

## CULTURE, ALCOHOL, AND SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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*A Newsletter for members of KirkWorks – students whose research interests may connect with the materials available in the Kirk Collection.*

We offer both news and substance in this issue: news about some new members, tentative plans for Summer 2003, and a partial listing of the present contents of the Kirk Collection. There are also some news notes about the activities and plans of our members. Substantively you will find articles by Matthew Raphael, Jared Lobdell, and Jay Williams.

### NEW MEMBERS:

Glenn Chesnut, whose web page (<http://www.iusb.edu/~gchesnut/HomePage.html>) merits a visit

Clark Dougan, editor at the University of Massachusetts Press,

Richard Dubiel, student of the Emmanuel Movement and the Jacoby Clubs,

David Fahey, current president of the Alcohol and Temperance History Group.

Jim Harbaugh, former editor of the now defunct literary journal *Dionysus*,

Jon Miller, editor of *The Social History of Alcohol Review*

Ron Roizen, retired sociologist, presently an environmentalist in Idaho, whose web page (<http://www.roizen.com/ron/index.htm>) offers large riches.

### GROUP DESCRIPTION AND MISSION STATEMENT

KirkWorks originated in a meeting held at the Alcohol and Addiction Studies Center and Brown University in June 2002. The 16 people present were mainly from the field of literature, but there were also historians, an anthropologist, a social worker, two philosophers, and a journal editor. Each participant presented a paper, and something very special developed among the group in recognizing the light other disciplines could shed on the questions being investigated. The Culture, Alcohol & Society Quarterly (CA&SQ) newsletter is an attempt to preserve and carry forward that discovery. The binding force in the group is the presence of material in the Chester Kirk Archives at Brown useful to present or planned research plus excitement at being able to explore those materials with scholars of diverse disciplines.

The Chester H. Kirk Collection, a special collection devoted to alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous, is housed in the John Hay Library at Brown University. The Kirk collection is named for its primary benefactor, Chester H. Kirk, whose donation enabled Brown to acquire a substantial portion of the collection in 1995. Assembled under the direction of Dr. David Lewis, chair of the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, the Kirk collection represents one of the finest collections of materials on alcohol, alcoholism and AA in the United States and possibly the world. The fundamental strengths of the collection include the history of the temperance movement, Alcoholics Anonymous, and alcohol consumption.

The Kirk Collection provides resources relevant to researchers in psychology, medicine, and the humanities. The wide-ranging appeal of this cross-disciplinary collection within the context of a liberal arts university, such as Brown, makes the uses of the Kirk collection too many to name. A few examples will illustrate the importance of this collection.

The collection contains a variety of original resources on the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. In addition to first edition copies of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the collection contains notes from Ernest Kurtz's twenty-plus years of research on A.A., including interview notes with Nell Wing, the administrative assistant to Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, and several early members. In addition, the Kirk Collection contains papers from Clarence S., an early and influential member of Alcoholics Anonymous, as well as the recent addition of papers from Marty Mann, the first woman member of AA. In addition to the significance of the Mann papers to the story of A.A., these papers also provide materials for needed scholarship on the intersection between alcoholism and national drug policy with important consequences for understanding contemporary approaches to drug and alcohol treatment.

In addition to resources pertaining to AA, the Kirk Collection contains some extremely rare texts on alcoholism and temperance. For example, Anthony Benezet's, *The Mighty Destroyer*, which was published in 1774 and is believed to be the first text published on alcoholism in the United States. Also included are runs from Anti-Saloon League magazines and prohibition tracts. Benezet's writings are only some of the Kirk Collection holding devoted to early American engagements with alcohol, society and culture.

Membership in KirkWorks is open to anyone who might have an interest in the materials in the Kirk Collection. Membership at the moment involves only being on the KirkWorks listserv and receiving (and contributing to) the CS&AQ.

## FELLOWSHIPS

**Maria Swora** writes: "After I finish my book on collective memory and healing, my mother and I are hoping to work on a book on AA members as historians. . . . But I have to write the first book first."

Maria will be at Brown as a Kirk Fellow this summer and asks the people at Brown to inform her of any good leads on summer housing. She plans to be in Providence around June 15, and stay through August 15. "I will spend time in the Kirk collection looking for articles and correspondence on sponsorship. I will primarily focus on AAGV, but hopefully I will get into some of the other materials. The idea is to get a picture of how the practice evolved from 1935 on."

**Trysh Travis** has secured a John Nicholas Brown Fellowship in American Civilization to augment her Kirk Collection grant for travel to Brown this spring, enabling her to be in residence for two months. She will be in Providence for the months of April and May.

I'll be using the resources of the Kirk Collection and the Rockefeller Library to work on a chapter tentatively titled "the Political Economy of Recovery Movement Publishing," the third in my book project *Reading and Recovery: the New Middlebrow Culture*. This chapter moves my inquiry about recovery and reading out of the world of AA proper and into the print culture mainstream. It's the most wide-ranging chapter in the book (read: least focused!) and needs to do important work within the piece as a whole, forming a bridge between mid-century AA and the "recovery movement/ industry" of the '80s and '90s. It also has to explain why I'm moving from a consideration of non-fiction, quasi-devotional literature to fiction as I make this leap in time. So it's a big undertaking.

Right now, I'm planning to look at a variety of documents in the Kirk collection to shape this story. This chapter follows the one I circulated at WIPS last summer, about the development of the Works Publishing and the writing and reading of the Big Book. In it, I plan to talk first about the growth of *The AA Grapevine* (and smaller, local and regional newsletters and publications), the reasons behind the second edition of the Big Book, and the recurring questions within the fellowship of the role of "non- conference approved literature." But I plan to move fairly quickly from there to the 1980s, where the Kirk's collection of "recovery lifestyle" publications demonstrates a real change in the print culture of recovery. A lot of critics of the publishing industry have talked derisively about how the growth of self-help titles in the '70s and '80s signaled a decline in American literary culture, but no one has really talked about how or why this happened. Although the Kirk holdings are incomplete, I want to use them to at least sketch out how small—but definitely for-profit—recovery magazines and newspaper sprang up in the '80s. I hope as well to be able to talk about the history and growth of publishers like Hazelden and Health Communications, Inc., though I'm less certain that I'll be able to find detailed and reliable information about these ventures. My point here is to show the changing publishing infrastructure through which "the message" was "carried" in this later moment, and to reflect on *why* recovery began to seem a profitable concern in the '80s, and *how* that changed political economy influenced the ideas and ideals of 12-step thinking.

