WORKS IN PROGRESS

Rob Breton's essay, "Diverting the Drunkard's Path: Chartist Temperance Narratives," is part of a book-length project on Chartist fiction.

Monica F. Cohen's article, "Imitation Fiction: Pirate Citings in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*," is part of a project on nineteenth-century literary piracy and English pirate narratives tentatively entitled "Buried Treasures: Piracy and the Invention of Authority in Victorian Popular Culture."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Victorian Literature and Culture (2013), **41**, 139–152.
© Cambridge University Press 2013. 1060-1503/13 $15.00
doi:10.1017/S1060150312000277

DIVERTING THE DRUNKARD'S PATH: CHARTIST TEMPERANCE NARRATIVES

By Rob Breton

IN THE ANONYMOUS "THE CHARTER AND THE LAND" (1847), a story about the Chartist Land Co-operative Society, William Wright's drunkard's path is remarkably short and his subsequent journey to teetotalism is astonishingly easy. Displaced in urban London and without sustainable work, Wright slowly and somewhat predictably takes to the bottle. The lack of detail the author gives regarding Wright's waywardness suggests that the narrative was common enough to be truncated. Unemployment, poverty, and forced idleness receive a good deal more attention than the ensuing moral downfall. Still, Wright's wife grows increasingly worried as the small amount of money she brings home is cruelly taken from her and spent by her husband in the alehouse, and not on food for the children. After witnessing familial conflicts over spending, readers familiar with the drunkard trope might expect spousal abuse, crime, and death. But one day, out of the blue, Wright says he has for weeks given up drink, instead using the family money to purchase lottery tickets for a stake in the Land Co-operative Society, what was to become the National Land Company in 1846. Feargus O'Connor founded the Company in 1845 in part to allow urban working classes to return to a more rural and stable way of life and in part to create working-class landowners who could subsequently qualify for the franchise.[1] Wright wins a few acres of land outside of London and though the work promises to be challenging, he is happy to have it. The Wright family settles happily in their new home and has nothing but the possibility of more unmitigated happiness to celebrate. Pleasing his wife to no end, Wright promises total abstinence and the story comes to an abrupt conclusion.

A number of observations might be made regarding "The Charter and the Land." The story is unabashed propaganda for the Land Company.[2] One might also observe that despite the happy ending, a general sense that the working classes could not generate their own financial prosperity under existing circumstances is conveyed through the centrality of the lottery system in the story's plot. Alternately, one might focus on the assumption that a return to traditional gender and familial roles produces working-class contentment. In this essay, I focus on the question of Chartist attitudes towards drink and temperance. What might strike a reader of this Chartist story is the insignificance of the drinking narrative. Readers are introduced to the threat of intemperance to the working-class family, but when the economic situation of that family changes, the threat is easily and entirely diffused. It is also important

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to note that Wright's drinking is the result of joblessness and urban living: economic factors directly result in his drinking and there is no suggestion that he has an inherent moral flaw or that a moment of weakness brought about his decline. Drunkenness is not written as an insurmountable working-class problem – the real problems faced by this class are the ones that lead Wright to drink. The problem of intemperance in the story is subsumed into a political problem regarding the right to vote and industrial reform. The decline in any case is only temporary and, in terms of the story's plot or the final characterization of Wright, is of no consequence. Wright easily cures himself of drinking by sheer will and strength of character and by having options and opportunities. Finally of note regarding the treatment of drink in "The Charter and the Land" is Wright's decision to go further than temperance and embrace teetotalism, foregoing even beer for dinner. Wright's total abstinence is in keeping with many Chartist organizations that distanced themselves from middle-class counterparts by embracing teetotalism (and by grouping cultural and political reform), and it is also part of the author's apparent desire to show that drinking would be a relatively small problem in working-class culture if other conditions of life were stable and satisfying.

The Chartist temperance narrative is fundamentally different from the one made familiar by Clara Belfour, Sarah Stickney Ellis, and other middle-class temperance writers, the conventional temperance narrative that P. J. Keating describes in *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*. The Chartist treatment of intemperance minimizes or marginalizes the problem of drink so as to emphasize broader social evils, questioning the social usefulness of blaming alcohol for working-class misery. Though both middle- and working-class versions of the story frequently emphasize the problem of working-class drinking,[3] only in the middle-class story are intemperance and alcoholism shown to originate in moral weakness. Despite John Greenaway's argument that "Throughout the century, working-class political movements were … split on the temperance issue" (12), the Chartist storyline prunes the middle-class story and alters its sequencing or patterning of causality in remarkably consistent ways. As vehemently opposed to drunkenness and certain of its harmful effects, as were members of middle-class temperance-tract societies, prohibitionist Chartists, including teetotalers, refused to confirm the conventional story of the drunkard's path. The subjectivist underpinnings of the middle-class story were simply not available to working-class writer, just as the way that the middle-class autobiographical story and bildungsroman were not available to working people, as Regenia Gagnier has shown.

