

CULTURE, ALCOHOL, AND SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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A Newsletter for Participants in the Kirk Collection Works-in-Progress Conference held
Brown University, June 2002

A Letter from David Lewis:

This newsletter is an outgrowth of an interesting and productive meeting held at Brown University on June 12-15, 2002. The unique theme of this meeting, thanks to Religious Studies graduate student Jim Swan Tuite, was Work in Progress- thereafter known as the WIPS meeting. I didn't appreciate the power of Jim's idea when I agreed to sponsor the meeting, but it was clear at the meeting that the advantage of bringing first rate scholars together to discuss their on-going work was a useful exercise for everyone. It also allowed for informal dialogue across generations of scholars with common interests. The thoughtful feedback that we received after the meeting indicated interest by the participants in continuing the process. Ernie Kurtz took the initiative in creating and naming this newsletter and he and Jim with the support of my office will tend to the logistics of getting it out. The success of this publication will, of course, depend on the submissions and the helpful critique of colleagues. I promise to be an avid reader and occasional contributor. The graphics in this issue are from the Kirk Collection, my teaching files or nature photos. Of the several projects that I have been able to support, this is clearly one of the best. For your interest, with this newsletter I am enclosing a copy of the 2003 Sobriety Calendar with my compliments.

David C. Lewis, M.D.

There are two kinds of contributions to this newsletter, and so they are presented separately. Some graciously sent extensive outlines or detailed presentations. These will be printed on separate pages, the better for detaching and filing, if that be anyone's choice.

The briefer notes will appear together. From correspondence with some of these contributors (and because Linda and I are among them), I am sure any would be happy to tell inquirers more, if asked. To facilitate that and other continuing contact among the group members, the final page lists postal and e-mail addresses as they are now on file. Please inform me if corrections or changes are needed.

As part of the hope that this Newsletter might eventually become a journal, copies of this issue are being sent to a few interested others. If you deem it desirable to have a copy sent to someone you know, please send me the name, postal address, and e-mail address.

Ernie Kurtz

John Crowley is settling comfortably in Tuscaloosa, AL, a setting he finds much preferable to Syracuse, NY, and environs. "You don't have to shovel humidity," he commented.

John has distributed to many of us his piece, "Twelve Myths of Alcoholics Anonymous." I trust that several have offered comments. John and Bill White have also completed their study of the history of the New York State Inebriate Asylum – "a little book pulling together the story of Dr. Joseph Turner and the troubled fate of the first inebriate asylum" – and sent the manuscript to the University of Massachusetts Press, which has accepted it for publication.

Here is the Table of Contents of that book:

Drunkards' Refuge
The Lessons of the New York Inebriate Asylum
By John W. Crowley and William White

Preface

Chapter One: "What shall we do with the inebriate?"

- The Call for Reform
- Two Temperance Movements
- The Washingtonian Movement
- The Rise of Addiction Treatment in America
- The Professionalization of Addiction Treatment
- A Man and an Institution

Chapter Two: The Visionary J. Edward Turner

- Neal Dow's Maine
- Dow and Turner
- Turner's Vision
- The Preparation and Planning Years
- Site Selection and Construction
- Defending the Idea
- Early Financial and Political Struggles
- Design of the Inebriate Asylum

Chapter Three: The Battle of Binghamton

- Asylum Patients
- Dr. Willard Parker and the Asylum Board
- The Fight for Control of the Asylum
- Charges of Arson
- The Asylum and the National Press
- Innocence and Exile
- A Second Failure
- The Verdict on Turner

