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Barbara Stadler

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to analyse and historically contextualise the representation of drunkenness in its various forms, from moderate or extreme intoxication during specific social and familial events to chronic alcoholism, in texts by Anne Brontë and George Eliot, two women writers living in the Victorian Age.

The Victorian Age turned its full attention to the examination of the relation between the modern individual and society – and thus, unavoidably, also to alcohol, which, comparable to a Janus-faced demon (compare Schadewaldt 10), sits right in the middle between these two poles, integrating or separating the individual. As Wheeler puts it, “mid-century novelists,” who are my subject here, “share certain common concerns” (Wheeler 37). In their works, “[t]he life of the individual in the family, in courtship and in marriage is related to larger historical, social, political and religious themes” (Wheeler 37).

In order to approach the topic of drunkenness, I will first try to establish a general anthropological view of alcohol consumption and its various functions in society. In addition to this and within the narrower frame of the Western tradition, some persisting ideas about alcohol from antiquity and the Middle Ages, including mythology, the Bible and social customs, will briefly be presented, in order to provide a reference point for allusions within the primary literary texts.

Subsequently, a more detailed presentation of the historical situation within which the authors produced their texts will be given. In order to do so, it is absolutely indispensable to take a look at the description and analysis of the various effects of alcohol as put forth by Victorian medical science. In this context, it will of course be necessary to keep in mind Jean-Charles Sournia’s remark that, “[l]ike everybody else, doctors remain products of society, they speak its language and are raised on its ideas” (Sournia xvii). The Victorians’ peculiar discourse on health will therefore be outlined as well.

In the next chapter, I will furthermore attempt to go into some of the details of alcohol’s role in Victorian people’s everyday life. The relevant aspects to be discussed include the importance and connotations of different kinds of alcohol in the British diet and what the places of its consumption were like.

A further subchapter will present Victorian social policies regarding the drink problem and the work of the temperance and teetotal movement and, implicitly, how these responses to the problem of drunkenness shaped people's conception of it.

Finally, another section will try to outline the relationship between drunkenness and Victorian literature.

After briefly giving a few major facts about the authors' own experiences of drunkenness or with drinking people, the second part will deal with the individual texts by Brontë and Eliot. The discussion of the texts will, for one, present in detail the way in which the physical and mental effects of drinking are depicted. I will do this by characterising the respective drinking characters as such, then analysing them in the state of slight or severe intoxication. Furthermore, I will show how the respective writer establishes the setting of the drinking acts and whether differences in circumstances and procedures of drinking are seen to result in different outcomes. In both contexts, gender considerations will prove indispensable. This will be followed by attempts to outline the implicit and explicit explanations for the different developments in the various characters' drinking careers given in the texts, as well as the underlying or outspoken assumptions as to the possibilities (or impossibility) of cures for and causes of drinking problems. As a conclusion, I will compare the main findings concerning the two texts – also with the historical cultural context in which they were written.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The aim of this first chapter is to provide information about the historical cultural background against which Anne Brontë and George Eliot wrote the texts to be discussed in the second part of this paper.

A short presentation of relevant alcohol-related ideas from anthropology, connected with an overview over traditional European mythological and utilitarian connotations of alcohol and its consumption, will be followed by a subchapter outlining some aspects of the general Victorian discourse on health and illness and an overview over the nineteenth-century medical concepts regarding alcohol and alcoholism. The next section will be used for a discussion of such facts from everyday life as the changing

role of various kinds of alcohol in the British diet and the places of its consumption. The historical development of the temperance movement and other public responses to the perceived drink problem shall be presented in the next part, followed by a concluding discussion of alcohol and drinking as possible motifs in Victorian literature.

1.1. Alcohol in Anthropology and European Cultural History

1.1.1. General Anthropological Findings

In order to establish a wider context for the subject of this paper, it is necessary to look at the most important anthropological findings concerning the role of alcoholic beverages in human societies, the “ubiquity” of which “cannot be doubted” (Sherratt, “Introduction” 3)

In his article “A decade of development in the anthropological study of alcohol use, 1970-1980”, Dwight Heath delineates the most important aspects of human alcohol use as follows: first of all, “drinking is essentially a social act [...] embedded in a context of values, attitudes, and other norms” from which certain rules as to the who, how, where, how much and what for alcohol consumption are then derived – rules which in turn are frequently “the focus of exceptionally strong emotions and sanctions,” despite the rather surprising fact that in most human societies drinking is usually not pinned down as the concrete cause of a unanimously defined set of particular social or medical problems (Heath, “Decade” 46) – although there are “many populations in which the use of alcoholic beverages is frequently and profoundly associated with problems” (Heath, “Introduction” 1) This point is also made by Agarwal: “the ‘governing images’ of alcohol problems differ considerably from one society to another, and they shift over time in a particular society or culture” (Agarwal 23; see also Waddell 23); indeed, they even differ between “social classes within ethnic groups” (Westermayer 45).

On the other hand, the significance of alcoholic beverages “for promoting relaxation and sociability is emphasized in many populations,” which is why any attempt to completely abolish their consumption, unless “strictly couched in terms of sacred or supernatural rules,” has so far been doomed to failure (Heath, “Decade” 46; see also Vaillant 59). Heath also observes that the exact attitudes to and rules for drinking quite

often seem to determine at least in part the actual “effects of drinking,” irrespective of such non-cultural givens as physiology and biochemistry (Heath, “Decade” 46; see also Heath, “Determining” 11). Martin puts this last point even more succinctly, stating that

[t]he consumption of alcohol causes physiological changes that are scientifically verifiable, but much of what passes for drinking behavior and drunken comportment varies from one society to the next. What is typical for a drunk in one society is not typical in another. In some societies drunks are violent and aggressive, in others they are peaceful and passive; in some alcohol arouses sexual passions, in others it dampens them. (Martin 1)

As Robin Room says, “each society has a separate set of norms controlling drunken behaviour, existing alongside the norms controlling sober behaviour [... and] drunkenness can serve as an excuse for behaviour which would [... otherwise be] inexcusable” (Room 189). In so-called “dry” societies, such as the modern British one, alcohol “is held apart from everyday life as a special commodity for special contexts; drinking has traditionally been sporadic, often at festivals or weekends,” whereas in “wet” societies, such as Italy, “drink is part of everyday life (at least for men), and frequently accompanies meals” (Room 192). Wetter societies usually show greater similarity between drunken and sober comportment than drier ones (see Room 192).

All things considered, we can say that it is learned behaviour, based on culturally specific ideas about drinking and its effects, which gives drunkenness its perceived shape – be it in life or fictional texts. This is aptly illustrated in an anecdote about George Eliot and her partner Lewes, who only after years started to suspect that occasional morning headaches might indeed be causally linked to the consumption of alcohol on the pervious day (see McCormack 32). Associations with drinking and drunkenness which the twenty-first century reader takes for granted were often all but obvious in the Victorian era and were thus indeed a matter of empirical/realist interest. As Maryon McDonald informs us in her introduction to *Gender, Drink and Drugs*, even habitual alcohol abuse only came to be associated with the more or less clearly defined (biological) disease concept of “alcoholism” in Western discourse in the course of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, a trend which is now again in the process of being revised as a mere cultural construction (see McDonald, Introduction 2-6), leading to a view of problem drinking as a “biopsychosocial” syndrome (Lilienfeld, *Reading* 4); there is also revision under way as to the “closed, static, taken-for-granted functionalist social systems and cultural orders” which underlie most current anthropological theories such as Heath’s (Hunt and Barker 175).

Taking all the above into consideration, it can be argued that cultural associations might lead to a selective perception of the plain physical effects of alcohol, on the one hand, and to biased assumptions about the underlying reasons and possible cures for excessive alcohol abuse, which – as Elvin M. Jellinek informs us – arises in any society as soon as the symbolic uses of alcohol are superseded by more individualistic, utilitarian functions of drinking:

[t]hrough drinking together, people are able to identify with each other, to form symbolic blood covenants; by drinking alone, one is able to achieve power, a resurgence of life. The symbolic functions of alcohol are one aspect of drinking; the utilitarian functions are another. Drinking alone, one realizes that alcohol serves more immediate functions than symbolically uniting clans and friends – it reduces tensions and makes social intercourse easier; it enables one to profane the “sacred custom” and to indulge in excess. Excess leads to alcoholism. Control, treatment and rehabilitation become necessary. The symbol has receded – the immediate need served by alcohol dictates its use. (Jellinek 864-5)

The latter is often the case in “communities [... which are] aggressively competitive,” so that individual competition overrides community rituals and group solidarity (Douglas, “Perspective” 6).