A great deal has been written on Victorian temperance societies and campaigns, debates over temperance legislation and the politics of taxing liquor, the pledge, and the differences between middle- and working-class drinking habits. Much less has been written on the way Chartists rewrote the story of the drunkard's path to suit their own political interests or on how the polarized orthodoxies of the working- and middle-classes produced radically different aesthetics. Raymond Williams is correct to claim that "In fiction … there is an extraordinary reproduction, by working class novelists and poets quite closely associated with the working-class political movement, of bourgeois forms though sometimes with the moral turned the other way" (4–5). But I question why Williams reduces the significance of a "moral turned the other way." Williams goes on to say that "much more often … there is an identification of the aristocracy … as the class enemy" and as a result, "working-class fiction and poetry reproduces what are in fact dominant bourgeois forms" (5). With the Chartist version of the temperance story, however, we see a direct challenge to bourgeois orthodoxies, precisely because the moral is turned such a way as to steadfastly contradict

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

bourgeois forms and the contents they convey. To see the "use" of middle-class forms as a sign of cultural or literary hegemony is to turn a blind eye to the bitterness and sarcasm embedded in the Chartist story, what E. P. Thompson might have called "the irony in the face of Establishment homilies" (63). Turning over a moral essentially amounts either to parody or to a direct rejection of something meaningful to an identified antagonist or "class enemy," the middle-classes. After a brief discussion of the temperance debate within radical and Chartist circles and an examination of the typical middle-class story, I focus on Chartist approaches to the temperance issue, suggesting that the overturning of the specifically middle-class moral indicates not only a unique and independent body of Chartist literature, but also the refutation of an epitomizing middle-class form. I include more plot summary than is customary because the stories I describe are relatively unknown and, more importantly, because Chartist authors tend to convey arguments through the workings of plot (as well as direct appeals).

Dorothy Thompson has observed that, "A general attack on the consumption of alcohol as being a root cause of poverty among the working people could hardly be acceptable to the people themselves" (114). Chartists were understandably reluctant to reproduce the typical middle-class story with its slippery slope trope of drinking, wife-beating, crime, and death (or conversion, when lucky). Notwithstanding a widespread belief in the need to improve the common working-class disposition, anyone supporting the political ambitions of working people would have been loath to tell a story in which self-disciplined industry leads to financial success whereas a weak moral character, and thus drink, fully explains why someone is poor. If temperance were a sign of middle-class respectability – expressing ideals of self-control and self-denial, and these embodied middle-class Victorian values – drinking would have to be problematized in a literature aiming at distinguishing the interests, values, histories, and cultures of the classes, what Thomas Cooper demanded with his call in *Cooper's Journal* for "a literature of your own" (2 March 1850). Drink was presented as a problem in the middle-class literature of the 1830s and 1840s: the best and the worst of it repeatedly identified drinking as the cause of working people's economic and social difficulties. Focusing on the wickedness of drink dangerously de-emphasizes the economic or social causes of wanting to drink.

Robert Owen, William Cobbett,[4] Francis Place, G. J. Holyoake, Robert Blatchford, and J. A. Roebuck all argued, at different times and in different ways, that temperance was paternalist, that legislation and taxation were unfair, and that working people could be industrious despite a "sup of ale." Moreover, it was widely recognized that beerhouses and pubs were crucial not only to working-class mores, but also to a growing working-class consciousness. Iain McCalman calls the convivial alehouse debating clubs of the late 1700s, "stubborn centres of popular Jacobite resistance" (309) that eventually developed "into a distinctive political structure, strategy and culture" (311). "These clubs," he goes on to say, "helped ultra-radicalism to survive from the mid-I790s through to Chartism" (311).[5] Brian Harrison has noted that while the rich had numerous avenues for private recreation – dinner parties, balls, etc. – the poor in early nineteenth-century England had only public facilities (109).[6] The fact then that only working-class leisure was subject to legislative restriction increased working-class suspicions of the ideological underpinnings of temperance.[7] Even non-political working people might believe that temperance was nothing more than an instrument used by ruling classes to undermine working-class autonomy.

Culture and politics are not easily separated. The availability of unstamped newspapers in alehouses, for example, meant the conflation of working-class politics and cultures, a

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

conflation writers of Chartist fiction deliberately sought to reproduce by the 1840s. To ask workers not to "keep" Saint Monday, the tradition – already on the decline by the 1830s – of taking off Mondays from work, would admit a concession to the industrial and utilitarian organization of work and the political operations that support it; it would also be a loss of a uniquely working-class tradition. Thomas Wright calls Saint Monday, "the most thoroughly self-made" holiday (112) for working people and spells out that it was never simply a day to recover from a hangover. Some "Saint Mondayites," he writes, "merge the worship of Saint Monday into the worship of Bacchus," but others use it as a family day or a day to enjoy sports, and so on (125). Working-class intellectuals and Chartists, no matter how devoted to abstinence, could not offer the factory and its regimes as a simple alternative to the drinking culture of working people; rather, the factory is more likely to be represented as a reason to drink. If it is true that popular radicalism "was the product of the leisure of Saturday night and Sunday morning, the pothouse and the chapel, not of the working week," as J. R. Vincent argues (79), then to promote the elimination of a central venue for leisure would be bad Chartist politics. Although Lilian Lewis Shiman overstates the case by saying, "the traditional lower-class entertainments were all intimately connected with drink, either being held in a public house or otherwise involving drinking customs" (30),[8] it is true that temperance reformers – working or middle class – could offer very little as a substitute for convivial drinking, a problem perhaps recognized in Chartist stories emphasizing drunkenness as a desperate displacement for some lost artisanal tradition (as in "The Charter and the Land"). Because of the various meanings drink held for working-class culture and politics, it might even be expected that a Chartist representation of drink would flat-out reject the conventional story of intemperance.