Chapter Four: The Asylum's New Day and Its Twilight

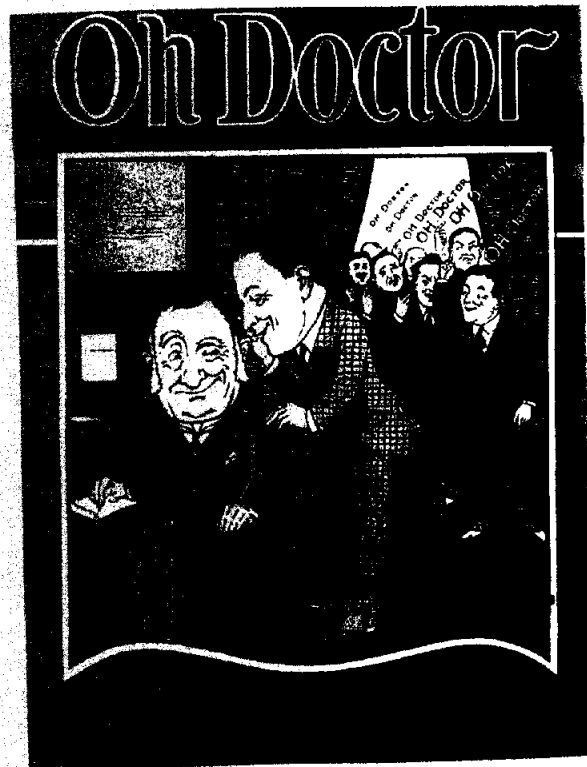
- Dr. Albert Day: New Leadership and Philosophy
- Asylum Life
- Turner on Day
- Day and the Board: New Charges of Arson
- Moral Reform vs. Medical Treatment

The Asylum's Decline

- Chapter Five: J. Edward Turner and the First Inebriate Asylum: Lessons and Legacies
- The Fall of 19th Century Addiction Treatment
 - The Nature of the Addict and the Recovery Process
 - The Methods of Social Reform
 - The Rise and Fall of Social Reformers
 - The Rise and Fall of Reform Institutions
 - Turner's Place in the History of Addiction Treatment
 - The New York State Inebriate Asylum and its Influence on 19th Century Addiction Treatment
 - Turner and the New York State Inebriate Asylum as a Cautionary Tale
 - The Fate of a Concept
 - Social Policy: Then and Now
 - A Continuing Story

Appendices:

- A. A Chronology of the New York State Inebriate Asylum
- B. New York State Inebriate Asylum Archival Resources



George Jensen reports: Since the WIPS conference, I have decided to change the format of my book. I have decided to drop the statement about being a member of Al-Anon and simply say, as I did with *Storytelling in Alcoholics Anonymous*, that I became interested in AA and attended open AA meetings. This way I can sign the book with my full name, although I will add "Jr." In a way, this is another mark of my coming to terms with my father, because I had never used the "Jr." on my name. Erasing the "Jr." was a way of erasing my father. I will eliminate most of the italicized interludes, although some will be included in the regular chapters.

In August, my family and I made a trip to New Orleans, where my father spent his last days. I saw his grave for the first time, and I found the place where he lived in the French Quarter. I was able to contact the son of the person who owned the property, who remembered my father. He said that the place was a boarding house then, and his parents also owned a bar next door where my father often drank. They called him the Commander and seemed to like him a great deal. My father often shipped out as a Merchant Marine, sometimes for two year stints. When he came back, he was very generous with his friends, especially those who needed rent money. He also told me that he never saw my father drunk. I'm curious about people's reactions to this. Was it that this guy, who was a kid then, didn't see what happened late at night, or when my father went on binges? Was my father's drinking more under control? Was he "not drunk" only by French Quarter standards. Is the guy's memory accurate? Or does he think this is what I want to hear? The guy said he was a "good Christian." It's all very interesting.

Here is a progress report on the chapters.

Chapter 1: "A Childhood Lost." This is what everyone read at WIPS. It has been extensively revised and is now about 40 pages in length. I think everyone will see many of their suggestions at work.

Chapter 2: "Looking for Security." This chapter focuses on my mother. It is about 35 pages and in pretty solid shape. It covers my idealization of my mother and how I have tried to know the person who struggled to raise two boys on her own.

Chapter 3: "An Only Child's Brother." This focuses on my brother. It has also been extensively revised and is about 35 pages. This is the chapter that moves/depresses/disturbs most people.

Chapter 4: "Looking for the Father." This chapter switches to something like a journal format. I begin by saying that I need to try to put my story back together. I want to plot out key events by dates and see where the gaps are. This has been drafted (about 45 pages), but it needs much revision and probably will grow in length. I write about my father's absence, father figures (including James Dickey, who was the "advisor" of MA thesis), being a father, manhood, and eventually the need to come to terms with my real father.