1.1.2. European Cultural History

1.1.2.1. Symbolism and Mythology

In the context of European cultures, the Bible and Greek mythology are the major sources for symbols or symbolic figures of alcohol and drunkenness and symbolic meanings attached to drinking, presumably because “[w]ine [...] was the metaphorical lifeblood of Mediterranean civilization” (Sherratt, “Alcohol” 20) – and the former, i.e., the mythological figures, were presumably still much closer to the surface of people’s consciousness in the nineteenth century than they are today: “any schoolchild – any nineteenth-century schoolchild, at least – might identify Dionysus as the god of wine” (O’Reilly 9).

In his essay on the symbolism of drinking, E. M. Jellinek has analysed the most common major symbolic functions of drinking and drinks. For one, alcoholic beverages, particularly wine, have always functioned as symbolic equivalents of blood (see Jellinek 855-857), thus serving to signify the “stream of life” (Jellinek 857). The consequence of this was that

when[ever] the alcoholic beverage [...] was equated with blood, then the properties of blood were transferred to the substance with which it was equated.

Since blood is food and medicine, not only symbolically but actually, these properties were transferred to alcoholic beverages. [For example w]ines, spirituous liquors and beers have long been considered “blood builders.” [...] [Thus b]lood and alcoholic beverages mean two things to men: the restoration of health, i.e., medicine, and the maintenance of good health, i.e., food. (Jellinek 856-857)

By implication of these (symbolic) values, alcohol also turns into a symbol of a general vital power (see Jellinek 857). To state the obvious, the Christian Eucharist tradition is of course intrinsically connected with this archaic symbolism of wine (see Martin 39; Sherratt, “Alcohol” 18).

Closely linked to the above complex of symbolic attributions is the association of drink with fertility, which showed in such cults as that of the Greek god Dionysus, who – like most gods associated with wine – was also the god of fertility (see Jellinek 857-858; Sherratt, “Alcohol” 18). Dionysus (sometimes called Bacchus), whose Roman equivalent was Liber (see Martin 39),¹ was considered the god who “taught [...] the Greeks how to make wine,” according to the way he had learned to do it during his stay in Egypt (Sournia 6), and he also taught men to use it responsibly by mixing it with water (Sherratt, “Alcohol” 19):

[t]he public ceremonies that [...] the cult of Dionysus] inspired were often linked to “phallopheries,” rustic fertility rites featuring choirs, dances and parades, out of which were born poetry, comedy and drama. [...] T]here was however, a certain opposition among the cultivated classes, whose allegiance was with Apollo. This opposition between Dionysus and Apollo, between spontaneity, fantasy and joy as symbols of mystical intoxication and carnival, and the more rigorous qualities of self-control and individual reason, persists today. (Sournia 6)

A common symbol associated with this god was, for example, a male goat – a creature which Christianity (not accidentally, perhaps) later on tended to identify with the devil (see O’Reilly 21). As Jellinek informs us, Dionysus was not only the god of wine but also of “vegetation and fertility”; and “[p]arenthetically, he was also the god of friendship” (Jellinek 857). This is, presumably, the reason why Dionysus was also the god “under [whose ...] sign” the Greeks held their “all-male” *symposions*, “ritual [in] character,” which were “devoted to *euphrosyne* (delight) and *hesychia* (tranquility) – the political harmony and convivial sociability associated with civic life” (Sherratt, “Alcohol” 19). Furthermore, Dionysus sometimes also took on a Plutonic character [...] and] became an underworld god, a god of the dead” (Jellinek 857)

¹ Cf. the English expression “libertine.”

In the context of his analysis of Euripides's play *The Bacchae* (ca. 400 B.C.) – a play which might well have been known at least to George Eliot –, Edmund B. O'Reilly provides some further interesting pieces of information about and interpretations of Dionysus and the Dionysian principle, which sum up neatly some of the classical ideas about drunkenness directly or indirectly (through their influence on literary tradition) available to the writers under discussion in this paper. The play demonstrates the violent conflict between the ever smiling god Dionysus and Pentheus, the ruler of Thebes, a conflict which O'Reilly characterises as between a Dionysian “state [...] of insolubly] equal-valued oppositions,” which “intrudes upon [Pentheus representing a] regulated hierarchical dominion under the apparent governance of a ‘mental component,’ a ‘self’” (O'Reilly 30):

Intoxication, once introduced into the regulated dominion, produces desired effects in some sectors, since it seems to erase distinctions which produce pain or frustration [...] through] dedifferentiation[, which] implies the elimination of physical, mental, and social distinctions, the erasure of boundaries between people, the prospect of a spiritual fusion, and [...] a consequent experience of bliss which lies well beyond mere tension reduction (O'Reilly 30)

Since the need for rules, surrounding the isolated individual, usually does not disappear with the sweet experience of intoxication, the individual self is left divided in itself between the pragmatic wish to conform to regulations in order to keep its position of power in the system and the wish to evade them (in alcoholic oblivion) – the beginning of a destructive vicious circle down the road to what modern medicine would label as chronic alcoholism in its various forms (see O'Reilly 31). The reason for these effects associated with Dionysus, however, lies not within the god himself, but rather in the conflict between him and people who do not worship him and thus accept him in a cultic, communal form, but rather fight and disobey him (see Sournia 864-865). In this situation, there

[d]evelop[s] from within the adversities of the segmented self [...] a defining and potentially lethal influence in the life of an active alcoholic: pride. [...] It is a point of pride, a challenge to be able to drink well, hold one's liquor; or when that fails, to seem to be able to stop drinking in the face of powerful physical cravings. [...] But then, having achieved the short-term goal of a provisional renunciation, the situation reverses itself, and the relocated challenge is provided by the risks of returning to drink – usually to “controlled” drinking. (O'Reilly 21)

These modern sounding ideas, similar to those uttered by the anthropologist Heath and Jellinek in the above chapter, were already implicitly associated with the ancient Greek

god (see O'Reilly 29-30). Anne Brontë's Arthur Huntington and his friends – whose communal, all-male drinking experiences seem to ironically parallel the idea of the Greek *symposion*, ending in orgies with individual breakdown – amply illustrate this vicious circle, playing on some of the traditional associations with Dionysus and the Dionysian principle. And pride is one of the marked characteristics of both Robert Dempster and his wife in George Eliot's text.

In addition to the said meanings attributed to alcohol (and its god) itself, in many societies the communal drinking of it has traditionally also served as a signifier for "identification" in the sense of a fusion between different people and clans (Jellinek 858). Remnants of this symbolic aspect are still to be found in bonding rituals such as "drinking brotherhood" (Jellinek 860). Moreover, alcoholic beverages and drunkenness have also often been used as signifiers in various rites of passage (to another world or to adulthood, for example) (Jellinek 861-862), and they are furthermore – in obvious connection with the fertility and power connotations – frequently used to denominate virility (see Jellinek 861-862; Sournia 10):

The importance attached to the ability to consume large amounts of an alcoholic beverage would seem to be rooted in the ancient symbolic connection between drinking and fertility. Thus, to drink is to take in the stream of life which implies the acquisition of reproductive power. It follows that the more one can drink, the greater one's capacity for sexual power must be. Virility is a function of this capacity and hence is symbolically reflected in the ability to drink much. (Jellinek 862)

This opinion on virility's link with alcohol is also held by Sournia, in his *History of Alcoholism* (see Sournia 10).

Implicit in these attributions is a close connection between sexuality and alcohol, an association which Jellinek, however, ignores for the most part. Jean-Charles Sournia observes that "[t]he Bible contains nearly two hundred references to vineyards and wine, and there are also references to drunkenness" (Sournia 5), many of them establishing a link between sex and alcohol. As an example, he cites the case of Noah in Genesis, who was exposed to the ridicule of his sons as a consequence of falling asleep naked, revealing his sexual organ, after he had had too much wine, and the story of Lot, who is led to committing incest with his daughters by too much drink (see Sournia 5). In the highly interesting text *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Martin elaborates this list, mentioning the erotic wine- and vine-related symbolism of the Song of Solomon (see Martin 9). The frequent occurrence of wine (and, later on, also other alcoholic beverages) in sexual contexts in

the Bible, in addition to what remained of ancient mythology, has led to it being fraught with sexual connotations, be they positive, indicating harmonious union, or negative, inducing a breach of sexual taboos and “lechery” (Martin 10). In the course of time, references to alcohol thus have developed into crucial instruments for setting the scene for “literary sex.” Indeed, Martin presents several popular tropes to be found in traditional European literature based on the ancient link between sexuality and drinking: for example, the giving and receiving of alcoholic drinks (or food) between a man and a woman came to frequently imply the occurrence of sexual intercourse; and the state of passionate love and “intoxicating” sensuality was often expressed using alcohol-related imagery (see Martin 39-40). According to folk wisdom – which is and was of course based on the symbolic values attached to alcohol – “the drinking of wine or ale could make someone fall in love, men could fall in love with women who served them drink” (Martin 80), and the offering and/or joint consumption of alcoholic beverages often functioned as an invitation to courtship or sexual activity (see Martin 80-82).