From there (see what I mean about this chapter being wide-ranging?) I want to look briefly at three sets of texts that came out of and, to my mind, emblemize a "recovery movement" that is inspired by, but very different from, the original AA/Al-Anon model: these are the works of John Bradshaw (the "on the family" series), Julia Cameron (the "artist's way" series), and Sarah Ban Breathnach, (the "simple abundance" series). Bradshaw and Cameron both identify as AAs; Breathnach refers to herself as a "workaholic, careaholic, and perfectionist." I want to use their—dare I call them *oeuvres*?—to demonstrate the way a simple print culture of books and reading became, in the '80s, a complex, multimedia, synergistic market of what Ernie Kurtz has called "recovery porn." So this section of the chapter will be devoted to showing how, at a very concrete level, these writers/theorists developed and marketed their products in concert with a variety of publishers (usually, they worked first with a small, spiritual or recovery-specific publishing house, then traded up to a big trade firm that offered more cross-media opportunities). It will also attempt to

plumb the “philosophies” of these authors and to figure out how they honor and depart from the “conference approved” writings within the fellowship(s). The hardest thing about this part will, I think, be finding reliable information about how and when these authors produced and distributed their texts and their many spin-offs (calendars, daybooks, videos, etc.), because it’s difficult to get people within the publishing industry to talk about this stuff. I’d be grateful if anyone in the WIPS community can make suggestions about how I might cope with this issue, or give me ideas for useful contacts in the industry. I’m looking forward to getting going on this chapter, although I have some trepidation about it too. Fortunately, all these books have affirmations galore to help me through each and every difficult moment!

## **OTHER NEWS:**

**Linda Kurtz** reports that the article she discussed and received comments on last June, “Twelve Step Recovery and Community Service,” has been accepted for publication in *Health and Social Work*. The date of publication has not yet been determined, but Linda notes that she mentions the contributions of the WIPS participants and especially of David Lewis in her acknowledgements.

**Bill White** sends word that his current major history-related projects include research for a photo-essay on the international history of recovery mutual aid groups and work an article offering a historical review of Transformational Change. He also hopes to begin editing the book on Recovery in Native America in February.

The “Transformational Change” piece will appear in a special issue of the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, edited to William R. Miller. Its Abstract reads: “Recovery from alcoholism can occur through a process of psychological death and rebirth. Generating a new person within a body once occupied by another, the process of transformational change (TC) stands as a life-shaping experience demarcating before (old self) and after (new self). This essay describes the transformational change (TC) of seven individuals (Handsome Lake, John Gough, Francis Murphy, Jerry McAuley, Bill Wilson, Marty Mann and Malcolm X) whose recoveries from alcoholism and other addictions catalyzed larger abstinence-based mutual aid, advocacy, or religious/cultural revitalization movements. Classic studies of transformational change conducted over the past century are used to explore the clinical implications of these history-shaping experiences. Therapists are encouraged to 1) recognize and respect the healing power of the TC experience, 2) avoid aborting the TC experience via superficial amelioration of its more disquieting manifestations, 3) interpret the TC experience in ways that solidify and sustain the change process, and 4) help bridge the TC experience and construction of a new identity and lifestyle.”

### **James Swan Tuite reports:**

This spring I will offer a cross-listed course entitled, "Self-Help Practices and Therapies of Desire: A Case Study of Alcoholics Anonymous" to undergraduates. In addition to being a unique opportunity to teach a self-designed course, I will have regular attendance by faculty in my department and others who have agreed to comment on course content, offer advice, and so forth.

I continue to work on funding for a second meeting this summer & so far, I am hoping to work around the various travel restrictions mentioned by those who have acknowledged a strong interest in working through more of the Kirk papers. If you want to come, please email me by mid-February. If members have not read "Identities Across Texts" by George Jensen, consider taking the time to do so. It's a fascinating read and I promise a thorough review come next newsletter.

### **KIRKWORKS LISTSERV:**

The KirkWorks listserv is up and running, and we trust you all have received the introductory message with its instructions. No doubt many KirkWorks members belong to other listservs such as that of the Kettil Bruun Society and the Alcohol and Temperance History Group. While there is no need to duplicate materials that appear there or elsewhere, it may be helpful on occasion to point out pieces that might be of special interest to the KirkWorks group. Also, of course, our listserv should serve as a convenient way to query each other or to report findings of interest.

### **SUMMER PLANS:**

As earlier reported, the Kirk Collection hopes to make available accommodations funding for any KirkWorks member who wishes to meet for a week with others in order to sort and explore the collection. A collection description appears below, but we know that it is far from exhaustive. Our hope is that people working on diverse projects will be able to explore and discuss how materials in the collection relate to their ongoing work.

A definite week has not yet been chosen. We hope to find one that is convenient for most who wish to participate and when adequate accommodations are available. Please watch the KirkWorks listserv for further information. And if you have any ideas, please pass them on to Ernie Kurtz at [kurtzern@umich.edu](mailto:kurtzern@umich.edu).

*THE COLONEL, THE CAPTAIN, AND THE LIEUTENANT,*

OR,

*THE BEGINNINGS OF A.A. IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY:*

*SOME PROBLEMS IN WRITING A.A. LOCAL HISTORY*

Jared Lobdell

Writing local histories of Alcoholics Anonymous can be a tricky enterprise. A key problem arises because, in some sense at least, all history is biography. But how does one write the history of people who by principle are anonymous? One answer was given over sixty years ago by the reporter Jack Alexander in his March 2, 1941, *Saturday Evening Post* article on Alcoholics Anonymous, in which, in effect, he made Alcoholics Anonymous into Alcoholics Pseudonymous: co-founder Bill W. became Bill Griffith, for example, and Marty M. became Sarah Martin. A similar procedure will be used in what follows.

Before embarking on the particular local history of Alcoholics Anonymous in the Lehigh Valley of (Eastern) Pennsylvania – Area 59, as it is designated within A.A. General Service Office listings – it is useful to explore why one might want to write local A.A. history. Some write for an explicitly hagiographic purpose: there are always those who imagine a “golden age” in the past. Others write out of controversy, attempting to prove that some practice they wish present or absent was once or never there. Still others write when they realize that a group’s founding members are dying off, or when they discover that different old-timers have differing memories of events. The main reason, however, seems to be the simple one that A.A. itself, like its individual members, lives by story and has to tell that story.

The stories told break down, roughly speaking, into two kinds of A.A. history. The first grow out of the Twelve Steps and tend to be spiritual, hagiographic, and focus on individuals; the second grow out of the Twelve Traditions and treat more of the “institutional” or service-structure history. We thus have, on the one hand, the history told in the stories in the back of the “Big Book” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1939, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1955, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1976, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2001). On the other hand, we have the Traditions section of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1952/53) and the “Unity” section of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (1958 for 1955, but a 1950 text). We have also, in Conference-approved literature, two mixed books, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* (1980) and “*Pass It On*”: *Bill Wilson and the A.A. Message* (1984), the first tending more toward growth from the Steps, the second toward growth from the Traditions, though both books attend to both kinds of history noted above.