Chapter 5: "The Story I Will Tell My Sons." This chapter will be in the form of a letter to my sons. I begin by saying to my sons that the only thing I ever told them about my father was he was an alcoholic and he drank himself to death. I say this was wrong, and I need to tell them more. The chapter will cover my father at his best, during WWII. I have obtained his military records and I am trying to reconstruct (or construct) his experience at Pearl Harbor. I have a grad student (who was in the Navy) looking over these records now. I recently obtained (from the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association) 22 names of crew members of the USS Dewey, my father's ship for most of the war. I have written to them, asking only if they knew my father's battle station but hoping they will be willing to share other stories. I am also doing some reading of WWII histories, especially first hand accounts of battles.

Chapter 6: "A Brief Sermon on Love." I include here some of the material from the "Changing" italicized interlude that you read. I also say that I had to come to terms with the members of my family separately, that I never came to terms with the structure of my family. Crowley, if you remember, said I needed to decide who would have the last word. I end this chapter and the book with a section from my brother's four page journal, which he could never finish. He is writing about the pain of love and ends with "Why does it have to be this way?"



Trysh Travis submitted the following:

The Insider/Outsider Conundrum:

Presenting Work on 12-Step Culture to the Strange and Unruly Audience Beyond WIPS

Trysh Travis, Southern Methodist University

The Dallas Area Social History group (DASH) is a consortium of scholars from Dallas-Ft. Worth schools who, primarily, study American cultural and social history. DASH meets monthly during the academic year to share works in progress and general collegiality. I was invited to give the first talk of the new school year, so on 27 September I presented a version of the first chapter of my book project, "Reading and Recovery: the New Middlebrow Culture." In the context of the book, the chapter lays out a history of drinking and drunkenness in the United States, emphasizing the evolving and somewhat elusive "disease concept" of alcoholism. It draws heavily on the rich scholarship in this area that's been done by Harry G. Levine, Marianna Valverde, and William A. White, and I argue that what White calls "the metaphorical utility" of the disease concept contributes to AA's culture of story-writing and storytelling: the fellowship lives and breathes by metaphor.

My plans for the talk to the DASH group were somewhat more modest. As I've worked on this chapter, I've had at the front of my mind Valverde's argument that, in the 20th century at least, alcoholism is "gendered masculine everywhere." John Crowley's and Lori Rotskoff's sensitive treatments of men, women, and alcohol in *The White Logic* and *Love on the Rocks* elaborate this claim in provocative detail. In thinking about this talk, I wanted to hear from a group of historians whether the history of the disease concept of alcoholism seemed simply like a story in which gendered individuals and social norms played a large part, or if it somehow challenged and revised our images of gender and our understandings of how it is constituted.

Ultimately, however, the talk was interesting to me not because of what people said about gender, which was almost nothing. Rather, what intrigued and puzzled me was what I've now come to think of as "the anti-WIPS aspect" of the endeavor, namely, the difficulty of talking in a public forum about 12-Step institutions, beliefs, and practices. In any given group of people, it seems, there will be a couple who have first hand knowledge of AA or another 12-Step program, a few more who maybe know something about it because they have a close friend or relative who's in a program, and a whole lot whose information about 12-Step culture comes from the media and other secondhand accounts and who, as a result, have a hodge-podge of ideas—some correct and some totally wacky—about what that culture is like. I find this makes for a unique and difficult situation for presenting research and enjoining enlightened, intelligent discussion. I'm curious to know if others have found this to be a challenge to doing work on 12-Step culture, and to get a sense of how others have dealt with it.