But complicating the Chartist literature representing drink is the vehemence of a working-class and Chartist belief in sobriety. Harrison's histories of temperance clearly show that working-class radicals and Chartists were more militantly in favor of abstinence than their middle-class equivalents. Harrison reminds us that the "Seven men of Preston,"[9] among the first publicly to sign a teetotal pledge, were of humble origin – cheesemonger, carder, dogger, roller-maker, plasterer, shoemaker, and tailor (106). The very word "teetotal" was first applied to the rule of total abstinence from all intoxicants by a reformed plasterer. Working-class teetotalers radicalized temperance from the sporadic morality "of influential local worthies summoned to discuss ways of elevating their inferiors" (Harrison, 106) into a politicized movement aimed at broad social change. Working people thereby alienated more moderate and middle-class temperance reformers by linking temperance to radical politics. As Harrison points out, "Respectability was alarmed by this moral initiative rising from below, particularly when it was joined with political radicalism by Henry Vincent's Teetotal Chartist movement in 1840–41" (106). In this environment, temperance literature was an especially contested site. Temperance literature, therefore, has to be understood in terms of a battle over the future direction of education and "improvement," as well as a debate over political autonomy and social mobility. As Richard Altick made clear years ago, middle-class attempts at educating the masses were strong from the 1790s onwards, as the threat of revolution was thought to be manageable through properly instructing "lower orders" (141–42). Libraries were constructed in part as an answer to "the drink problem."[10] The Chartist version of the temperance story partakes in a rejection of middle-class efforts to organize the "March of the Intellect."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Henry Vincent was only one of many Chartists to conflate temperance and politics. For a time John Cassell produced a periodical devoted to temperance, the *Teetotal Times*, and his *Working Man's Friend* was "crammed from one end to the other with entirely temperance news" (qtd. in Altick 353). Henry Hetherington, Feargus O'Connor, G. W. M. Reynolds, and John Cleave, despite much in-fighting and the personality clashes among them, all supported temperance, though with differing degrees of enthusiasm and not always consistently. The argument for the franchise made the presentation of a respectable working class essential, and this itself was enough to align many Chartists with temperance or at least to bias their writing in favor of temperance. Disseminating the image of working-class sobriety had clear political advantages, but so did the alehouse. If "drinking could be an essential form of neighbourliness or an extension of the exploitation practised by employers and merchants" (Dorothy Thompson 114), how to represent it? The temperance narrative we get from the Victorian middle classes substantiates and gives good reason for economic disparities by establishing that individuals are responsible for their own economic status. Behind most temperance narratives is an individualism denying that social problems lead to human misery. Poverty is reducible to an individual folly, and the broader conditions that lead to poverty, or even to alcoholism, are elided. Such a middle-class narrative denies the need for a recourse to politics. In this temperance story, drinking leads to poverty, abusive behavior (mostly of wives and children), squalor and the loss of respectability, disease, crime, and imprisonment. If conversion to sobriety (and usually Christianity) is not part of the narrative, death follows drinking and the relation between the two is almost mathematical. Sobriety or self-restraint, on the other hand, leads to economic prosperity, happiness, cleanliness, health, and salvation (or at least a kind of narrative blessing). Often explicitly, the story of the drunkard declares that industrialization and urbanization are not responsible for human misery; drink and a lack of self-restraint are. This is more than the familiar offering of imaginary solutions to real social problems; it is a flat-out denial of systemic problems or, worse, an indictment of the victims of social problems. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), for example, John Thornton associates success with sobriety by saying,

> It is one of the great beauties of our system, that a working-man may raise himself into the power and position of a master by his own exertions and behaviour; that, in fact, every one who rules himself to decency and sobriety of conduct, and attention to his duties, comes over to our ranks; it may not be always as a master, but as an over-looker, a cashier, a book-keeper, a clerk, one on the side of authority and order. (84)

North and South is sophisticated and complicated, as it problematizes this idea. But a "natural punishment of dishonestly-enjoyed pleasure" stemming from a "poorness of character" (85) is nevertheless confirmed. At times, middle-class writers might accept that the environment causes drunkenness, but Victorian middle-class fiction again and again establishes that any obstacle to success is simply one's own making.

P. J. Keating calls Clara L. Balfour "probably the most influential writer of temperance fiction," her *Toil and Trust: or The Life Story of Patty the Workhouse Girl* (1860) "characteristic of the genre" (25). He says that it was "directed at a working-class reading public with the intention of transforming manners or habits" (25). In the preface, Balfour makes her argument explicit: "female depravity, whether in the young or old, is the fruitful source of the greatest evil to society" (ii), even if working-class women "are goaded often

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by sorrow into sin" (iii). The novel is unrelenting in its efforts to demonstrate that success comes to the virtuous and failure to the morally flawed. In spite of the preface, of those efforts, and of that message, the women in the story are victimized in ways that men are not, though this does not seem to soften the novel's argument. Because Balfour wants her story to underline both the dangers young women face in marriage and the responsibility of the working classes as a whole for their hardships, the moral is not entirely consistent.