1.1.2.2. Utilitarian Functions of Drinking

As E. M Jellinek points out, “in the history of a given culture, symbolic drinking is predominant in one period; at another time, utilitarian drinking is pronounced, and the symbol recedes, although it never vanishes altogether” (Jellinek 862-863). In those periods when the latter is the case – periods which, considering what has been said above about the Dionysian principle, pave the way for what we nowadays label alcohol abuse and chronic alcoholism – drinking increasingly takes on social or even just “egocentric,” psychological functions for the individual; functions which only evolve from the interplay of the original symbolic attributions, the plain physical effects of alcohol and economic factors (see Jellinek 862-864).

According to Jellinek, typical examples of such utilitarian functions are those belonging into the category of “tension relief,” such as drinking in order to lose inhibitions, with intoxication “breaking down [...] fears and shyness and [...] facilitat[ing] social interaction” (Jellinek 863), which links up with the above-mentioned role of alcohol in sexual contexts.

The second type of utilitarian function of alcohol consumption cited by Jellinek is that which we could label as status or “prestige drinking” (Jellinek 863; see also Sherratt, “Alcohol” 13 and 18). This phrase actually subsumes two forms of drinking:

for one, the above-mentioned drinking to prove one's ability to "hold one's liquor like a man" (Jellinek 862); secondly, it also refers to the fact that the actual choice of drink, alcoholic or not, is influenced by class and prestige factors: "when members of one class move up to another, they may be guests at a cocktail party or a champagne dinner depending on their newly acquired status" (Jellinek 863).

In addition to the functions stated so far, other, even more obvious utilitarian aspects of alcohol intake to be deduced from common knowledge are that of applying it as a pharmacological substance and using it as a nutritional component (see Martin 4-5). Wine (as other kinds of alcohol) has always "had a multitude of uses: it was an anaesthetic, a solvent and a coolant [...] and a disinfectant" (Sherratt, "Alcohol" 18). All these functions as such are obviously rather non-gender-specific.

As Martin says, "demonstrating that women drank alcohol in traditional Europe is comparable to demonstrating that they ate food. Rather than a case of *bibo ergo sum* it was a situation of *sum ergo bibo*" (Martin 19). As Bert L. Vallee says in his article "Alcohol in the Western World," up to the nineteenth century, "beer and wine were [the only broadly available beverages] free of pathogens," since most water supplies were heavily polluted (Vallee 63). For this reason, even children seem to have drunk heavily or at least regularly (see Martin 21). The only difference was that, different from men, women (and children) "would normally drink in the private space of the home, more precisely the kitchen with their meals in the presence of the family. Men also drank at home, but they had more opportunities than did women to drink in the public space of taverns and alehouses. [Nevertheless w]omen had ready access to alcohol" (Martin 23).

In the medical context, alcohol was used by men and women of all classes and ages alike. Still, one of the key functions of alcohol in traditional medicine was explicitly gender-based; namely, its function in child-birth (Martin 25):

Medical opinion supported the midwives' use of alcoholic beverages as medicines to ease the birthing process. Brandy supposedly helped "ungrease" the child and free it from the womb. [...] Midwives seemed to go beyond the prescriptions of physicians in their use of *aqua vitae* [i.e., distilled spirits] to ease the pains of birth, however, and their reputation for relying on it was so notorious that it became proverbial. [...] This might account for [*aqua vitae*'s] becoming the preferred medicine for women, or at least the perception that women preferred to use it [... which might] in turn have led toward the end of the seventeenth century to the consumption of spirits by women on a broad scale, especially by upper-class women. (Martin 26-27)

As a matter of fact, traditionally the poor, no matter if male or female, were often too poor to afford to drink big amounts of alcohol or use it as a medicine (see Martin 30

and 37), leading to an association of alcohol with prosperity. This only changed with the advent of cheap gin to be discussed in the chapter “Alcohol and the British Diet.”

1.2. Medical History and the Victorian Discourse on Health

Medical findings concerning alcohol and alcoholism, which are to be outlined in the second part of this chapter, also found their way into popular Victorian knowledge, partly of course through the work of the temperance movements and mass education programmes and through the work of literary writers and intellectuals with different degrees of medical background knowledge and different political and philosophical biases. Let us first take a closer look at the typical Victorian discourse on healthiness (and disease) into which scientific theories on alcohol were received. Then, we will look at the role alcohol played in nineteenth-century medical practice and at the descriptive or explanatory models of alcohol problems put forth by contemporary scientists.

1.2.1. Victorian Discourse on Health and the Body

No topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health – not religion, or politics, or Improvement or Darwinism. In the name of Health, Victorians flocked to the seaside, tramped about the Alps or Cotswolds, dieted, took pills, sweated themselves in Turkish baths, adopted this “system” of medicine or that. Partly for the sake of Health, they invented, revived, or imported a multitude of athletic recreations [...]. Literary critics thought of Health when they read a new book of poems; social theorists thought of Health when they envisioned an ideal society. Victorians worshiped the goddess Hygeia, sought out her laws, and disciplined themselves to obey them. (Haley 3)

Or to put it otherwise: the Victorian concern about health encompassed all areas of life, on the concrete and the abstract level and the suggested causes of illness as well as the possible cures were legion.

According to Haley, one of the Victorians’ main reasons for turning virtually every aspect of health into a topic of major interest was the obvious but also inexplicable lack of it wherever they turned, mostly due to devastating epidemics of as yet incurable diseases such as cholera, smallpox, tuberculosis and influenza, the spreading of which

was favoured by a lack of awareness regarding the importance of sanitary matters, at least in the Early Victorian days (see Haley 5-9; see also Vrettos 7-8): “[t]he constant threat of illness in the Victorian home made people conscious of their bodies, anxious to know how their bodies worked, and prepared to see a moral significance in the laws of life” (Haley 5-6). The almost obsessive discourse was centred on a particular concept of health that evolved in the course of the nineteenth century, based on the old philosophical maxim of “*mens sana in corpore sano*,” as Bruce Haley argues (Haley 4). For the Victorian,

[h]ealth [was] a state of constitutional growth and development in which the bodily systems and mental faculties interoperate[d] harmoniously under the direct motive power of vital energy or the indirect motive power of the moral will, or both. Its signs [... were], subjectively recognized, a sense of wholeness and unencumbered capability, and, externally recognized, the production of useful, creative labor. (Haley 21)

This meant that, for one, “there was a general tendency to broaden the concept of health metaphysically to suggest an integration with external, spiritual laws” (Haley 19), an integration which led to a feeling of comfort. Secondly, it implied that the healthy individual acted “responsibly within his environment” (Haley 20). Third, according to Haley, this signified that healthy man was defined by his ability to change in accord with his environment (see 20).

The mentioned, ever increasing, “moralisation” of health issues was based on the combination of the age’s (self)-improvement ethic and emphasis on work-discipline developing in the course of growing industrialisation (see, for example, Thompson; and Bailey 12 and 35) with new developments in the field of biology and medicine: physiology was finally established as a science in its own right, where the “emphasis [...] was on the wholeness of the body” and the functional interplay of the organs, instead of focussing on the individual organs (Haley 4). In addition to this more systemic general physiological approach, a “physiological psychology”, seeking out physical explanations for mental phenomena, as well as “a psychological approach to medicine” which resembled modern holistic treatment concepts, were important innovations of the time (based on older traditions, such as the ancient idea of the “temperaments” brought into a new form)², innovations which “fostered the conviction that the health of the body and that of the mind were interdependent” (Haley 4). As Wiener states in *Reconstructing the Criminal*, “Victorian physiologists developed

² The theory of the humours and temperaments left its traces on Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; therefore it will be briefly discussed in the context of my analysis of her work.

models of human functioning and particularly of mental processes that, although increasingly materialist and determinist, left an important, even decisive role for self-mastery and self-creation” (Wiener 42). However, especially from the 1860s onwards, “spiritual explanations of illness [were increasingly] being banished, explanation by general states was replaced by the principle of disease specificity (which was much less supportive of the importance of character), and the focus on internal constitution yielded to a stress on external influences, whether infectious or environmental” (Wiener 165). This development highlighted the need for social reforms and the adequate treatment of illnesses to ensure national health and, with it, socially acceptable behaviour, instead of mere moral exhortations and police control (see, for example Wiener 185). In the Mid and Late Victorian period, this trend was gathering force and thus, as a counter-trend towards the close of the Victorian Age, ideas of a sick society and the sick individual as comparable to “dam-bursting anarchy began to be replaced by [an] opposite [... image] of a disabled society of ineffectual, devitalized, and overcontrolled individuals,” and “self-discipline” began to give way to Modernist and Edwardian “self-realization” as a means of ensuring the health of the individual and society (Wiener 12).