There are two major issues that I've encountered as problems. The first is a set of what I'm calling "outsider issues," questions raised by people who don't know, or don't know well, what the 12-Step world entails. For many people, 12-Step culture is both relatively unknown and (perhaps as a result) quite fascinating—sometimes in an almost prurient way. Despite the fact that my recent talk spanned American drinking history from Colonial times to the present, the questions were ALL about AA. People (especially a roomful of social historians, as you can imagine!) want facts about the

fellowship: who is in AA? what comprises "AA culture"? on what empirical basis can we make generalizations about it? Explanation of the Traditions and how they build in a sort of institutional ignorance of or disregard for these kind of statistical and demographic reckonings goes a little way to answering these questions. In a loosely structured discussion, though, plenty of room is left for participants to share their own ideas—which may or may not be accurate. While audience members at my recent talk were courteous, respectful, and genuinely curious about people in 12-Step programs, there was nevertheless a heavy use of the pronouns "they" and "them." Did "they" turn to a free program because "they" had no access to medical insurance? Did psychotherapy not work for "them"? Don't "they" have separate meetings for lesbians and gays? As is almost inevitably the case, no matter what the factual answers to these questions were, what gradually came to distinguish "them" was the fact that "they" were different from "us." While progressive, Left-leaning academics currently privilege several kinds of difference—racial, class-based, sexual, etc.—revisionist history and cultural studies have not made participation in anonymous spiritual programs that abjure politics the stuff of celebration. The affiliates of 12-Step culture remain strangely "other" even to a very friendly academic audience.

I've called this first set of issues "outsider" because they arise when people outside of 12-Step culture are presented with it as a subject for intellectual inquiry. A less common but, I think equally pressing set of issues arise from "insiders"—people in a 12-Step program that want to use that fact to assert their power and their vision of what the fellowship is. I first experienced this phenomenon when I published an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the prevalence of recovery-speak among my students. Two hostile letters from readers, both of whom identified as AAs, asserted that, as a non-AA, I had no knowledge of how the program worked or what it was about. Since writing that article, I've done more research and, probably more important, talked with more people about the nature of this strand of scholarship; I now take pains to be particularly careful to present information about *all* 12-Step groups neutrally and with respect. (I must admit, however, that at times my enthusiasm for all interesting and bizarre phenomena and turns of phrase gets the better of me—in my DASH talk I reported with probably inappropriate glee on both the Big Book's sensational language ["King Alcohol and the shivering denizens of his mad realm"], and Ernie Kurtz's coinage of "recovery porn" to describe the for-profit goods and services of the codependency movement.) Despite this attention, I received an email from a colleague the day after my talk, identifying himself as a recovering alcoholic with nine months sobriety, and suggesting, again, that as a non-AA, I did not fully understand the nature and purpose of the 12-Steps and that therefore, my discussion of it, and of the disease concept as a whole, had been insensitive.

What is most troubling about such a comment is its suggestion that only someone in the program knows and is licensed to write/speak/think about it, and that certainly no one but such a privileged insider could possibly begin to think of critiquing any aspect of 12-Step culture. In the face of such a critique, the only way to respond effectively (it often seems) is to break the 12th Tradition and thereby "prove" your legitimacy. But this then opens up a whole other can of worms: whose 12-Step experience is truly authentic? To some AAs, Al-Anon affiliation may seem a lesser 12-Step experience, and to some in those two original groups, affiliation with more recent groups like CODA or ACOA may not seem legitimate. Once a break with the 12th Tradition occurs, then it seems to me it's open season, and the legitimacy of one's scholarship can easily be equated with (and/or reduced to) the length and quality of

Bill White continues to mix writing with traveling to offer his educational presentations. He sends along a summary of the book he and Don Coyhis are working on. Don is the President of White Bison, Inc--the major Native American Recovery Advocacy Organization (See www.whitebison.org). He led the project to create a Native American adaptation of the Big Book (The Red Road to Wellbriety) that has been just released. They hope to get their book to press during 2003. About 200 pages have been drafted, but there is still much to be included from Don's interviews with tribal elders.

Alcoholism in Native American: The Untold Story of Resistance and Recovery

By Don Coyhis and Bill White

Over the past three decades, there has been an accumulation of evidence drawn from archival sources and oral tribal histories that challenge how the dominant culture has viewed Native American alcohol problems and how Native peoples have viewed their own personal and cultural relationships with alcohol. The goal of this book is to weave together into a meaningful whole the historical evidence of how Native peoples resisted and recovered, and today continue to resist and recover, from alcoholism and other alcohol-related problems. The conclusions we have drawn from our research are summarized in the following propositions.