Toil and Trust is the story of an extremely virtuous Patty (short for Patience) whose mother has remarried a Mr. Toxy, a drunk. After her mother dies, she is forced to live with Toxy and his mother, "Nurse Toxy," another drunk, who despises Patty for her clear moral superiority. We know what we need to know of her stepfather, Toxy, by his name and the fact that he sold the family Bible for half-a-pint of rum (17). Still, one of the more interesting aspects of Toxy is that his drinking is linked to a vaguely political identity. When we first meet him he is in a bar singing "Britons shall never be slaves" (7), though this part of the characterization is not developed. Toxy constantly denies all responsibility for himself or his family, repeatedly muttering "taint my fault." Importantly, he is "very well paid" (25) but drinks to the point of idleness, regularly choosing to work just three days a week in a foundry. He is quite evidently responsible for the social and economic conditions that lead to his family's downward spiral.

The story proceeds quickly. Patty is thrown into Wrencham workhouse, where "the idle, the weak, the wicked, and the unfortunate" (18) bicker and complain, refusing to recognize that the workhouse is clean, the food good, and the officials kind and caring. Patty eventual gets work as a servant for the Vineers, a very lower middle-class family. Mr Vineer begins to drink, again for no apparent reason, and this leads him to beat his wife and to other crimes. Patty does not abandon the destitute wife, relying on middle-class benefactors to help her through these trying times. She remains sober, loyal, humble, hard-working, neat, respectable, and clean. When cholera comes to town she is under no threat of catching it, though many of the drunken working-class men and women around her, as if in consequence of their drunkenness, catch it and die:

> where strong drink was freely passing, and by the folly of the working men, at deaths and funerals, as well as at weddings and births, the cup of waste, of sin, and of ruin was always to be found; for wages were high in that district, though cleanliness and comfort were low enough. But in a few days after the first visitation, [the working classes] . . . were startled by finding more illness than they had ever seen before. (59)

Balfour knows that cholera is not directly related to drinking. But the generic logic – that drunkenness is the cause of working-class hardships – would blame cholera on alcohol. In this type of story, all social problems are caused by excessive drinking. All members of the working classes in the novel seem well paid, except perhaps Patty, but all, again except Patty, complain against circumstances while essentially creating their own conditions of existence by excessively drinking.

Finally, Patty meets a "fine young man and a skilful mechanic with good wages" (96) who desires to marry her. Beginning sober, the man lacks the self-discipline to remain so and Patty is warned away from him: "If he were religious and perfectly sober it would be another thing" (96).[11] Patty asks if he can change, and we are told he can, but he does not. Written in 1860 when the debate over extending the franchise was well advanced, the novel

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

implies that working people who appear to be fine young men, like Patty's friend, were congenitally disposed to land on the drunkard's path, making an extension of the vote to even the seemingly respectable working classes a dangerous prospect. The novel emphasizes that working people choose to drink because they are morally weak and, as such, they must not only be understood as responsible for their own fates but also as incapable or uninterested in changing them themselves. In a Malthusian conclusion, Patty, who remains sober, is not awarded a husband and family, as other members of the working classes in the novel are simply not good potential partners and cross-class marriage seems unthinkable. She is offered, however, the honor of a humble, unassuming, quiet, and austere working-class respectability.

In contrast, Chartist stories downplay drunkenness. Drink in the Chartist story does not initiate a downfall or crisis, nor does it have momentous effects, even though it is recognized as a problem. The refusal to treat drunkenness as a serious threat to working people is striking when measured against the vehemence of Chartist temperance. Agreeing with middle-class temperance reformers that drink is a problem for working people, Chartists do not agree with the middle-class story of drink, suggesting that they had identified a specific need to challenge not only middle-class paternalism, but also middle-class narrative form. Amanda Claybaugh calls temperance reform the "most influential social movement in 1830s Britain" (46). However, she notes that

> [it] became an influential social movement only after it was reconceptualized in terms of narrative, specifically, in terms of a narrative that unfolded the inevitable consequences of drink: from the first occasion of drunkenness, or from the first exposure to spirits, or even from the very first taste of alcohol, follows an unyielding trajectory of moral, physical, and economic decline. (51)

The Chartist version of this story includes a trajectory of decline but it is not initiated by drink, as drinking is a mere part of the trajectory. Alcohol consumption is especially prominent in what Ian Haywood calls stories "of the broken artisan," stories of disinheritance and dispossession, including Thomas Martin Wheeler's *Sunshine and Shadow*, Ernest Jones's "The Working Man's Wife" (see below), and "many other[s]" (147). But even in these stories drinking is pushed to the sidelines and treated as an incidental consequence of some greater social or economic problem.

