heat of its message abated. The AA narratives produce some telling facts: the problem drinker, through routines of guilt and shame inherited from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attitudes and legislation regarding alcohol, is required to remain anonymous within a society that functions by way of active, yet outdated, stereotypes; routines of concealment are reinforced, not eradicated, by the Twelve Step program; the individual recovery story is a strictly policed AA narrative of conformity rather than the expression or reclamation of an individual's autonomous voice; and temperance hysteria, combined with questionable medical evidence on the causes of alcohol dependence, have been subsumed within the self-help mantras of the organization. Where temperance proselytizers had been the voices of condemnation and reform in previous times, that role has been written into the self-narrativizing impulses of AA. The individual member, internalizing the condemnatory vocabulary of temperance now fitted out with AA codas, produces a rigorously controlled and formulaic personal history, the form, content, and audience of which are dictated by and restricted to the requirements of "A. A. orthodoxy."[115]

115 Edmund O'Reilly, *Sobering Tales*, 100.

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