Among studies in A.A. local history, examples of the first kind are *Nick & Brownie: The St. Joe Valley Tradition of the Twelve Steps* and *The Factory Owner and the Convict* (South Bend IN, 1996), and (by extension – and by the same author) *The Higher Power of*

*the Twelve-Step Program* (Lincoln NE, 2001). Among local A.A. history examples of the second kind is *An Alcoholics Anonymous History in Northern Illinois Area 20* (Rockford IL, 1996), a valuable institutional study (108 pages) but one extremely dull if one does not know the people behind the anonymity and the institutions. Among the triumphant examples of a book mixed in kind is Mitchell K.'s *How It Worked: The Story of Clarence H. Snyder and the Early Days of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio* (AA Big Book Study Group: Washingtonville NY, 1999). This is in a sense local history, though it might better be qualified as an "as-told-to" autobiography.

I began my study of A.A. Area 59 history when there came into my hands a small internal publication of this Eastern Pennsylvania area. This *E. P. G. S. A. Structure Manual* (1998) had a list of Delegates from Eastern Pennsylvania to the annual A.A. Conference in New York. The Delegate for 1953-54, was someone we will call Aaron Baldrige. Since I was on the lookout for A.A. old-timers as part of another research project, I ran a routine check on the Internet for Aaron Baldrige of Pennsylvania, finding that he was born in 1894 and had died in Bethlehem PA in 1977.

The first secretary listed by the Alcoholic Foundation for a group in the Lehigh Valley (in 1946- 47) was Aaron Baldrige. I posted an inquiry on the Baldrige Family Forum web site, asking whether anyone could give me any information on Aaron Baldrige (1894-1977) of Bethlehem PA. Within a few weeks I had a response from his nephew and heir, Robert Baldrige. I explained that I was interested in his uncle's career and particularly in his work in a service institution for which he had been a Delegate to the annual meetings in New York in 1953-54. It turned out that Robert had attended Lehigh University in the years 1952-54 and had lived with his uncle in Bethlehem – while he was the Delegate.

Robert informed me that his uncle Aaron Baldrige of Bethlehem PA, full name Aaron Burr Baldrige, had been born in Graves County KY. He had four brothers and one sister, and he lived at 53 East Market St. in Bethlehem with the Levers family. Aaron had been a captain in the army in World War I, after which he got a job with a hotel chain and was sent to Bethlehem as the Assistant Manager of the old Hotel Bethlehem. In Bethlehem, he had met a childless couple, Harry Levers and his wife, who befriended him. Aaron left the hotel to live with them and take care of them. The Levers were a very wealthy family, Mr. Levers' father having helped start Bethlehem Steel. The Levers sent Aaron to Lehigh where he completed his education (in 1928). Aaron never married and never had any children. Robert wrote me that while living with the Levers, Aaron became an alcoholic. After some years, in the 1940s, he joined Alcoholics Anonymous and "was a leader in that organization." When the Levers died, Aaron inherited the house at 53 East Market St. in Bethlehem. He later gave the house to the Moravian Church, and he is buried in the church cemetery at Bethlehem.

Aaron's alcoholism caused a lot of distress in the family, and he was not very well-liked by the rest of the family. He was a knowledgeable person and outspoken; he usually had an opinion on any subject and was not afraid to voice his views, sometimes becoming argumentative. Robert himself had been treated well by Aaron and lived with him from 1952 to 1954 while attending Lehigh. Robert remembers Aaron "working on the A.A. thing" in those years, and that he would sometimes travel to New York with him. To the best of Robert's knowledge, Aaron had left no papers, and he did not remember the name of the attorney who handled the estate.

I had learned quite a bit about Aaron Baldrige, and at about this time, a friend who knew of my interest in this history gave me a copy of an issue of the *A. B. E.* [Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton] *Intergroup Valley Views Newsletter* (n.d.), titled "AA from Akron to New York to Philadelphia to the Lehigh Valley: How It Happened." This publication, being open to both members and non-members of A.A., used first names and last initials. It consisted of a reprint of a 1946 memoir by Jimmy B., entitled "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes to Philadelphia," and a somewhat later history (by one Bob W., apparently updated in 1965) on "Early Beginnings: Lehigh Valley A.A. Groups."

This latter piece gave credit for the founding of A.A. in the Lehigh Valley to a young naval lieutenant from New York, who had been sent at the end of World War II "to take charge of the contract termination and materiel disposal at the Consolidated Vultee plant in Allentown" (*Valley Views*, p. 10). Then, while "on a weekend in New York (his hometown) the lieutenant discovered that another 'Valley' resident was quite active in AA groups beyond the Valley for anonymity reasons. This was a well-known top executive with the leading corporation in Bethlehem" (p. 12). The lieutenant "persuaded this member – our good friend, 'the Colonel' (probably the best-known recovered alcoholic in the entire Valley area) ... to come to a meeting" (p. 13) – and by 1946 a group in Bethlehem was meeting at the Colonel's house. Meanwhile, the lieutenant had been recalled from Allentown, first to Philadelphia and then to civilian life in New York.

The very last paragraph of the publication read: "To our local founder, Lieutenant Yvelin G., we give thanks, and pray that God will keep you with Him, everywhere and always" (p. 16). The highly unusual first name, Yvelin, and the initial "G," called to mind Yvelin Granger (or that is what we will call him), who had served as Acting Executive Director of the National Council for Education on Alcoholism, later N. C. A., later than that N. C. A. D. D., founded by the alcoholic whom Jack Alexander called Sarah Martin and who (in A.A. circles) is usually called Marty M.

Pursuing the Granger lead in the papers of the National Council on Alcoholism at Brown University, I learned from a tape of Marty M., N.C.A.'s founder, that she thought he had come in Alcoholics Anonymous just before his thirtieth birthday, and had then served as a Lieutenant and then Lieutenant Commander in the Pacific theater during World War II. Marty told of hiring Yvelin as her first employee in 1948. After the war and his service in Allentown in 1945-1946, he had returned to his real estate business in Garden City, NY, but then decided that he wished to make a larger contribution. Shortly after beginning at N.C.A., Marty reported, Yvelin began study for the ministry, but he remained as Marty's number two until her death in 1980.

I then turned to gaining more knowledge about "the Colonel" mentioned so prominently in the *Intergroup Valley Views Newsletter*. After pursuing a few dead-ends, I learned of a fifty-year sober member of A.A. in Bethlehem, and so I hastened to interview him. I met with John Bee in December 2002 at the A-B-E Intergroup Office, and he told me that "the Colonel" was Robert S. A. Donnelley, Vice President of Research and Development for Bethlehem's largest employer. John Bee pretty much confirmed – from what he had been told and from what it was like when he came into



A.A. in 1952 – the brief account of the Colonel in the *Valley Views* account by Bob W., written during the Colonel's life.

I also asked John Bee about Aaron Baldrige, and here he was able to be much more informative. John Bee's father had been in the beer-coil business, and from the time John was five or six years old, he used to go around with his father to the "clubs" where (it being prohibition) the beer-coils were in use. If Mr. Baldrige were there – "we always called him Mr. Baldrige" – John's father would put two quarters or a fifty-cent piece in front of him, or perhaps even a dollar, and Mr. Baldrige would order whiskey. Usually, in the absence of John's father (he later told John), he ordered beer, and he would put down a dime when he came into the club, and drink two nickel beers, widely spaced – "'Dime' Baldrige, they call me," he would say.