Haywood identifies the anonymous "Will Harper" (1838) as a story "of the broken artisan" and the first of many working- and middle-class stories with "a new kind of hero" whose "class tragedy" includes excessive drinking (147). The similarities between working- and middle-class stories, he points out, ends there. "Will Harper" represents the dangers of working-class drink but only in order to identify alcohol as an effect and not a cause. The story begins with a description of Will, "at one time of his life, the pride and boast of the village" (26). A successful farm servant, he is religious and a good dancer, loves nature, and is desired by all the local girls. Will is "an honest, hard-working man . . . frugal and care-taking" but with "a hand ready to relieve the necessities of those upon whom Fortune frowned" (26). The ominous "at one time of his life" in the first sentence indicates that he too in his turn will have fortune frowning upon him. The first half of the story, however, sees Will achieve greater and greater successes. He happily marries the simple and equally frugal Mary, and they have two children whom they love greatly. Of course this happiness is to be put to a test, and when he loses his situation and is reduced to dire poverty at first

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Will "complains not" (27). Becoming unable to provide for his family and on the brink of destitution, however, means that he will suffer the "degradation" of the workhouse. Only at this point does Will take to drinking, falling victim to a stock character of the reprobate buddy of temptation who under normal circumstances Will would have avoided. But Will starts drinking right after he first applies to the workhouse, spending nearly all his remaining money. Later, Will "reeled off to bed – not to sleep – but to reflect upon the folly of which he had that day been guilty" (31). A night spent drinking is merely a part of a process of decline that had been initiated before the drink. When Will meets the same tempter the next day, this time he goes poaching, an equally consequential step in the trajectory, but certainly not caused by the previous night's drinking. Will has in fact sworn off drinking before he poaches. The rest of the story is soon told: "evil companions had contaminated him, and his lawless course of life soon made him morose and arbitrary to those he had till now loved" (31). Sliding further into an amoral abyss, when the workhouse overseer crosses his path Will attempts to kill him. The ending is not happy: "a prey to grief and despair, he soon sank under his accumulated sufferings and died" (32).

Drinking in the story is but one of Will's accumulated sufferings. By no means is drinking written as the cause of his degradation. Social and economic degradation leads to Will's personal degradation; drinking, crime (poaching), sulking, and so on are the result of a loss of work and the humiliation of being reduced to the workhouse. Will's history with drinking occurs late in the story when he has already been unravelled by circumstance; it happens through chance and is not written as a personal moral flaw but as a sign that even the morally outstanding can be reduced by circumstance to degradation. The story outlines the corruption of honest industry and "true" working-class character, and the loss of manliness and morality following unemployment and abject poverty. The Poor Law and the workhouse, not alcohol, have determining power. Drinking is noticeably tangential and incidental, as if to place it in proper perspective. Moral fiber is tested only in order to demonstrate that no one could pass such a test under certain given conditions. Because social and economic conditions are at issue, the story, in fact, offers very little character development, psychological insight, symbolic content, or developed description. The Chartist aesthetic eschews the inner life because the point so often made has to do with the blunt determining power of an outer reality that reduces character to a bland type.

It is typical of the Chartist story to represent drunkenness either as a displacement of class anger or as an expression of the futility of reclaiming individual self-worth given the world-as-it-is. "Will Harper" does both. The middle-class temperance narrative might express sympathy for drunkards victimized by a society that provides many temptations though few valuable economic opportunities, but individual character is to blame if the drunks fail to reclaim themselves. Behind most middle-class temperance narratives are the familiar images of worthy and unworthy or deserving and undeserving poor. In Harriet Martineau's "A Manchester Strike" (1832–34), for example, William Allen is respectable, hard working, and sober. Most of the other laborers in the novella are inclined to drink and have bad working habits. Coupling indiscipline and drunkenness has direct political implications, for as Dorothy Thompson says, the assumption that these were twin evils was a "standard from the employers' side in times of wage disputes" (247). Because Martineau wanted to show that the market works impersonally and that fluctuations in trade and employment happen naturally, her respectable working classes can experience economic hardship and there is no simple equation of honest industry and economic success. But the unworthy poor in "A

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Manchester Strike," like Clack or Fields, are drunks, agitate for political representation, and are easily fooled by demagoguery: they are responsible for their decline even as decline is documented as intermittently unavoidable. The question of why someone would drink to excess is avoided, for such a question would most often dismantle the categories of worthy and unworthy.

In contrast, Thomas Cooper's "Seth Thompson, the Stockinger" from *Wise Saws and Modern Instances* (1845) stages the temperance debate so as to entirely divorce it from the question of morality or worthiness. Seth's decline is much like William Allen's, and entirely unrelated to alcohol. Alcohol is introduced and recognized, however, in terms of class politics. In a conversation between three working men, the first to speak, Robert, casually upbraids the second, Timothy, for smoking. Timothy has twice given up the habit but lacks the ability to entirely abandon this mild addiction. A third worker, James, puts working-class vice, drinking and smoking, in a political perspective: "Well, I'm resolute that I'll neither smoke nor drink any more," he says. "[T]he tyrants can do what they like with us, as long as we feed their vices by paying taxes. If all men would be o' my mind there would soon be an end of their extravagance, – for they would have nothing to support it" (227). Timothy rejoins by saying, "you'll never persuade all working-men to give up a sup of ale or a pipe, if they can get hold of either; but, not to talk of that, what's to hinder the great rascals from inventing other taxes if these fail" (227–28). Their conversation continues to develop the idea that with the vote, the working classes could not be burdened by the "rascals." Drinking and smoking are again tangential to the problems of society, have nothing to do with the discourse of moral fiber, and are relative problems that will be experienced differently by different people.