1. Native tribes were knowledgeable of, and lived in harmony with, a wide variety of psychoactive plants prior to European contact, respecting the spirits and rules of these plants.
2. Prior to European contact, Native tribes ritualized the use of plant-based, psychoactive drugs (including alcohol in some tribes) in ways that minimized their harmful effects and maximized their benefit to the individual and tribe.
3. The initial response of Native tribes to alcohol availability following European contact was not one of widespread alcoholism.
4. Native alcohol problems and alcoholism emerged when Native tribes came under physical and cultural assault and when alcohol shifted from a ritual of social contact to a tool of economic, political and sexual exploitation.
5. "Firewater myths" that portrayed Native Americans as inherently vulnerable to alcoholism provided a rationale for the policy of "Manifest Destiny" and provided ideological support for the decimation and colonization of Native tribes.
6. The legacy of these "firewater myths" has been generations of stigma (the "drunken Indian" stereotype) and racial shame, and a fundamental misconstruction of the sources and solutions to Native alcohol problems.
7. Native leaders actively resisted the infusion of alcohol into tribal life and continue to resist such infusion today.
8. Early indigenous responses to alcohol problems included the development of sobriety-based religious/cultural revitalization and healing movements that constitute the first recovery mutual aid societies.

9. Alcoholism recovery is a living reality in Native American communities and has been so for more than 250 years -- a century before the Washingtonian revival of the 1840s and two centuries before the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous.

10. The recovery traditions in Native communities continue today through abstinence-based religions, the "Indianization" of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, recovery-based cultural revitalization movements, and the rise of culturally-informed alcoholism treatment.

11. The most effective and enduring solutions to Native alcohol problems have emerged and continue to emerge from the very heart of these tribal cultures.

12. The history of resistance and recovery within Native American tribes is a testimony to cultural forces of prevention and healing that continue to constitute powerful, but underutilized, antidotes to alcohol problems.

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Address, naming this paper, Prof. HART, 210 E. 9th St., N. Y.

SHORT NOTES

Bruce Donovan reports "I am currently writing -- informally--a sort of retrospective on my work at Brown with addicts these past 25+ years. Have just begun. Otherwise life goes on as before.

Joli Jensen writes: "I am still pondering my project on medicating moods, interested in writing a book on what is at stake when we take--or choose not to take--antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications. My current plan is to address this from a personal perspective, in relation to the variety of conflicting claims of neuroscientists, psychopharmacologists, psychologists, addiction studies, recovery groups, satisfied users, ambivalent users and ex-users.

"It would be more analytic and philosophical than biological/medical/empirical in orientation. It would benefit GREATLY from the combined expertise of our WIPS participants! I would also welcome suggestions for agents and/or publishers."

Ernie Kurtz has been working on this newsletter. Additionally, he has been working on revising his 1980 booklet on *Guilt and Shame*, with an eye to republishing it with less emphasis on the alcoholic experience. He is also working on a separate, more academic book on Shame and how its understanding has changed since the recovery-porn fad of the 1990s.

Linda Kurtz has finished revising both of the articles that she wrote based on her interviews with recovering people doing community service. One, entitled, "Twelve Step Recovery and Community Service" has been returned to *Health and Social Work*, where revisions were requested. The other, "Participation in Community Life by AA and NA Members," has been submitted to the editor of *Contemporary Drug Problems*. She is grateful for the very helpful comments she received at our June meeting.

David (Wally) Pansing: "My life has been crazy preparing job application letters and materials. Most of the schools I'm applying to have November 1 deadlines. . . . I'm on the job market with all that entails. I'm doing drug and alcohol education and policy work in the Office of Health Education at Brown. I intend to graduate in May.

. . . "I'm currently working on reviewing and updating Brown's Substance Free Housing Program so that it works. I'm also trying to develop effective education strategies around marijuana use and abuse on campus."