John went on to say that Aaron Baldrige was always gentle-spoken, courteous and proper, dressed in suit and tie ("but the suit would be shiny"). He chewed snuff and sometimes smoked while chewing. John thought the name of the family with whom Mr. Baldrige lived was *Devers*, rather than *Lever* or *Levers*. John also remembered a Lehigh Valley visit by the "founder," Yvelin Granger, in 1954: he recalled him as a small man who gave the impression of being "rangy" with hands and feet big for his size.

A miscellaneous item discovered while researching in the Clarence Snyder papers at Brown University suggests a provocative possibility. A 1948 Pennsylvania automobile registration (for a 1940 Hudson) in Clarence's name gives Clarence's residence as 1928 Greenleaf Street, Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. There was no word of Clarence current in A.A. in the Lehigh Valley when John Bee came into A.A. in 1952, but it is difficult to imagine his being entirely uninvolved if he actually lived (however briefly) in Allentown. This is an item for further research, though it is unclear where to begin.

Piecing together the parts of the story that we were able to verify reveals some interesting errors in some of the sources. Examining these can clarify the benefits of study the history of Alcoholics Anonymous at the local level. First, the title of the *Valley Views* newsletter "From Akron to New York to Philadelphia to the Lehigh Valley" is a trifle misleading. The lieutenant (Yvelin Granger) was not from Philadelphia A.A. and his only contact with it was to seek speakers from Philadelphia in late 1945. Second, early Lehigh Valley A.A. had closer ties with New Jersey than with Philadelphia, largely because of Colonel Donnelley's need to maintain his anonymity in the Valley area. Third, the first "trusted servant" of A.A. in the Lehigh Valley was neither the founder (who was gone back to New York) nor the best-known of member of A.A. in the Valley, the Colonel (who was understandably shy of being known as an alcoholic in Bethlehem in 1946-47), but Aaron Baldrige, who rose from being Secretary of the Bethlehem Group to being Delegate from Pennsylvania to the Conference in New York six years later.

According to another early member (Chet Hilton, of Harrisburg, sober since April 1949), during the time he was Delegate, Aaron Baldrige served as a kind of inspector-general of A.A. meetings in Eastern Pennsylvania, asking questions such as "What are you doing here?" "Why do you do it this way?" His suits were no longer shiny; he had his inheritance from his benefactors; after his term as Delegate he worked for the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce; and it has been suggested that he was involved in the formation of Historic Bethlehem. Who is the father of Alcoholics Anonymous in the

Lehigh Valley? Clearly, there can be no single, simple answer. Unraveling the complexity of the story is one of the joys of studying A.A. history on the local level.

There are more than ninety areas in A.A. in the United States and Canada, and to form an over- all picture will require this kind of detailed work in quite a number of them. What can be learned from such limited exercises? In the case of Area 59, we have at least begun to get to know three fathers of A.A. in the Lehigh Valley: I can see Aaron Burr Baldrige, cocking his head slightly, listening, speaking with his residual western Kentucky accent, organizing; I can see Yvelin Granger with his pipe and in later years his clerical collar, his genuine humility (not unlike Dr. Bob's), his quick humor (in his 1958 talk) not unlike Bill W.'s; I can imagine Colonel Robert S. A. Donnelley, ten years older than Captain Baldrige, twenty-plus years older than Lieutenant-Commander Granger – how far did he drive to go out of his area to meetings back in 1945-46, or earlier, during the war, with an A ration card, to Montclair perhaps, or further in Jersey or downstate New York (Greenwood Lake or Tuxedo Park, perhaps)? I see him as a taller man, with a pencil moustache, looking younger than his years.

More than this getting to know these men (however slightly), we have learned something about the dissemination of A.A. in the early years – and here it was not precisely in the Akron - New York - Philadelphia - Lehigh Valley pattern the local historians who provided the *Valley Views* thought it was (though Philadelphia did play a minor role). We have made a start on getting a picture of what was happening in A.A. locally *in* and nationally *from* the Lehigh Valley.

There is additional work to do, of course, particularly on some of the other early Delegates. Some may ask whether it is worth doing. My answer – despite all the problems, and despite the fact that this is a mixed kind of history, with somewhat indeterminate outcomes – is a resounding “Yes.” If it is not done now, it may not be able to be done at all, and another part of A.A.'s experience will be lost. And as the development of other Twelve-Step Groups and the mutual-aid movement in general has already demonstrated, knowing A.A.'s accurate story, in all its detail, can be of immense help to numbers of people and in a number of ways as yet unimagined. But above all, these stories are interesting. They immerse us in the life of different people who nevertheless are also in some ways like us. The proper study of humanity is, and always has been (as Alexander Pope told us long ago), humanity itself.



Chester H. Kirk

## The Pleasure and Danger of Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries

### Dennis Kazar on "Shakespeare's Addictions"

Jay Williams

Dennis Kazar's essay "Shakespeare's Addictions" will be appearing this year in *Critical Inquiry*. It is the first time that this University of Chicago Press journal will publish an essay that uses theoretical constructs of addiction to illuminate literary texts as well as historical and materialistic (New Historicist) theory. (Leslie Stern's two essays on tobacco do not count; they are autobiographical and read more as poetic meanderings than serious scholarship.) I trust that the readership of an addiction studies newsletter will not find it odd that I completely ignore Kazar's contribution to Shakespeare studies and our understanding of the Renaissance, which I do, except to say here that it is substantial and that Kazar blends historical and literary critical knowledge in ways that make a real advance in his field.

But addiction studies is not his field, and what will historians, sociologists, and other social science types, as well as humanities scholars, come away with from this essay? Certainly not new biographical information, because even if the title suggests it, we soon realize something else is at work. In the first paragraph we read that this essay "claims that *Othello* is all about tobacco – that the play and our critical response cannot do without the identification and use of this specific drug."

Kazar characterizes certain "theoretical and methodological assumptions" as an addiction, an addiction that *Othello*, when read correctly, exposes as both "toxic" and "unsustainable" or "untenable" but nevertheless "compulsively" acted upon by the critic. Kazar defines *addiction* as "the emphatic ascription of agency and causality to time-bound matter that cannot completely support such an investment." And "to be addicted is to occupy a subject-position divided between consumer and critic, a position that identifies one's needs (behavioral, chemical, interpretive, theoretical) as both necessity and poison." In *Othello*, tobacco is the "time-bound matter" and Iago is the addict (as well as the reader and critic who follow Iago); Iago is not addicted to tobacco but rather to a form of reasoning that finds agency and causality where only coincidence exist. That is, it is fun and exciting to look for material or historical causes for certain historical or cultural events. Tobacco could be such a material cause; its introduction into Renaissance England certainly had identifiable effects. But the temptation, according to Kazar, is to ascribe to material causes more than they will sustain. One might say that this kind of theorizing is the easier, softer way – and it will get you a job, or keep one, and help you publish books in academia. Hence, it's "addictive" power. One can't help oneself thinking in this way. We can't give up this habit of thinking, this desire to find truth in causes that, in actuality, are not as explanatory as we would like.