The discussion of the implications of the possible link between physical and moral health inspired a great part of Victorian philosophical discourse, which in turn again constructed public notions of healthiness; its importance; and how to maintain or achieve it. Men like Thomas Carlyle and Herbert Spencer, John Henry Newman and Charles Kingsley all insisted on and propagated in different ways the importance of “bodily well-being” for the maintenance of mental and moral health (see Haley 21). The “muscular Christianity” of Charles Kingsley emphasised the godliness of accepting one’s vitality in a *manly* way, putting oneself to task at *manly* games (see Haley 107 and 119), an idea competing with concepts such as Newman’s (and also George Eliot’s), who insisted on the fact that “the truly healthy mind had a vital power sufficient to compensate for bodily weakness,” at least if the mind received proper practice (Haley 255). In Newman’s case, this led to the construction of the concept of the “gentleman-Christian” (Haley 21) of classical learning and healthy habits (see 95-96). Thomas Carlyle called for a return to natural vitality and intuition, envisaging health as a state of no self-consciousness apart from the mind’s awareness of itself (see Haley 71) – in the shape of an active “healthy hero” (21), sickness being a typical sign

of the “modern thinking, self-conscious, logical, speculative” individual (73). The Darwinian Spencer, finally, in trying to unify all scientific knowledge on the basis of mathematical precision (see Haley 83), arrived a concept of the “biologically perfect man” (Haley 21), whose perfection lay in (or rather: was rooted in) a body kept healthy by meticulous attention to the basic matters of hygiene (see Haley 93), which in turn formed the basis for a mind whose first and foremost priority was to acquire a groundwork of practically applicable knowledge (see Haley 90).

We can sum things up by saying that the more was known about the workings of the body and its link with the mind, the stronger was the obligation to take care of it by means of moral improvement. The reverse, of course, was also seen as true: in order to improve one’s moral state it appeared indispensable to make some changes affecting the body, for example, in one’s diet and exercise, according to the findings of physiology. The campaigns for individual moral reform, which were so typical of Victorian Britain, were thus intrinsically linked with social reform movements affecting living and working conditions and, thereby, health issues – and health itself was a patriotic duty (see, for example, Vrettos 17).

On the level of social policy, as Peter Bailey tells us, all the preoccupation with health and its maintenance were originally based on

[t]he [...] concern [...] that the diseases and misery of the new manufacturing towns would demoralise the working classes, make them easy prey for the political agitator and lead them to subversion and revolt. After 1848, the fear of the governing classes was of assault from without, more than from within[, necessitating physical fitness of the potential soldiers]. (Bailey 125)

Thus, “[i]n the 1830s and 1840s, reformers [...] talked of the Health of Towns; the capitalised imperative in following decades became the Health of the Nation” (Bailey 125). Such rhetorical figures reveal the Victorian tendency to see “society [...] as a human body [...], more specifically, an ailing body,” as which it was also increasingly represented in Victorian literature (McCormack 2) – a trend presumably set by Spencer and, especially, Carlyle, who saw society as an “organic whole,” a “collective individual,” implying that “[i]f society’s members fall out of health individually, they do so collectively as well; if the spirit of society becomes diseased or paralyzed, so will that of its members” (Haley 76). For all these reasons, there was a growing concern about matters of “rational recreation,” which included attempts at regulating people’s health, both on a mental and on a physical level, ranging from exhortations concerning people’s diet (including temperance) to the popularisation of a “new-style athleticism”

as endorsed by men like Kingsley and Matthew Arnold (Bailey 35, see also 126-129; and Haley 123-140), with the aim of inculcating a spirit of sportsmanship “to which [...] were] attributed [...] self-control, compassion and honesty” (Bailey 128), apart from that of “preserving the fitness of the national stock” (Bailey 126). The image of health (mostly defined as true *manliness*) thus became the image of the sportsman (see, for example, Haley 260-261).

Concluding, we can say that it will be of interest to compare the above views of health and sickness to the ones to be found in the primary texts. I would like to argue that both authors’ implicit constructions of health, with which unhealthy drinking is contrasted, are in keeping with the general Victorian concept of health as proposed by Haley. However, in their representations of “sick” individual and social malfunctioning in the form of problematic drinking, the authors differ in their underlying assumptions. Whereas Brontë suggests physical as well as spiritual causes for a problematic development in the characters’ drinking careers, Eliot seems to suggest spiritual or psychosocial reasons only. These differences might also have been due to varying influences from the various developments in medical science to be presented in the following section.

1.2.2. Alcohol, Drunkenness and Alcoholism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Science

In this chapter, I will outline the development of attitudes to alcohol and problematic alcohol consumption in nineteenth-century medicine. As Athena Vrettos tells us in her study of Victorian *Somatic Fictions*, it is counterproductive to restrict oneself only to British sources of medical discourse because of the “widespread exchange of knowledge within the medical community, the rapid translation and publication of influential medical treatises, and the [British doctors’] practice [...] of completing some portion of their medical training in Europe” (Vrettos 14).

As Jean-Charles Sournia informs us in his study of the *History of Alcoholism*, “[i]n the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, doctors were by no means unanimously agreed that alcohol was toxic and that it presented a danger to the human constitution” (Sournia 90). Apart from a possible favourable bias deriving from the symbolical, even Biblical, attributions to alcohol described further above, this was mainly due to the fact

that “in nineteenth-century medical practice,” “doctors valued alcohol as a therapeutic agent and had done so for hundreds of years” (Sournia 91).

The general habit of applying alcohol as a cure for virtually everything was only briefly interrupted for about twenty years in the early nineteenth century, when the theories of a certain Dr Broussais – who “based his system on his understanding of the process of inflammation and on the process of blood-letting” (Sournia 207: note 6) and was not particularly in favour of alcohol as a therapeutic agent – enjoyed some popularity among practitioners and common people alike (see Sournia 91; for more details on the theories of Broussais, see Schott, “1800-1850” 255). These ideas were then opposed by the English physician R. B. Todd, who would not believe that the body would “metabolize[...] and store[...] alcohol” if it were a useless substance (Sournia 91). Therefore, Todd insisted that “alcohol stimulated the natural healing process, reinforcing the body’s defences against disease” (Sournia 91). The popularity of Todd’s ideas among members of the medical profession continued unabated until about the year 1860, when it was discovered that most alcohol actually left the body unused and could thus not be of particularly great healing value to it; the public, however, continued to stick to Todd’s theories for much more time (see Sournia 91-92). For all these reasons, Sournia suggests that in those days, the “quantities of alcohol [...] consumed on prescription must have been enormous” (Sournia 92); and, “[s]ince the qualities of this would-be medicine were so highly praised by medical practitioners, domestic consumption was also considerable and alcohol was given to babies to stop them crying; it was also used as a remedy for period pain and indigestion, and served both as a sedative and a stimulant” (Sournia 92). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the debate over the therapeutic (and the negative) effects of alcohol became ever more heated but remained without a resolution until the middle of the twentieth century, when alcohol disappeared from the ranks of pharmacologically relevant substances with the development of more effective drugs (see Sournia 92-93).

Let us now turn to the medical debate on the non-therapeutic consumption of beverages containing alcohol:

Even within the medical profession, it was still believed [in the nineteenth century] (without any toxicological evidence to prove the matter) that fermented drink was “hygienic” and that only spirits were dangerous. This notion had been applied to beer and gin consumption by Hogarth, it was supported by Pasteur, who had worked with wine and beer drinkers, and it was perpetuated in France by those who saw wine as the country’s national product. (Sournia 90)

As regards spirits, in spite of alcohol's traditional pharmacological importance, "haben sich Ärzte zu allen Zeiten [...] gegen das Übermaß im Genuß [sic!] der geistigen Getränke ausgesprochen", as Diepgen informs us in his article "Der Alkohol in der Medizingeschichte" (Diepgen 23).

Jean-Charles Sournia's *A History of Alcoholism* provides an excellent overview over the development of different attitudes to problematic alcohol consumption and its effects throughout the centuries in various European countries. As a matter of fact, one of the main points Sournia emphasises is the very divergence of practices and opinions throughout Europe and the United States with regard to alcohol and its intake, especially so until the middle of the nineteenth century:

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, certain Western societies, or at least a few enlightened individuals, were beginning to express concern at the increasing level of drunkenness. Such a phenomenon did not occur simultaneously in every country, nor did it always manifest itself in the same way. Those concerned with the general lack of temperance were few and far between, at best forming small groups. Their concern, rather surprisingly, was based on social rather than medical grounds: drunkenness was upsetting social order in that the lower classes, thought to be the only indulgers in alcoholic excess, were becoming unruly. (Sournia 20)

While in France the "alcohol question" met with no particular interest on the side of politicians and members of the medical profession until the introduction of the enlightened concept of "public hygiene" in the 1840s, the case was different for the United States of America, Britain and also Germany (see Sournia 33 and 39-40).