In another of the stories in the *Wise Saws* collection, "Sam Simkins, the Run-Away; or, Villainy as a Refuge from the Tortures of Sour-Godliness," Cooper places much greater emphasis on the perils of drink. Here a pious, hypocritical boss, a "money-grub," drives his apprentice, Sam, to crime. Sam is more or less forced to drink on the way to a life of crime, but from the title and the opening sentence of the story – "Sam Simkins was a wild lad – but whose fault was it that he became so?" (234) – it is clear that drinking is merely a substitute for the resentment the disempowered feel as a result of their disempowerment. A number of Cooper's stories, in fact, go out of their way to demonstrate that drinking is alien to true working-class or artisanal culture, though it is thrust upon working people as a result of having lost the ability to shape their own environments. Like Sam Simkins, Diggory Lawson rejects the alcohol that was "pushed about" (229) him in "The Lad who Felt like a Fish Out of Water," although in this case Diggory is enabled by means of financial independence to return to a simple, rustic, sober life. Jonathan Rose identifies Cooper as a leading Chartist proponent of working-class self-help, auto-didacticism, and mutual improvement societies (63). But Cooper nonetheless recognized that self-improvement is part and parcel of political and economic improvements.

A number of periodicals sympathetic to Chartism and featuring fiction can also be very dismissive of alcohol's significance when measured against social issues. In "How Mr. Jonas Jones Became a Convert to Temperance" (5 February 1853) from John Cassell's *Working Man's Friend and Family Instructor*, life-long abstinence after an extended history of drinking is a matter of attending one temperance meeting. In "The Demon Lover" (25 July 1840) from *The Teetotaler*, a young girl gets drunk, passes out, and dreams of falling to a drunkard's life; she then swears off alcohol and somehow gets her boyfriend to do the same, even though he was a hard drinker and a demonizing influence over her. The quick

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and easy narrative undoubtedly has something to do with a debate over whether abstinence or alcohol is good for the health, or if an abrupt conversion to teetotalism could damage the body. But what is most significant about this type of narrative is the way physiological and psychological challenges are overcome by resoluteness of purpose, given that nothing else precludes the conversion. One striking feature of a number of Chartist newspapers that claim a temperance agenda, such as the *English Chartist Circular and Temperance Record*, is how little of the prime real estate is given to temperance, when temperance news appears at all.[12] Although it is important not to overlook the stories in these papers that show alcohol as the source of moral and physical collapse, such as "The Water-Drinker" from the *English Chartist Circular* (289), when documenting the humiliation, degradation, and death that alcohol causes, they tend, as in "The Water-Drinker," to show middle-class drinkers drinking to their destruction. Working classes or the poor, on the other hand, are rarely held to be directly responsible for their drinking habits. The Chartist temperance story in this way suggests that the moral or intellectual improvement required of working people cannot be divorced from political or economic improvement. It is inclined to insist that improvements in individual character or a conversion to temperance could only happen when matched by economic or political reform.

Minimizing the significance of intemperance in their stories also allows Chartists and Chartist sympathizers to address the crucial issue of political readiness. Drawing attention away from the loss of autonomy that necessarily shadows addiction suggests that extending the vote would not amount to a morally or intellectually inferior class running the country, as insinuated in the debate over the franchise, so often organized around the idea that working people were particularly susceptible to giving up their autonomy and discernment to radical demagogues. Whereas in 1846 a non-Chartist such as Peter Burne blames alcohol for all pauperism, crime, disease, and immorality and therefore sees it only right and reasonable that universal suffrage would be impossible for "the operating classes grovelling in drunkenness" (493), Chartist periodicals tend to represent mostly the self-destructive dependencies of the middle classes. The Chartist press, much like its middle-class counterpart, nonetheless entreats readers to improve themselves. Rose catalogues a long tradition of mutual improvement societies that eventually crested with "knowledge Chartists" (59–91). The Chartist treatment of intemperance only corroborates the idea that "knowledge is spreading fast," if it has not already "descended into the depths of society," an argument made here by the *Chartist Circular* (2 November 1839) and common in the Chartist literature of self-improvement. The authors do not deny the need for working-class improvement, but they insist that since identity is "modified by circumstances," circumstances ought to be the focus when discussing improvement, especially temperance.

The last and most important Chartist author to examine in this context is Ernest Jones, a vehement advocate of temperance and abstinence, although he "drew the line at prohibition" (Taylor 165). In the 1850s, he repeatedly attempted to make the *People's Paper* a temperance paper. "The Working Man's Wife," however, though a story of working-class drunkenness, goes out of its way to resist the typical middle-class unfolding of events. "The Working Man's Wife" is a story of rags to abject rags, of bad becoming worse. It is not as much about Margaret Haspen, the working man's wife, as it is about John Haspen and his path to criminality. When the story begins John is sullen and irritable, but neither truly bad nor good. He is a drunk but he is "capable of a sudden generous impulse" (4). Despite the fact that "society had done the best to make him a brute of a man," society had not yet been

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

entirely successful: "A machine of flesh and bone, he could be good or bad according as the hand of circumstance might push" (4). Impulsive and with a "principal pleasure" in satisfying "his appetites," he, Jones emphasizes, "*did not beat*" his wife (5). Emphasizing such a thing suggests that Jones understands readers would be familiar enough with the narrative of the drunkard's path to infer that John is not on it, despite being a drunk. Jones wants to show that unemployment and poverty ruin John Haspen and his family, not the "intoxication of pleasure" to which he is generally inclined (4). When the story begins, John is already spending most of his money at a public house, he is already cruelly sullen, already a drunk; but he is not physically abusive, not irredeemable, and not doomed to stumble down the "drunkard's path." This is the main way Jones disrupts the conventional narrative of working-class drunkenness.