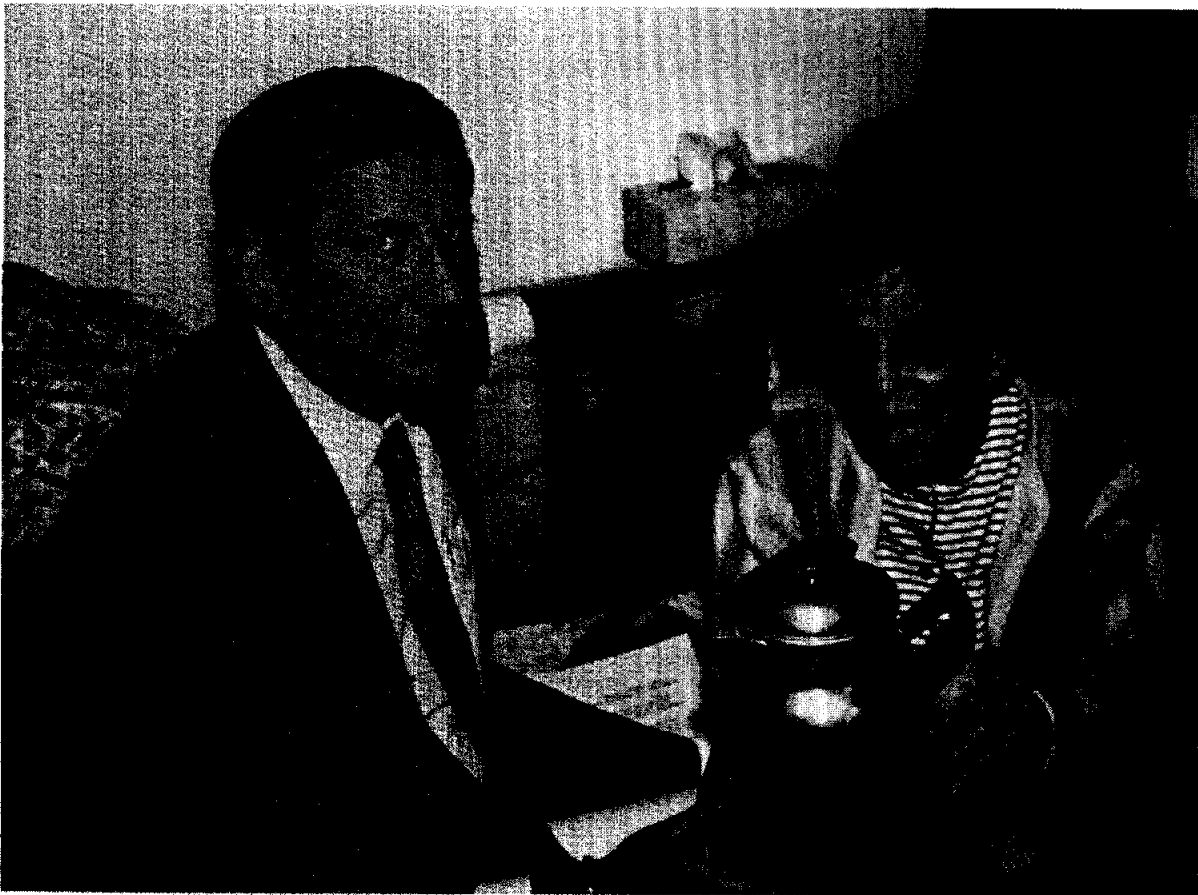
Thus tobacco or potatoes or pens can be addictive in this literary critical universe. Here's the crux of the biscuit, as Frank Zappa would say: does it further the understanding of the concept of addiction if we hold simultaneously a definition that is both physiological and metaphorical? Do we understand better the way alcohol and drugs are addictive in the traditional sense when we identify ways of academic

theorizing or thinking as addictive? (Of course, Kazar is rhetorically playful and fun to read, and he certainly isn't proposing a social consequences based on a new understanding of addiction.) For my money, the answer is no. To understand *addiction* it is not enough to point to the substance's dual role of cause and object of abuse. It is not enough to point to the subject's knowledge of the harmful qualities of the abused substance. The problem is that crucial defining elements of a physiological addiction are not present in metaphorical or analogical definitions. Kazar doesn't discuss or incorporate the idea that an addictive substance, actively present in the subject, will convert the addict's knowledge of toxicity to knowledge of not just benefit but of life-sustaining power; that this idea is a corollary to Gregory Bateson's insight that the use of alcohol is the correct solution to problems the alcoholic faces; that *addiction* has been supplanted by *dependence* in some circles, which is principally defined by the DSM-IV as a relation of an individual to the drug (does he or she suffer from withdrawal or increasingly higher levels of tolerance) and to his or her environment (does he or she suffer from work, home, or legal problems as a result of use). That is why physiological addiction is toxic and life threatening: one uses a substance that has become dangerous convinced that it is necessary for survival. Kazar's metaphorical definition doesn't contain these elements, nor do any metaphorical definitions, which have been current in postmodern thought (specifically, Avital Ronel). That is why metaphorical addiction should always be put in quotation marks. "Addiction" is misleading and dangerous in academic circles because it may convince the unwary that his or her theoretical work actually has the same authority as scientific or social science work. It doesn't; it has its own truth, just as valuable, but nonetheless different.

Sound familiar? It should. If addiction studies get introduced into humanities uncritically, we could see a repetition of the science wars of the nineties. Who knows, David Lewis might be forced into becoming the new Alan Sokal (that is, the Sokal who wrote the necessary but dispiriting, successful essay lampooning uncritical humanities scholars, not the Sokal on his highly irritating and self-detrimental rock-star tour trumpeting his ruse) and write a parody-expose in *Social Text*. Calling a humanities theoretical enterprise addictive may not help the social scientist in his own work, but it does help within the humanities, as Kazar's essay demonstrates. For example, Kazar traces the early meanings of the word *addiction*, using *Othello*, other Renaissance dramas, and *The Oxford English Language Dictionary* as his texts. *Othello*, Kazar points out, is the OED's first citation for *addiction*'s early modern meaning of "penchant" or "inclination," as opposed to the word's original legalistic meaning, "a surrender, or dedication, of any one to a master." The modern meaning of "compulsion and need to take a drug" is first mentioned in 1779, interestingly, I might add, by that great compulsive Samuel Johnson. Kazar, however, makes a case that the introduction of tobacco triggers "a shift toward a newer meaning," that is the modern meaning: the noun *addiction* "fuses the subject and object of habit" (of course Kazar is conscious of his own critique of materialist theorizing). In fact, he suggests that the word was not original to the play but rather introduced editorially in the 1630 second quarto. The play by that time was so suggestive of the modern dilemma of addiction, though still 100 years before its documented first use, that an editor needed to import the word that would better describe the condition of addiction as revealed by the use of tobacco. One can argue that the editorial importation of the word actually carries none of the negative connotations Kazar wants to insist on and that by fusing subject and object one doesn't necessarily imply abuse (though one would have to contend with the Renaissance literature Kazar quotes that links abuse of tobacco to abuse of alcohol). In

fact, it seems Kazar has done a good job of showing how today's popular culture – however tired we are of hearing it – is perfectly correct in ascribing addictive qualities to everything from TV and chocolate to the wearing of a favorite pair of earrings.