In England, the "gin problem" had early drawn a few intellectuals' and legislators' attention to the problematic aspects of drunkenness. As Sournia informs us, already in 1592, Thomas Nashe had criticised "the new habit of drinking to get drunk" on gin in his work *Pierce Pennilesse* (Sournia 20). In the eighteenth century, awareness of gin-related difficulties increased, leading to their caricaturing by William Hogarth in the famous pictures "Beer Street" and "Gin Lane" (see Sournia 20-22). Authors such as Henry Fielding, who – also through his work as a criminal magistrate – "came to the conclusion that alcohol played a considerable role in the crime-ridden lives of many citizens," became equally concerned about the topic, a development which went hand in hand with governmental "attempts to restrict the sales of gin" by raising its price (Sournia 21). According to Sournia's research, it was the "era" of the mid-eighteenth century which "engendered two notions that were to become widespread in the

following two hundred years – namely that only the poor were drunkards and that drunkenness gave rise to crime” (Sournia 21).

Growing suspicions that alcohol excesses were the cause not only of social unrest but also of the extreme infant mortality rate of the period (see Sournia 21), as well as the fact that the increasing urbanisation towards the end of the eighteenth century (as a consequence of the industrial revolution) provided doctors “in hospitals” with more opportunities to observe “the effects of heavy alcohol consumption on the human body” finally led to a heightened interest on the side of the medical profession (Sournia 23). In the course of this new development, the very popular Scottish doctor John Brown, whose teachings – subsumed under the name of “Brownism” – “classed all diseases as arising either from an excess or lack of excitability (sthenia or asthenia [respectively]),” suggested that chronic drunkenness had its cause in the latter condition (Sournia 26; see also Engelhardt 265). Therefore, his proposed treatment of it was the application of substances he considered stimulants; i.e., alcohol itself and opium (see Sournia 26) – a form of treatment sounding most ridiculous to modern ears but taken very seriously at the time (see also Schadewaldt 10).

Yet, although Brown had already suggested a treatment for drunkenness, it was only the British physician Thomas Trotter who first *explicitly* considered chronic drunkenness an *illness* in its own right in 1804 and saw a real connection between some forms of physical problems and the intake of alcoholic beverages (see Sournia 23; and Schott, “1800-1850” 251):

Trotter considered the heavy drinker to be ill: “Drunkenness is an illness of unknown cause which upsets the healthy equilibrium of the body.” He also implicated alcohol as a cause of dropsy, gout, apoplexy and epilepsy. In treating the ailment, Trotter relied more on trust and determination in his patients than he did on sermons and moralizations. (Sournia 23, quoting Trotter).

Twenty years earlier, the American Benjamin Rush – also a member of the medical profession and one “father of American psychiatry” – had already written a work on the perils of excessive alcohol consumption, both on the mental and the physical level (Sournia 29). In his 1784 paper, entitled *An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body*, Rush – as different from Trotter, who put forth no explanation at all, and from Brown, who assumed physical causes for what he did not yet outspokenly consider an illness – mainly offered psychological or “moral” explanations for chronic intoxication (see Sournia 29), stating that

“[d]runkenness is the result of a loss of willpower. Initially, drinking is purely a matter of choice. It becomes a habit and then a necessity.” This notion, which sees the drinker as dependent upon his poison, is well-founded, but the treatment Rush considered necessary to effect a cure – cold baths and total abstinence – was ill conceived and gave only disappointing results. (Sournia 29, quoting Rush)

The main difference between these two medical men, and between England and the United States in general, was that, while Trotter focussed on the physical side of chronic alcohol intake, the American Rush was rather looking for moral explanations and effects thereof (see Sournia 29). It is interesting to observe that their respective suggested measures of treatment were diametrically opposed to what was their central concern in dealing with the subject.

In general, Europe, including England, but excluding France, showed a growing preoccupation with the physical instead of mental or moral aspects of drunkenness at the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Schadewaldt 10). This went hand in hand with new, more precise descriptions of symptoms which were only to be definitely causally linked to drunkenness later in the century. A good example thereof is the well-known *delirium tremens*, a phrase coined by Thomas Sutton in 1813 (see Schadewaldt 11). This *delirium tremens* was “characterized by extreme bouts of agitation” (Sournia 23). Despite the fact that

he did not recognize *delirium tremens* as a product of heavy drinking, Sutton, unlike his professional colleagues, had little time for blood-letting as an effective treatment, and proposed the administration of opium and laudanum in its place. (Sournia 23)

The gap between the respective examination of either the mental (and moral) or physical side of drunkenness began to close in 1819, the year in which the German physician Brühl-Cramer arrived at a disease concept similar to that of Trotter, which he called *dipsomania*, a term soon also used in English circles. As different from Trotter, Brühl-Cramer also found a concrete bodily explanation for the disease, assuming that people suffering from it felt an overwhelming, quasi inborn need for alcohol – and rather than the reason (as Rush had suggested), the “destruction of moral judgment” was the effect of a chronic indulgence of this urge (Sournia 26). As I would like to argue, Brühl-Cramer’s concept first incorporated aspects of both levels of contemporary medical investigation, mental and physical alike.

While the majority of physicians at the time had not yet realised or been convinced that there existed a connection between alcohol abuse and various diseases, in 1836, the

Scotsman Macnish suggested “alcohol as the cause of almost all human pathology” (Sournia 24):

He placed particular emphasis on liver damage, claiming that wine alone had no effect upon the organ (the English unfortunately drank wines fortified with brandy). One by one, he reviewed other organs affected: stomach, brain, kidneys, bladder, skin, eyes; one’s blood turned black and one’s nose crimson [...]. In addition, there were accidents associated with delirium tremens, not to mention sterility, gout, and epilepsy. Drinkers of spirits grew thin, whereas those preferring wine put on weight; all, however succumbed to premature old age and dementia. In spite of all this, Macnish [and his followers] vehemently rejected the notion of complete abstinence [...] (Sournia 24, referring to Macnish)

In 1838, a further German physician, Dr. Rösch, concluded that habitual drunkenness was “a mental illness leading to subsequent physical degeneration” (Sournia 26). According to him, only strict rules and forceful measures of restriction could keep the mentally ill drinker from falling victim to dipsomania (see Sournia 26).

The final consolidation of the medical concept of habitual drunkenness as “a discrete medical entity” (Sournia 41) – a notion which, as has been shown, had already begun to form in people’s minds throughout the first half of the nineteenth century – came in 1849, with the work of the Swedish doctor Magnus Huss, who first spoke of the condition of *alcoholismus chronicus* or chronic alcoholism (see Sournia 46). The word “alcoholism” was a new creation of Huss’s, and so was his systematic and “unifying” description of all the connected symptoms of heavy long-term alcohol abuse (Sournia 41):

[He] created a new diagnostic entity and gathered together all the medical findings on intemperance. From this time forth, doctors had to face up to the problems of drinking: alcoholism was now an integral part of medical knowledge, to be consolidated upon and expanded. But is alcoholism uniquely a medical problem? In Huss’s opinion, it was ultimately the individual who was responsible for his own behaviour, and therefore the question was also a matter of personal morality. Thus, Huss’s teaching was both moral and technical, and it was this dual emphasis that made it so influential, not only in Sweden, but in Western medicine as a whole. (Sournia 48, referring to Huss)

Basically, Huss argued that,

in the same way as [some] physical damage, mental problems observed in alcoholics were non-specific and could equally be found in non-alcoholic patients. Only in the case of patients for whom the sole pathological antecedent had been excessive long-term drinking did he hold alcohol to be uniquely responsible for insanity. [...] Huss’s emphasis on organic lesions and the necessity for a long period of intoxication led him to believe that chronic alcoholism was not hereditary and could be explained by other factors, such as poor housing conditions, bad parental example, drinking without eating and a

harsh climate. Unlike other doctors, who would continue to debate the subject for decades, Huss himself formulated no firm hypotheses, because of the lack of relevant statistics. (Sournia 48, referring to Huss)

On this basis, same as Benjamin Rush had done in the United States, Magnus Huss readily supported the work of European temperance groups and, thus, brought them to a first cooperation with the medical profession (see Sournia 48). He also developed a treatment scheme of his own by establishing “clinics that were distinct from the asylums [...], where] the forms of treatment often included hypnotism” (Sournia 48).