Jones's revision of the drunkard character is important. John is eventually led astray by the stock figure of the unredeemable "friend," but he is not destined, even as someone who drinks heavily, to hopelessness until economic circumstance determines so. He fights in vain against poverty: poverty is said to be the "overwhelming fatality which was dragging him down into an abyss" (7). John in fact "strove hard – he strove manfully – but he strove uselessly" (7) against the employer who determines his poverty: refusing to take a cut in wages that his greedy boss, Barrowson, demands (which Jones represents as entirely justified), he sinks into "apathy and despair" and eventually abject drunkenness. Again, hopeless corruption attends poverty, and not the other way around. He drinks so as "to drown his thoughts" (8) and spirals into further despair as he senses his family's disapprobation. Drink certainly has a negative effect on his character, but it itself does not initiate his fate.

Jones, however, as a vehement temperance reformer, would not wish to depict drink as anything save the working-man's scourge and an obstacle to self-development. John is almost always drinking in the story and also almost always sullen, violent, and lazy. Margaret, the wronged woman, tells her husband that his swilling in the beer-house increases the suffering she and the hungry children have to endure. Caught between demonstrating woman's wrongs and the economic causes of drink, Jones has Margaret blame John's continued lack of work on an unsteady gin-hand. She also says she will no longer be quiet when he is drunk: "While you drink, you shall hear us cry for bread – when you come home drunk, you shall have to stagger over the bodies of your children that I'll cast in the mud before the threshold. It's time you shared a little of our misery" (10). When their child catches on fire and the drunken John is too stupefied to lift a hand in help, we have her views harshly confirmed: what reader would not react emotionally to such a scene and blame the drunkard man? Jones shows that drink deadens the senses to the point where natural impulses are obliterated. He employs melodramatic plotting and emotional appeals surely designed to judge and condemn individual character.

But Jones also interrogates the notion that individuals are solely responsible for their morality by beginning the very next chapter with an epigraph reading, "Poverty is the Mother of Crime" (12). John then commits a night robbery. Like so many other Chartist writers, Jones figures causality to be an embedded or root problem, making narrative solutions or resolutions to conflicts and crises conspicuously inadequate or impossible. Individual character in such a story cannot be fully individualized because individual character is entrenched on a *social* path; drinking is merely a common displacement of the inability to redress social wrongs. "The Working Man's Wife" is a story full of displacements. The individual's story, the temperance story of individual responsibility, is displaced by a social story. Woman's wrongs

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

are displaced by a more general working-class wrong. Though purportedly the story of "The Working Man's Wife," Margaret is not central to the story any more than she is in charge of her fate. Drinking and crime, moreover, are displaced actions in a world without valuable options, without satisfying work. Ultimately, the artisan is displaced. "The Working Man's Wife" is in search of a cause of working-class disintegration. Its teleology confronts middle-class versions of the story by making fate or the inescapable "path" an extra-textual and political matter that cannot be resolved in narrative or explained by character. As we see so often in the middle-class story, the "path" is inexorable. But in the Chartist story it is inexorable because the world would need to change prior to the narrative path changing.

Once again, Jones was stringently in favor of temperance, believed in the need for working-class improvement, and would not want to minimize representing the damage that alcohol can cause. But he also knew that alcohol is not at the origin of working-class problems; it is merely a sign or symptom of those problems. Although Harrison argues that in the nineteenth century "the modern objection to the movement [teetotalism] – that working men in such an environment could not fairly be expected to abstain – was rarely voiced" (114), this is precisely what Jones's story confirms. Harrison's main argument, that temperance reformers "allowed peripheral evils to divert their attention from the central evil of class exploitation" (120), is also Jones's. The story confirms that real harm is caused by focusing attention on tangential problems, on drink, because to do so implies that all would be fine if you merely abstained.

Jones was also aware that confirming temperance in his stories would force an ideological alliance between working and nonworking classes, something that this particular story could not be accused of doing. Despite being pro-temperance, Jones, like other Chartists, goes out of his way to undermine what might be the quintessential middle-class form. Only by promoting environments conducive to improvement through the depiction of individuals living in societies that preclude any kind of improvement could Jones write a temperance story. Miles Taylor reads *Woman's Wrongs* as an "attempt by Jones to apply romantic ways of ordering the modern world" (159), but it also might be read as an attempt to reorder middle-class narratives so as to identify those responsible for the modern world and its victims. The Chartist temperance narrative consistently overturns its middle-class equivalent in a way that demonstrates not only a different class orientation, but a consciously different literature as well.