It is crucial, however, to show how critical methodologies become too big and outweigh their usefulness, and, finally, this I believe is Kazar's contribution to our understanding of the word *addiction*, if only because, as he warns us at the beginning, he is touched by its power: "I sponsor the reading that, however untenable, must be right. Doing so, I promote a reading that, however tenable, must be wrong." He may be talking about "addiction," but it ties in nicely to the common observation in alcohol and drug studies that there is such a thing as addict-thought, or addiction-reasoning, or stinking thinking (though he doesn't himself make this link). Thus it would be a mistake for those active in addiction studies to criticize the humanities scholar who borrows the word *addiction* for use in his or her own field. What we all learn from an essay like Kazar's is both a respect for disciplinary boundaries and the mutability of concepts. Conceptual practice entails change, and the borrowing of vocabulary is a healthy activity. Despite our professional differences, many activities unite the social scientist and the humanities scholar, and one of those things is the never-ending search for the proper words to describe the truths in our own fields.



Sue Smith Windows and Dr. David C. Lewis, at her home in Akron Ohio, November, 1999.

## The Twelve Myths of Alcoholics Anonymous

By Matthew J. Raphael

The feature piece of the present issue is an article that several of you have seen and commented on in its earlier forms. It has been revised . . . several times. Respecting the author's wish to respect the A.A. Tradition of anonymity, it is presented under a pseudonym. Please note that this piece is intended to spark thought and discussion – especially if you pass this on, please point your readers to the Commentary.

1. Alcoholism is a disease.
2. Recovering alcoholics can never drink again. Taken in any form, alcohol will trigger an irresistible craving.
- 3 A.A. is unique and unprecedented – the single key to sobriety. Other methods simply do not work as well, if at all.
4. Those who leave A.A. always end up drunk – either dead drunk or miserably dry drunk.
5. A.A. alone can heal our mental disorders. Medications are superfluous and dangerous to sobriety.
6. All our problems arise from our character defects; all our solutions lie in the steps.
7. A.A. is a spiritual program, but it eventually leads to religion, preferably Christianity.
8. The Big Book is divinely inspired, and non-program literature about alcoholism is worthless (unless it's published by Hazelden).
9. Having a sponsor, of the same sex, is essential to sobriety.
10. The soberest person in any meeting is the one who got up first in the morning.
11. There is no such thing as a bad meeting; all A.A. groups are essentially the same.
12. Those who don't believe the above haven't been working the program.
13. Since the thirteenth step does not exist, it rarely happens.

## The Twelve Myths of Alcoholics Anonymous: A Commentary

Alcoholics Anonymous saved my ass and then it saved my life. Grateful as I am and ought to be, I have no wish to harm the fellowship by creating needless controversy. It seems to me, however, that A.A. needs dissenting voices to be heard -- just as much now as in the early days, when a few mavericks from the New York group bucked the Oxford Group orthodoxy of the Akron group. Then as now, the survival of A.A. may hinge on its capacity for embracing differing viewpoints without losing sight of its primary purpose: to carry a message of hope to alcoholics who still suffer.

During the 1980s, the Southern Baptist Conference, another prosperous spiritual organization, was plagued by divisiveness when right-wing radicals tipped the balance of power among liberals, moderates, and conservatives and captured the church for their own narrow aims. A.A. has long maintained a similar balance of power, with moderate leaders steering between extremes. But I have sensed in recent years -- and I'm not alone in this -- a narrowing within A.A.: a fundamentalist ascendancy that threatens to repel or expel anyone who might beg to differ with some popular but dubious doctrines.

The Twelve Myths of Alcoholics Anonymous are meant to redress the imbalance in A.A. by calling some of these ideas into question. Left unchallenged, the Twelve Myths could undermine A.A.'s reputation as an honest program. For honesty should be practiced in regard both to our drinking *and* to our thinking.

There has always been an anti-intellectual bias in A.A. It seems sometimes as if newcomers are required to check their brains at the door in order to get in. "Don't think, don't drink, go to meetings." Sound advice, to be sure, especially early in sobriety. But just as our wills are restored by working the Twelve Steps, so our minds are reactivated. Thinking alone won't get anyone sober. It's often an obstacle for those too smart to grasp a simple program. But not thinking won't necessarily keep anyone sober for long. From time to time A.A. members need to take moral inventory of what we think we know and what we profess to believe.

I am using the term *myths* with all due respect. I don't mean calculated lies; rather something like unexamined half-truths. Myths are closely associated with belief systems. They can serve as the enabling fictions by which people lead better lives. If the Twelve Myths were not useful, after all, they would never have attained mythic status in the first place. If some A.A. members want to live by them, that's fine. But other members (or prospective members) may have legitimate doubts, and they may need reassurance that a healthy measure of skepticism is also part of the authentic A.A. tradition.

There must, of course, be *Twelve* Myths. Symmetry requires it. But the number and their order are finally arbitrary, and readers will undoubtedly think of omissions. Some of the myths are more prevalent than others, and few A.A. members likely believe all of them, at least all at the same time. So let's take them one myth at a time.

## ONE. Alcoholism is a disease.

Alcoholism is a "progressive fatal disease," a "family disease," a "disease of denial," the cunning nature of which is to tell us we don't have a disease. Alcoholism is no different from cancer or diabetes. And so on (and on).

It would be impossible to attend many A.A. meetings without hearing about the "disease" of alcoholism as if it were a natural fact. The disease concept, however, was invented only in the late eighteenth century, and its currency in A.A. dates only from the rise of the Modern Alcoholism Movement during the 1940s and, more recently, from the consolidation of the rehab-industrial- complex.

In the original version of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, particularly the part carried over from one edition of the Big Book to the next with minimal revision, alcoholism is *not* presented as a medical disease -- except, perhaps, in Dr. William Silkworth's prefatory "allergy" theory, which has long since been discredited scientifically. Alcoholism is seen, on the contrary, as a *soul* sickness, a spiritual dys-ease, the remedy for which can never be found solely on the material plane of medicine. Insofar as it implies that alcoholics are not accountable for actions under the influence, the disease concept, in fact, goes against the grain of the Big Book and other program literature, in which taking personal responsibility is constantly stressed.