Magnus Huss’s work proved of great influence in Sweden and slightly later on in the century also the rest of Europe, including England, and the United States (see Sournia 49). His main achievements, apart from the systematisation of the study of drunkenness, were, for one, the fact that finally, (lower-class) drunkards came “to be treated as though they were ill rather than simply criminals” (Sournia 49) and, secondly, his above-mentioned emphasis on social factors for the development of chronic alcoholism.

Soon, many physicians followed in Huss’s footsteps, and thus, the second half of the nineteenth century saw an increase in studies of symptoms attributable, among other things, to alcoholism. For example,

[i]n 1865, Lancereaux described the flaccid, atrophic muscles, reduced reflexes and cramps of alcoholic polyneuropathy. In 1881, Gayet and Wernicke identified an encephalopathy characterized by nervous paralysis of the eyes and limbs, motor disorders resulting from cerebellar damage, speech difficulties and, on occasions, delirium. In 1881, Korsakoff described mental changes characterized by disorientation, amnesia and anxiety terminating in apathy [...]. (Sournia 77)

The cited new developments in medical science (and the propaganda work of the temperance movement, about which we will hear further down) also left their traces on the public’s consciousness. As Sournia tells us, already the year 1841 “saw the establishment of the first life assurance [sic] company to deal solely with non-drinkers,” a new development in insurance policies which clearly indicates that the Early Victorians must already have been aware “of the increased longevity enjoyed by those abstaining from alcohol” (Sournia 25). (Statistical proofs for this assumption had first been provided by the Austrian doctor F. W. Lippich (see Sournia 26).) In combination with the philosophical and popular discourse on health and society in Victorian Britain presented before, this new awareness paved the way for an acceptance of the theories of hereditary degeneration connected with alcohol which were to evolve and finally

predominate in the second half of the nineteenth century, under the obvious reinforcing influence of Charles Darwin's observations (see Finzen 27).³

In 1857, the French physician Morel published the first book dealing explicitly with the concept of hereditary "degeneration" (see Sournia 98). He argued that a great number of people to be found in asylums showed signs of a degenerative process as a result of hereditary predispositions (see Sournia 99). Those hereditary aspects, however, were in themselves results of long-term exposure to unhealthy external influences. Among those influences, he also classed heavy alcohol consumption; for Morel "[d]egeneration c[ould] be the result of alcoholism, but it m[ight] also be its cause" (Sournia 99). The idea that alcoholism was attributable to a hereditary predisposition was further developed by another Frenchman, Magnan, in the middle of the 1870s (see Sournia 100). By the turn of the century, the idea that heavy or even just average alcohol consumption on the side of the parents led to permanent damage of their offspring, whose behavioural weaknesses (caused by that very inheritance) once more increased the damage to be passed on to the next generation (with criminality, complete idiocy, insanity, incapability to work and even sterility as the final results of the hereditary process), had already gained much ground (see Finzen 28-29 and Sournia 107). Thus, alcohol and alcoholism finally came to be seen as one of the biggest threats to the (Western) race (see Sournia 107-109), with the signs of degeneration being "discovered [...] everywhere, and physical traits [taking on] diagnostic significance": a "low forehead, diminutive stature, asymmetry of the ears or attachment of the lobes were seen as proof of the condition [of degeneration]," just as "dental decay and masturbation in the young" (Sournia 99).

1.3. Facts from Everyday Life

1.3.1. Alcohol and the British Diet

As has been said before, even in the nineteenth century – until the implementation of a working sewage system – alcoholic drinks were some of only a few fluids posing no threat to health, as opposed to water or milk (see Vallee 63).

³ As Sournia says, an idea similar to that of Morel and Magnan, claiming that all damage caused by drunkenness turned hereditary, had already been put forth by Erasmus Darwin in 1794 (see Sournia 107).

Alcoholic beverages are usually classed in five categories: “beers, table wines, dessert or cocktail wines, liqueurs or cordials, and distilled spirits” (Chin and Pisoni 8). Distillation, invented by the Arabs in 700, has been in use in Europe from 1100 onwards (see Vallee 65-66). Beers are produced by fermenting grains, reaching an alcohol content of three to eight percent; wines are made by the fermentation of fruit, usually grapes, and contain about ten to fourteen percent of alcohol (see Chin and Pisoni 8-9). Dessert or cocktail wines – running under such names as “sherry, port, madeira, muscatel, marsala, and vermouth” – are wines fortified with additional alcohol (17 to 20 percent) in order to retain their sweetness (Chin and Pisoni 9). Liqueurs and cordials were originally made for pharmacological purposes by means of distillation from herbal mixtures, reaching an alcohol concentration from 20 to 60 percent. Distilled spirits, finally, are produced by the fermentation of various substances, the product of which is then distilled in a second step, without any sugar being added. Their alcohol content is the same as in cordials. The commonest types of spirits are brandy (distilled wine), whiskey (distilled from grain), rum (made out of molasses) and also vodka (see Chin and Pisoni 9-10). Drinks from all categories featured in Victorian lives and thus might appear in the fictional texts of Brontë and Eliot, all of them with different associations and functions, which will be discussed in the presentation of the texts.

In his *History of Alcoholism*, Sournia informs us that

[traditionally i]n England there was greater social variation in drinking habits than in France, where the main difference was one of quality of wine drunk. The English aristocracy and wealthy classes consumed French or Portuguese wines, French brandy or West Indian rum punch flavoured with local fruit, whereas the poor drank beer and, increasingly, gin. (Sournia 21)

A very informative overview over the various types and amounts of alcoholic drinks consumed in Britain in the course of time is provided in the article “Three Centuries of Alcohol in the British Diet” by Josephine A. Spring and David H. Buss. They claim that beer’s predecessor – ale – has been in use in England since the days of the Celts. In the fifteenth century, the addition of hops, which is the distinctive feature of beer production, was introduced (567). In the nineteenth century, around 70 to 80 percent of all alcohol consumed was beer (571), working-class people being by sheer numbers its main consumers; however, rich people also drank beer, especially for a traditional style breakfast and during outings (see, for example, Burnett 78 and 231). Spirits were never consumed in large amounts until the Restoration period; only after 1660, the use of

brandy increased, later to be supplanted by gin (see Spring and Buss 568). In Victorian times, spirits seem to have accounted for about 20 percent of all alcoholic beverages (Spring and Buss 571). Wines, table wines and particularly fortified wines, were commonly drunk in Britain from the Middle Ages, in the course of time developing into rich men's preferred drink (see Spring and Buss 569; and Sherratt, "Alcohol", 13). As a matter of fact, here "rich men" also included rich women, as Burnett's descriptions of Victorian meals show; sometimes ladies even consumed cordials (see Burnett 78-79 and 214), whereas gentlemen presumably took brandy or brandy-and-water, as in the texts discussed in this paper. All in all, wines made up about five percent of the total of alcohol consumed in the Victorian era (see Spring and Buss 571).

According to Spring and Buss (568), it was due to royal pressure from the side of William of Orange that the production of English gin was increased at the expense of foreign imports of other types of distilled liquors, and as a consequence of Queen Anne's abolishment of the brewers' monopoly, free competition led to the sale of huge quantities of cheap poor-quality gin. A subsequent ban of most street-retailing led to the establishment of the famous gin shops, caricaturised by William Hogarth. Their sustained popularity well into the Victorian age, when they began to be increasingly replaced by the so-called "gin palaces", and thus the popularity of gin itself, was partly due to

the new urban environment, [in which the] traditional rural skills, of which domestic baking and brewing were economically the most important, gradually decayed and ultimately disappeared over wide areas of the country; where they did survive – often in the households of those who could afford to employ domestic servants – it was for reasons of preference, not cost. This was, no doubt, an inevitable consequence of industrialization and the division of labour. Baking and brewing were long, tedious operations, the materials sometimes hard to come by in small quantities and the result often uncertain. (Burnett 17)

Home-brewed ale was no longer a feasible feature of the average person's life in the nineteenth century; thus, working-class people had to rely on what was provided by the nation's brewers and distillers, with a divide opening between a mostly urban preference for spirits and a rural preference for beer. Indeed, as Abel argues, throughout the gin epidemic and after, "in the countryside, work was too strenuous for farmers to cope with constant hangovers [caused by spirits], and they continued to drink the traditional, and slower acting, beer and ale" (Abel par.10). Beer thus indirectly gained a reputation as a "healthy", typically British drink, which was to stay with it at least up to the spread of the teetotal rhetoric in the second half of the nineteenth century:

Beer for [... early nineteenth-century] contemporaries was an evocative drink, and aroused a host of patriotic sentiments: John Bull and St. George, foaming tankards, contempt for the French [and their wine], agricultural prosperity, “no popery and wooden shoes” and the “yeomen of England.” It was the “good, sound, wholesome, constitutional beverage of the country.” Its patriotic connotations were symbolized in the many inn signs depicting generals, admirals, dukes and kings, and their coats of arms. (Harrison 62)

This might be the main reason why beer was not completely discarded from the more refined diet of the Victorian middle and upper classes.