Jared Lobdell reports: The revised version of my book will be complete in late fall. The introduction (which I presented at Providence) has been scrapped, and the book will have nine chapters:

I - Alcoholism and Treatment for Alcoholism from Early Times to the Repeal of Prohibition (50 pp);

II -- This Strange Illness of Mind, Body, and Spirit [Bill W. and the First Years of A.A.] (50 pp);

III -- A Scientific Note: Typologies, Heredities, and the Adjacent Possible (50 pp);

IV -- Mind: The Psychology of Alcoholism and Sobriety (50 pp);
V -- Body: The Biochemistry of Alcoholism and Sobriety (50 pp);
VI -- Spirit: The Theology of Alcoholism and Sobriety (50 pp);
VII -- A.A. as Process: The Twelve Steps (75 pp);
VIII -- A.A. as Koinonia: The Twelve Traditions (75 pp);
IX -- The Model Completed [and suggestions for future research] (tentatively 50 pp?).

Total, estimated 500 pp., plus an Introduction (not by me). Janie and I envision a follow-up volume, but that's a way down the road.

Etta Madden writes that the photo of the group prompted her to contact John Crowley regarding sources he suggested on the mind and the will in 19th century America. She also expressed gratitude for the references on pamphlet culture and medical history that she received at our June meeting.

Etta also reports:

"1) My work on food and drink in early American literature continues to progress, however slowly, and I would like to extend thanks to you and others for their suggestions regarding my essay on Benjamin Rush. I've examined the recommended secondary sources and find them quite helpful.

"2) I will be co-editing, with Martha Finch, a colleague here at SMSU in Religious Studies, a collection of essays entitled *Eating in Eden: Food in America's Utopias*. We use "utopia" broadly to refer to those visions of an ideal that can never possibly be achieved (in American history, in literature, in communal societies, religious organizations, etc.) The volume will be interdisciplinary and broad in historical scope. We'd like to have abstracts and short c.v.s by mid-January, 2003. If anyone would like a formal CFP, let me know and I'll send one along."

Maria Swora writes: "I am currently working hard at my job monitoring drug abuse trends. Though the work situation has improved, I am currently on the job market seeking an academic position. I will be adjuncting for Wright State spring quarter; we'll see what happens after that.

"In my current position, I have been involved with a rapid response investigation of a series of deaths of young men by heroin overdose in a rural area of Ohio. The community has mobilized and is pushing very hard for 12 Step based treatment/recovery house for men. The families involved insist on 12 step programming. Interesting, the state and federal government has allocated funds for women, but there are insufficient funds for treatment for young adult men, the population hardest hit by the new wave of heroin addiction in Ohio and throughout the US.

"I have submitted a paper on the 12 Steps to *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, where it is currently under review. I am also working on a proposal for a Kirk Fellowship in order to spend some time in the collection looking for writings on sponsorship."

Jim Swan Tuite reports "Current News from the Kirk Collection: Library News: Jean Rainwater is now assisting Mary Jo Klein with the work of the Kirk Collection. If Mary Jo is not available feel free to contact Jean. You may also access the Kirk Collection on the Brown University web site. Mary Jo recently supervised an index project on the recently acquired Marty Mann Papers.

"Possibilities: We are still seeking proposals for intellectual adventures with the Kirk Collection. One possibility would be an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing a theme within the collection such as gender, race, or or some other topic. If you are interested, please contact David Lewis by email with a suggestion.

Jay Williams writes: "I continue to work on my book, *America, Alcoholic*, focusing on the first chapter 'John Barleycorn Is Our Best Ally.' This chapter's claim is that Jack London's autobiography John Barleycorn prefigures some of the crucial principles outlined in AA's Big Book and Twelve and Twelve, namely, the idea of controlled drinking being the best test of alcoholism and the continuance of a bohemian community into a life of abstinence. London's engagement with the clash of ideas between Violet Piaget and William James begins a subnarrative throughout *America, Alcoholic*, concerning the importance of William James--if even as a mere touchstone--for various bohemian communities, including Bill Wilson's alcoholic groups and San Francisco hippies.

"But mostly my professional life is consumed by Critical Inquiry. To paraphrase Derrida paraphrasing Madame de Maintenon, 'I give all of my time to CI, and what is left I spend writing to which I would like to give all.'"



WORKS IN PROGRESS SEMINAR: BROWN UNIVERSITY SUMMER 2002

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