What's happened over the decades since 1935 is that A.A. discourse has been gradually transformed as alcoholism has been gradually displaced from the realm of the soul to that of the body and mind. That is, the A.A. idea of alcoholism has been medicalized and also psychologized, most markedly since large numbers of drunks began to reach the program by way of rehabs, whose best interests, financial and otherwise, depend on instilling the disease concept as if it were an indisputable scientific finding. As a result, the disease concept has now come to dominate thinking in A.A. more fully than anywhere else in the current world of alcoholism theory and treatment (from which A.A. is increasingly out of touch).

There is at least one good reason for A.A.'s clinging to the disease concept: its immense pragmatic value. This notion helps to relieve the newly sober from disabling guilt about drinking and its consequences. It offers hope that the crushing weight of responsibility can be lifted just far enough to set them free. With the implicit and explicit advocacy of A.A., the disease concept has shaped both public policy and popular understanding about alcoholism. It has even been endorsed by the American Medical Association. Surely, so lofty an authority as the A.M.A. can't be wrong!

The truth is that the disease concept, born in controversy two centuries ago, has never since been undisputed. Challenges have come from religious, philosophical, psychological, and medical thinkers, and the idea now holds far less sway than it once did among scientific investigators of alcoholism, especially outside the United States. As for the A.M.A. endorsement, it must be understood in its historical context. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the medical establishment was relentlessly lobbied by leaders of the Modern Alcoholism Movement to adopt its idea of the alcoholic as a diseased rather than immoral person. When the A.M.A. yielded to such tactics during the 1960s, the result was comparable in many ways to the later *de*-diseasing of homosexuality by the American Psychological Association. In both



instances the medical authorities were under pressure from influential interest groups, and politics weighed heavily in supposedly scientific matters.

Honesty requires that A.A. members have the right to conceptualize their drinking problem in any way that advances their sobriety. That may be the disease concept, but there is no A.A. orthodoxy about it. *The nature of alcoholism is finally an outside issue.*

**TWO. Recovering alcoholics can never drink again. Taken in any form, alcohol will trigger an irresistible craving.**

Credible scientific studies have shown that a very small portion of alcoholics (on the order of five percent) can apparently return to "social" drinking. Good for them. But such slim odds change nothing for the overwhelming majority of alcoholics, who place themselves in this tiny minority at their extreme peril. Certainly, the soundest advice to drunks is that they should never drink again. Honesty requires, however, that we don't insist, in the face of the evidence, that no exceptions exist.

As for automatic loss of control from ingesting alcohol, it just isn't so. Yes, for some recovering alcoholics a whiff of mouthwash or a sip of "non-alcoholic" beer or a drop of cough syrup might touch off a craving for the real stuff. But it is also true that picking up a drink is not an entirely involuntary action, and it need not follow inevitably from any of the above (or similar) brushes with alcohol. Much depends on our attitude and our spiritual condition.

It is only prudent for the newly sober (or anyone in A.A.) to avoid contact with alcohol. But not every slip is a planned drunk, and it is misleading to pronounce the situation hopeless when a recovering alcoholic takes any alcohol, even accidentally. A slip is really no more reason to pick up a drink than any other excuse – such as that a slip is a predictable "relapse" into the "disease" of alcoholism.

**THREE. A.A. is unique and unprecedented – the single key to sobriety. Other methods simply do not work as well.**

Bruce Cole, the current director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has been talking lately about "American Amnesia" -- our peculiar national habit of forgetting our own past. In regard to alcoholism and its treatment, this amnesia underlies the common but erroneous belief that nothing like A.A. ever existed before Bill W. met Dr. Bob in 1935.

The truth is that all the major components of A.A. – such as fellowship meetings, recovery stories as a means to sobriety, and non-sectarian spirituality – were all present in the Washingtonian Temperance Society that flourished during the 1840s. Bill W. himself honored the Washingtonian precedent once he became aware of it. But he did not know what historians have subsequently discovered: an unbroken chain of mutual-help, non-drinking organizations between 1840 and 1935. On the level of how it works, nothing about A.A. is unprecedented. What makes A.A. unique is its unparalleled endurance. This is clearly due to the organizational genius of its cofounder. Bill W., with a background in business and the executive skills of a *Fortune*-500 C.E.O, built A.A. to last. And so it has – far longer than any other sobriety institution.

Nevertheless, since A.A. keeps no statistics and resists inspection by outside investigators, it has no way of assessing its own efficacy except anecdotally. We just don't know how well A.A. works, either in comparison to alternative programs or even in comparison to A.A. itself in earlier decades.

Honesty requires that we embrace ends and not means. Anything that helps alcoholics to get sober merits respect. A.A. has no stake in bragging rights about cure rates. It's enough to know that A.A. works -- not so much for those who work it, as for those it works for. Some people just don't like A.A.; some do not belong; some may not need our help to get sober. It has yet to be shown convincingly that A.A. or *any* alcoholism treatment is more successful than self-imposed abstinence.

**FOUR. Those who leave A.A. always end up drunk -- either dead drunk or miserably dry drunk.**

Anyone with time in the program knows that A.A. has the largest alumni/alumnae association on earth. For all its multitude of members at any given moment, most of them -- in truth, the vast majority -- will move on sooner or later, usually sooner. And we don't really know what happens to our "graduates," especially those -- also, perhaps, the vast majority -- who *don't* turn up on the police blotter or the obituary pages.

The only alternative to A.A. is *not* dry drunkenness. Not everyone who leaves meetings behind is condemned to lifelong misery. There are many who deeply absorb the A.A. message for a while and then take it out of the rooms and put it into their lives and stay sober on their own, serving as positive examples to others. It may well be that as much good Twelfth-Step work is being done by *former* members of the fellowship as by active ones.

**FIVE. A.A. alone can heal our mental disorders. Medications are superfluous and dangerous to sobriety.**

The relationship between alcohol and other drugs, as between alcoholism and other addictions, is complex and controversial. We need not address it in A.A., whose singleness of purpose demands that we reject the rehab rhetoric of "a drug is a drug is a drug" and limit ourselves to drinking problems.

That also means that we ought not to issue directives to those, still suffering from mental disorders, under treatment by medications that some A.A.s regard as mind-altering and hence inimical to true sobriety. Here again, there is a world of common sense in discouraging alcoholics from substituting one addictive substance for another. But dispensing medical advice lies well beyond the competence of all but a few in the program, and amateur physicians may be doing at least as much harm as the drugs they denounce.

**SIX. All our problems arise from our character defects; all our solutions lie in the steps.**

It is sometimes asserted in meetings that all our character defects stem from the "alcoholic personality" – the existence of which is dubious at best. Early research on the matter was too poorly conceived to prove anything, and the catholicity of A.A.'s membership seems to rule out predicting who will or will not qualify as an alcoholic. In any case, our own character defects do not account for all our problems. Non-alcoholics have their own share of shortcomings, and a sober drunk might even be right now and then. For serenity's sake, we may choose not to insist on being right, but biting our tongues is very different from blaming ourselves unreasonably.