However, gin and especially beer were coming to face serious competition from such newly introduced substances as tea, coffee and chocolate from the sixteenth century onwards, giving “rise to a whole set of graded consumption rituals and contextually appropriate usages, based on perceived oppositions such as those between wine and beer, tea and coffee, as well as [...] chocolate” (Sherratt, “Alcohol” 13). Among the emerging middle class, tea was being given priority over wine, since the latter was increasingly seen as a symbol of aristocratic culture (Sherratt, “Alcohol” 13). Within the gentry, tea increasingly replaced beer for breakfast and with snacks, a custom which had spread down to the working classes by the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Day 109 and 117). One might see this as the beginning of the trend to separate between the spheres of alcohol (public house) and its substitutes (mainly tea but also coffee for domestic consumption) on the level of working-class culture (see, for example, Nicholls 18). In higher social circles and the middle class as influenced by them, another kind of separation of drinking spheres became obvious; namely, a gendered one: that between tea as a “feminine” drink and alcohol as a “masculine” drink, a trend which also spread down to the “respectable” poor. As Jordan Goodman states in his article on “Ecitania”, “the Age of Enlightenment embraced a new lifestyle in which tea, coffee, chocolate and tobacco [...] played a critical cultural role” (126), with the rituals of their consumption being “used to proclaim a powerful ideology of sobriety and respectability” (127), based on such oppositions (to alcohol) as “moderation” to “excess”, “mildness” to “harshness”, “sobriety and wakefulness” to “drunkenness and wantonness” (137). They were originally consumed in “club-like and exclusively male” coffee houses (Goodman 132), but consumption soon changed “from public to domestic” (134), thereby being gendered as feminine since those non-alcoholic drinks were prepared by women who were also increasingly seen as the upholders of respectability within the family and private life, a trend which led to the Victorian ideology of domesticity and, thus, to the (more or less) separate sphere of women as

opposed to the men, who still consumed spirits but in separate rooms (see Smith 157-162) – as, for example, in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

1.3.2. Drinking Establishments

The texts to be treated in the second part of my paper contain at least some minor or indirect references to public drinking places; therefore, it is indispensable to take a look at what types of drinking establishments were to be found in those days and also what meaning – be it symbolical or just social – was likely to be attached to them (and their forerunners) in the period(s) in which the primary texts are set and in the period in which they were written. Even restraint on the authors’ side in depicting public drinking establishments could be meaningfully interpreted on the basis of the background knowledge I will try to provide in the following paragraphs.

In his highly informative study of the development of the British alehouse from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the Victorian Age, Peter Clark shows that, traditionally, there had been three distinctly different kinds of public places in England where alcoholic beverages were available to be consumed on the spot: the alehouse, the tavern and the inn, a “three-fold categorisation [which] was recognised in statute and common law from the sixteenth century in the way that premises were licensed and the legal obligations of their landlords defined” (Clark 5). We have to keep in mind, however, that for a long time “in country districts [...] the differences between kinds of premises were less marked than in towns” (Clark 5)

The first of the above-mentioned traditional drinking places, the *alehouse*, was then gradually to develop into the famous “English pub” we still know today (see Clark ix), and which, according to Clark, saw its “golden age ... [in] the *late* [emphasis added] nineteenth century” with the number of pubs “[i]n England and Wales [rising] by nearly a half between 1831 and 1881” (Clark 1). Today, our idea of the public house and the role it played in people’s life in the Victorian Age is actually fraught with clichés dating only from this final stage of its development. Regarding these stereotypical ideas about pub culture and the context within which its final refinement took place, Clark states that

[c]onventionally, th[e] late Victorian heyday of the public drinking place has been seen as umbilically linked with the rise of industrialisation and urbanisation in Western Europe and North America. Public houses and the like

have been portrayed as refuges for men escaping from the monotonous toll of factory work, from the misery of unemployment and big-city alienation; or, alternatively, as places to spend high industrial wages at a time when working men had few outlets for conspicuous expenditure. (Clark 1-2)

Indeed, it is hard to see any noteworthy difference between this description and how we tend to see British pub life even today.

However, if we restrict our associations of Victorian public drinking places to the late nineteenth-century pub itself and to the aspect of “escape and refuge” within a fully industrialised environment cited above, we will inevitably risk missing interesting implications in the mention made of them in the literary texts, which are set in periods predating this “heyday” the English pub towards the end of the nineteenth century. As Clark argues,

the study of the alehouse impinges on a number of wider issues[, ... and] the changing fortunes of the alehouse [in particular] ... shed some light [...] on the nature of the local community in *pre-industrial* [emphasis added] England; the status of women; the growth of a consumer economy; the impact of urbanisation; the effectiveness of governmental controls; and the continuing controversy over lower-class living standards, particularly during the Industrial Revolution. (Clark ix)

The differentiation between the three historical types of drinking places listed above was made according to several criteria: function(s), status and size (see Clark 5).

According to Clark, inns had traditionally been “large, fashionable establishments offering wine, ale and beer, together with quite elaborate food and lodging to well-heeled travellers” (Clark 5). Originally, from their emergence in the twelfth century onwards, inns were mainly to be found along the main streets of (market) towns (see Clark 6). The distinctive function assigned to them was “the entertainment of travellers on horseback” (Clark 6), usually “from the landed, mercantile and professional classes” (Clark 7). Therefore, a primary characteristic of typical inns (and later on also of larger alehouses, which took over some of the formers’ functions though not their status in the Victorian period), were their stables (see Clark 6-7); their “bevy of maids, tapsters, chamberlains and ostlers” (Clark 7); and – due to their ever increasing importance as centres of trade and communication from the seventeenth century onwards – warehouses, shops and post offices attached to them (see Clark 9). Before 1800, they were also regularly used as settings for “municipal activities” (Clark 9).

Taverns were also “selling wine to the more prosperous;” however, they did *not* offer “extensive accommodation” (Clark 5), which means that they were definitely

smaller than inns and had different and fewer functions. Still, they were quite equal to inns as to the prestige of their customers, despite the fact that they were sometimes associated with prostitution (see Clark 13 and Martin 66-67). Clark maintains that the characteristic of the tavern was basically the drink predominantly on offer – wine, that is –, the expensiveness of which led to taverns being mainly frequented by members of the “upper and middling ranks of society”, since wine had to be imported and was thus “beyond the pocket of poorer folk” in the Middle Ages and up to the nineteenth century (Clark 11). Traditionally, and especially so in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (despite competition by an increasing number of coffee houses (see Goodman 128)), taverns served as meeting places for various clubs, which created an associative connection between a tavern atmosphere and the arts (see Clark 13-14). In addition, they had always served as centres for doing business, exchanging useful information and just using the services of “lawyers and physicians” (Clark 13). Taverns as such did not exist any longer by 1800, most of them having been transformed into alehouses of the better kind, presumably also because “wine [...] was falling out of favour in the Hanoverian period[, ...] also because of the growing taste for spirits” (Clark 14). I am tempted to suggest that the original atmosphere of the public tavern survived in the exclusive semi-private clubs for which the Victorian era is commonly known today.

Alehouses, finally, were traditionally “smaller premises serving ale or beer (and later spirits) and providing rather basic food and accommodation for the lower orders” (Clark 5). Basically, they were the cheap version of inns without the above-mentioned stables and shops. Just like taverns, and different from respectable inns, alehouses were often associated with prostitution, with women “tout[ing] for trade at drinking establishments” (Martin 67).⁴ However, prostitutes were not the only female persons frequenting alehouses (or taverns): despite the fact that “[t]he shift in drinking from [open] public space to alehouses and taverns eroded the promiscuous mixing of ages, classes, and sexes that was a feature of the [earlier] festive drinking occasions” (Martin 61) – such as church ales (see Martin 60) –, and although “[d]rinking establishments were predominantly male space and centers for male sociability” (Martin 61), “women did have occasion to patronize *English* [emphasis added] alehouses and taverns, but they were in a minority” (Martin 62). Apart from selling their bodies, women also went there to “make[...] merry[, ...] conduct business,” to buy things, to do some matchmaking, or to seek shelter (Martin 75). It is obvious that these things hardly ever

⁴ For more on the sex business conducted in alehouses, see Martin 66-69.

occurred in the respectable atmosphere of the traditional inn and the inn-like Victorian public house of the better order.