Nipissing University

NOTES

1. The first community to be established was called Herringsgate, near Watford. It was later renamed O'Connorville after O'Connor. For more on the National Land Company see Hadfield.
2. First appearing in the *Labourer* (1847–48), a magazine started by O'Connor and Ernest Jones to promote the Land Company, we might indeed speculate that O'Connor had some direct involvement in the story's creation.
3. Twycross-Martin recovers the temperance fiction of Sarah Stickney Ellis to show how Ellis distinguishes herself among middle-class temperance writers by locating the problem of intemperance in middle-class homes.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. Cobbett located the value of political reform not in the abstract discourse of Rights of Man but in the physical comforts of rural life, especially beer and meat. He argued for the lifting of taxes on hops and malt because they raised the cost of beer.
5. To show why alehouses were chosen, McCalman adds that "Action against individual debaters for seditious, blasphemous or treasonous words was hampered because spies and shorthand writers could not easily transcribe undetected in such a milieu" (312).
6. The beerhouse was certainly not the only place where working people drank. "Home-brewed ale," says Dorothy Thompson, "was a regular part of the diet of working men and women" and sharing it was "an essential form of neighbourliness" (114).
7. There was of course more than just suspicion. Harrison's histories of temperance are particularly informative here. He mentions, for example, that "Biographies of the earliest teetotal lecturers often mention the mobs who broke up their meetings" (112).
8. Later, Shiman dangerously stereotypes working people again by saying, "All the working classes were drinking large amounts of alcoholic beverages, with usage increasing as the prosperity of the workers rose" (94).
9. The best known of the first teetotalism advocates was Joseph Livesey. The Livesey Collection at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, has over 5,000 items related to nineteenth-century teetotalism and a nearly complete collection of Livesey's work.
10. Altick quotes James Sands's "A General Defence of Modern Novels"; Sands wrote that libraries were "temples erected by Literature to attract the votaries of Bacchus" (229).
11. It is typical of middle-class temperance reformers to proselytize religion with their message. One way for working-class temperance groups to distinguish themselves from their middle-class counterparts was to divorce temperance from religion. Harrison says, "Secularists felt that any moral reform movement which merely propped up religion would keep the people subservient by blinding them to their true interests" (113–14).
12. The first issues of the *English Chartist Circular* include roughly one article of temperance news per number at most, but the ratio of temperance to political columns only decreases as the paper continues its run.

WORKS CITED

Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1957.

Balfour, Clara. *Toil and Trust; or, The Life-Story of Patty, the Workhouse Girl*. New York: M. W. Dodd, 1865.

Burne, Peter. *The Teetotaler's Companion; or, A Plea for Temperance*. London: Arthur Hall, 1847.

"The Charter and the Land." *The Literature of Struggle: An Anthology of Chartist Fiction*. Ed. Ian Haywood. Aldershot: Scolar, 1995. 191–94.

Claybaugh, Amanda. "Dickensian Intemperance: Charity and Reform." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 37.1–2 (2003/2004): 45–65.

Cooper, Thomas. "The Lad who Felt Like a Fish Out of Water." *Wise Saws and Modern Instances*. Vol. 2. London: Jeremiah How, 1845. 42–59.

———. "Sam Simkins, the Runaway; or Villainy as a Refuge from the Tortures of Sour-godliness." *Wise Saws and Modern Instances*. Vol. 1. London: Jeremiah How, 1845. 234–58.

———. "Seth Thompson, the Stockinger; or 'When Things are at the Worst, they Begin to Mend.'" *Wise Saws and Modern Instances*. Vol. 1. London: Jeremiah How, 1845. 218–34. *English Chartist Circular and Temperance Record. Reprint of Economic Classics*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968.

Gagnier, Regenia. *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832–1920*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. 1855. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
Greenaway, John. *Drink and British Politics since 1830: A Study in Policy-Making*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
Hadfield, Alice Mary. *The Chartist Land Company*. Devon: David and Charles, 1970.
Harrison, Brian. "Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England." *Past and Present* 38.1 (1967). 98–125.
Haywood, Ian. *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics, and the People, 1790–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
Jones, Ernest. "The Working Man's Wife." *Chartist Fiction. Volume 2: Woman's Wrongs*. Ed. Ian Haywood. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001. 2–39.
Keating, P. J. *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
Martineau, Harriet. "A Manchester Strike." *Illustrations of Political Economy: Selected Tales*. Ed. Deborah Anna Logan. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004.
McCalman, Iain. "Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795–1838." *English Historical Review* 102.403 (April 1987): 309–33.
Rose, Jonathan. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002.
Shiman, Lilian Lewis. *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England*. New York: St. Martin's, 1988.
Taylor, Miles. *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics 1819–1869*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.
Thompson, Dorothy. *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Penguin, 1980.
Twycross-Martin, Henrietta. "The Drunkard, the Brute and the Paterfamilias: The Temperance Fiction of the Early Victorian Writer Sarah Stickney Ellis." *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House*. Ed. Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998. 6–30.
Vincent, J. R. *The Formation of the Liberal Party: 1857–1868*. London: Constable, 1966.
"The Water Drinker." *English Chartist Circular* 2.125.
"Will Harper: A Poor-Law Tale." *The Literature of Struggle: An Anthology of Chartist Fiction*. Ed. Ian Haywood. Aldershot: Scolar, 1995. 26–32.
Williams, Raymond. "Forms of English Fiction in 1848." *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference*. Ed. Francis Barker, et al. London: Methuen, 1986. 1–16.
Wright, Thomas. *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes by a Journeyman Engineer*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150312000277 Published online by Cambridge University Press