A spiritual answer to life's problems can always be found in the steps, but such an answer may not always be the same thing as a solution – because not all change can be accomplished from within, although that's the only kind possible through A.A. itself. Some problems are irreducibly external, and these may require structural reform or even political action that is beyond the proper scope of A.A. When such outside issues don't yield to inside solutions, this is not necessarily the result of a defective program.

**SEVEN. A.A. is a spiritual program, but it eventually leads to religion, preferably Christianity.**

The history of A.A. shows that it originated in an evangelical Protestant sect, the Oxford Group; and although A.A. separated from the Oxford Group in 1939, it never lost its Christian tinge. For some members that's a very good thing. They believe that just as there are no atheists in foxholes, there are no real atheists in A.A. and that the message to the agnostic will sooner or later prevail. True religious belief is often thought to be inseparable, as it was for many early A.A.s, from Christianity.

Many recovering alcoholics do get religion in one form or another, but persistent non-believers are not automatically less sober than believers even if their Higher Power remains a light bulb. Religious belief may be a byproduct of sobriety, but it is neither prerequisite nor inevitable. Therefore the explicitly Christian practices of many meetings are basically contrary to A.A. principles.

**EIGHT. The Big Book is divinely inspired, and non-program literature about alcoholism is worthless (unless it's published by Hazelden).**

*Alcoholics Anonymous* was written by Bill W. with a lot of help from his friends. As Bill often remarked, its spiritual ideas are philosophical and religious commonplaces. The book was originally intended as a promotional device, and its boosterish tone is all too apparent in some passages. (Its style is badly dated overall, but revising it had become anathema even in Bill W.'s lifetime.) The Big Book, then, is an historical document, and it is useful to remember that it was produced when no one in A.A., including Bill himself, had more than four years' sobriety. *Alcoholics Anonymous* may continue to be a godsend for many of its readers, but to regard the Big Book as sacred writ is to inflate its importance, perhaps blasphemously.

There is plenty of A.A.-sanctioned literature for members to read, although unfortunately few newcomers are steered to Bill W.'s revealing history of the program, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. A trip to the "recovery" section of any large bookstore will confirm that there is also plenty of good material, from many perspectives, which is not "conference approved." The Big Book may be crucial for the newcomers to read, if only as a key to the otherwise incomprehensible program jargon tossed around in meetings. But exposure to other readings – on which Hazelden certainly has no monopoly – can also foster sobriety. Newcomers should, in fact, be informed that Hazelden is *not* part of the program, but rather a commercial enterprise that happens to enjoy a cozy business relationship with A.A. headquarters. The Hazelden guides to The Twelve Steps, for example, have no special authority, although they are sometimes presented as if they did.

**NINE. Having a sponsor, of the same sex, is essential to sobriety.**

Sponsors are not mentioned in the first part of the Big Book, for the simple reason that they did not exist as such until after its publication in 1939. Although it may be argued that the *idea* of sponsorship – the guidance of new members by more experienced ones – has always been fundamental to A.A., the institution itself has not. Many A.A.s nonetheless seem to subscribe to the cult of the sponsor, insisting that he or she possesses a superior wisdom that is properly lorded over "pigeons," as A.A. newcomers once were called.

Sponsors may be wise; they may also be foolish or worse. They are not, in any event, indispensable to sobriety. Some people do fine without them. The same-sex practice, too, has its limitations. Although there are practical explanations for this custom (see below), there is no reason in principle why sponsorship cannot cross the gender line (as it sometimes does for gay and lesbian members).

**TEN. The soberest person in any meeting is the one who got up first in the morning.**

In the interests of preserving its democratic spirit and practicing humility, A.A. encourages those with long-term sobriety not to make too much of it – certainly not to pull rank, as if years in the program automatically conferred seniority of sobriety. There are, unfortunately, some A.A.s with a lot of time who remain so deeply drunken in their ways and means that they offer no recommendation for the program. By contrast, there are the many old-timers who radiate a spiritual aura that seems to come with growth in the program. Honesty requires that we acknowledge that some members *are* more sober than others and that the soberest are often those with the most A.A. experience.

**ELEVEN. There is no such thing as a bad meeting; all A.A. groups are essentially the same.**

Anyone who travels knows that there are at least as many varieties of meetings as there used to be of Heinz pickles. The variations run along regional, national, and international lines, with overlays of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class difference. Formats, readings, and prayers may not be consistent. Even within a small city, A.A. is

seldom homogeneous. Some members may quite reasonably prefer one sort of meeting to another, and the program is designed to accommodate individual preferences. The proliferation of new groups is a sign of A.A.'s vitality.

Although one might hope that all meetings were equally sound on A.A. principles, it must be admitted that some groups are sounder than others and that some meetings, even within the best groups, are better than others. There are certain A.A. meetings, indeed, that are hardly worth attending. Entire groups can and do go astray, and newcomers should know that objections they may have to a given meeting may *not* be accountable only to a bad attitude or newness in sobriety.

**TWELVE. Those who don't believe the above haven't been working the program.**

Despite the inclusive rhetoric of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, fundamentalist members insist on a narrow construction of A.A. orthodoxy and perform the self-confirming trick of turning disagreement against itself. This is the same stunt that psychoanalysis used to pull: if you don't agree with every last Freudian doctrine, then that only proves how desperately sick you are – and how much more analysis you need to break down your "resistance." So if you don't embrace the Twelve Myths, it's because you aren't working the steps and traditions.

A.A. has everything to gain from cherishing the expansive liberality of the Third Tradition, especially in its long form, where the "only requirement for membership" is reduced from a desire (formerly "an honest desire") to stop drinking to merely a willingness to join with one or two other alcoholics in the quest for mutual sobriety. In practice and in principle alike, the only real requirement for membership is a desire for membership.

**THIRTEEN. Since the thirteenth step does not exist, it rarely happens.**

Among its many benefits, A.A. does *not* offer a dating service. But that doesn't stop the mating game. The gossip mill is always churning about this or that relationship, licit or illicit, between A.A. members. Like all sexual topics, thirteenth-stepping is rarely addressed in meetings. But it has long been a part of A.A. (Bill W. himself may have invented the term, or at least inspired it). And it is practiced quite visibly at some meetings, where newcomers, especially attractive younger women, are swarmed by "helpful" admirers.

Thirteenth-stepping arises out of the gender imbalance that has always characterized A.A. Once a male fellowship -- so the subtitle to the first Big Book attests: *The Story of How More Than One Hundred Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism* -- A.A. has remained so in various and important ways. Women, who did not join A.A. in any numbers until the 1940s, have long had to adapt themselves to A.A.'s masculine ethos.

I've attended thousands of meetings, and I can recall only one at which women were in the majority. It has been uncommon in my experience that women have constituted even a third of those present. Yet a meeting's mood and substance are often changed (for the better, I think) by a higher proportion of women. The existence of women's meetings speaks to this fact, as well as to the need for new female members to be shielded from sexual overtures.