The true *public house*, which was also with increasing frequency called by this name, came “to appear in growing numbers in London and other major centres” from approximately the 1810s onwards (Clark 273). As in the case of its forerunners, the keeping of a public house “remained above all a family business,” where “[e]veryone, the publican, his wife and children, had their role to play” (Clark 287).

However, pubs differed from their predecessors, the alehouses: they were “purpose-built”, rather large and expensive buildings – alehouses had usually been just “ordinary dwelling houses adapted for the drink trade with a limited number of alterations” (Clark 273). This change

was determined by a number of causal factors: the high level of investment by brewers in the retail trade, especially in southern England; the great surges of building activity in the late Hanoverian period; the increasing degree of magisterial regulation of premises; the major expansion of potential demand caused by demographic increase, with many more people having recourse to an often declining pool of licensed premises; and the prosperity and rising expectations of that important sector of public house custom – skilled workers and tradesmen. [...] Such forces also helped complete the steady transformation of the interior of the public house from the cramped squalor of the sixteenth-century boozing ken to a relatively attractive ambience. (Clark 275)

The interior changes included the introduction of bars and special rooms (for music and dancing or for club and society meetings) and sometimes rooms for modest accommodation and food consumption (see Clark 275-277). We might see in this a fusion of characteristics of all three traditional types of drinking places described before. From this fusion, however, there was once again derived a hierarchical order of premises, as Clark outlines: “By 1830 an informal hierarchy of public houses was evolving, largely displacing the traditional order of inns, taverns and alehouses” (Clark 278).

As to the drinks served at the public house, beer clearly remained uppermost, at least until 1830 (see Clark 292). Because of the great “rise in beer prices from the 1790s [onwards ...], spirits recovered some of their old price competitiveness” (Clark 295), especially in the 1820s and in particular drinks such as “[g]in, rum and brandy” (Clark 296), which led to the establishment of the splendid so-called “gin palaces” (Clark 296) in the 1830s and forties, which specialised on hard drinks and a cheap-yet-shiny atmosphere. Clark remarks that “[o]verall, it seems likely that the traditional

culture of heavy drinking was starting to fragment by the early nineteenth century, in the process becoming less closely linked to the respectable world of the public house” (Clark 298). By implication, we might say that heavy drinking must have moved either to the gin palace, cheap beer-shops or the privacy of the home or, perhaps, out into open space again – a development partly encouraged by the liberalisation of the drink trade and licensing procedures through the Beer Act of 1830, which initially led to an enormous increase in the number of beer-shops instead of public houses (see Clark 336). However, in the long run, these shops did not succeed at replacing the pub. Improvements in the living conditions of the working classes ensured that they returned to the more expensive public house in the course of the 1860s and seventies, which led to the above-mentioned “heyday” of the Victorian pub. Nevertheless, throughout its great time, the pub lost many of its traditional educational and entertainment functions to more specialised institutions, such as libraries and proper clubs (see Clark 337-338).

Due to the fact that their patrons were mainly recruited from the working classes, alehouses (and their successors, working-class public houses) remained – as they always had been – associated with social unrest in difficult times: they developed into centres of political activity for the lower classes and places from which to start social reforms (see Clark 256, 297 and 316). Even more so, since from the 1830s onwards, different from high Regency mores, “private as opposed to public drinking was becoming a mark of respectability [and b]y the 1850s no respectable urban Englishman entered a ordinary public house, [...] secrecy shroud[ing] the shared recreation of the different classes” (Harrison 46). Drink consumption by the middle class and the well-to-do was to be confined to the home or the semi-private club.

1.4. Drink-Related Policies and the Temperance Movement(s)

The aim of this chapter is to present a few core changes in nineteenth-century policies concerning alcohol and drunkenness and the development and spread of the temperance movement in its various forms. Any kind of legislation change in the nineteenth-century was highly debated in the newspapers and magazines of the age – as were the temperance movement’s activities and the great amount of temperance literature it

generated –, and neither of the authors discussed in this paper could possibly have avoided knowing about them and forming an attitude towards them, attitudes which per force showed in their fictional work.

As Brian Harrison informs us, the “nineteenth century saw the rise and fall of several remedies for the drink problem”, the first of which was that of “free trade” (Harrison 64). The free licensing campaign, gaining prominence “between 1815 and 1830” (Harrison 64), which was quite “influential in government circles” (Harrison 19), helped shape public attitudes to drunkenness through this influence. It was based on the assumption that principles of free trade should be used in the drink-trade legislation (see Harrison 64). For the free traders, drunkenness was “a mere symptom of an underlying social injustice [...] which could be eliminated only by indirect means. Their campaign was inspired by hatred and fear: by the free traders’ hatred of privilege and by the general public’s fear of an urban working class maddened by gin” (Harrison 64). As drinking water was still a scarce commodity in many areas of Britain even up to the 1850s, people had to turn either to tea and coffee or alcoholic drink in order to quench their thirst (see Harrison 37-38). And, so the argument of the free traders ran, since the beer brewers’ quasi monopoly on licensed premises kept beer prices artificially high and indirectly reinforced low quality standards (by adulteration in their own products as well as by making people turn to smuggled or illegally produced beverages, especially spirits), the abolishment of these monopolies would lead to improvements in matters of drink abuse (see Harrison 65):

[it would] reduce prices, eliminate adulteration and smuggling, and curb drunkenness – which flourishes only when governments bestow artificial attractions on drink. If drink [...] were] made as accessible as bread and cheese, and as cheap as wine in France, it [...] would] be taken for granted, drunkenness [...] would] fall to the French level and supply [...] would] settle down to meet demand. (Harrison 65)

Furthermore, the free traders argued that the reduction of alcohol consumption through prohibitive measures was misguided, since “it [...] was] not the business of the state to decide how much drink citizens sh[ould] consume[, f]or citizens [...] would] never be securely sober until they [...] had] faced temptation and overcome it. If temptation [...] had] not exist[ed], it would [have] be[en] necessary to invent it” (Harrison 65). This is a line of argument also featuring prominently in the discourse of Helen Huntington’s adversaries in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Activists for freeing the beer trade also

argued that freeing the trade would make people change from spirits to beer because of the tax reduction included in the 1830 Beer Act (see Harrison 77), a change for the positive, since beer was then still “eulogized [for its] temperate qualities” (Harrison 70). In actual effect, the Beer Act of 1830 mainly led to the establishment of innumerable cheap beer-shops (see Harrison 83) but did not succeed at significantly changing the amount of spirits being drunk (see Harrison 82-83). By the 1870s, the ideas of the free traders had fallen out of favour with the public, mostly due to the work of the temperance movement and agitation from the privileged classes, “complaining about the widespread debauchery the law had supposedly incited” (Mason 110). As Mason informs us,

what made the Beer Act of 1830 distinctive is not the actual debauchery it produced, but the degree to which it for many Victorians it came to symbolize a clear turning point in the behavior of the laboring people. [...] In the perception of many middle- and upper-class Britons, after 1830 the nation’s poor were never the same. A working-class culture previously centered around the home, the church, and the work-site now quite clearly found its focal point in the neighborhood beer house. (Mason 115)

Indeed, the rhetoric surrounding the Beer Act’s effects increasingly led to the assumption that, as different from the past, drunkenness in middling and upper ranks of society was declining, while it was steadily on the rise among the working classes (see Mason 117-118).

Founded in 1828 (see Harrison 19), the temperance movement, which was then basically an anti-spirits movement and was thus able to cooperate with the free traders based on their preference for beer and their emphasis on voluntarism instead of state-control, was born out of humanitarianism, with its main supporters being “women, Quakers and Evangelicals” (Harrison 94). It “appeared independently at the same time in several places”, was “only one of several contemporary attempts to propagate a middle-class style of life” (at a moment in time when, according to Harrison, “drunkenness was already becoming unfashionable” (Harrison 90-91)) and was inspired by the work of doctors such as Trotter and Rush (see 92). The first temperance activists tried to offer tea or coffee instead of alcohol during their meetings, and some of them even ventured into the manufacture of beer, seen as the temperance drink par excellence, to replace other alcoholic drinks (see Harrison 92-93). The main aim as well as instrument of their campaigns was to raise the respectability of the working class by making them denounce spirits and opt for rational, decent life-styles (see Harrison 93). Although at times supported by members of the gentry and aristocracy, the temperance

movement, and even more so the teetotal movement growing out of it, was characterised by the

social antagonism [...] between aristocracy and trade [...] and mobilized the reverence for property and the enthusiasm for thrift so widespread in both middle and working class, infused some of the nonconformist's righteous indignation, and contrasted this style of life with the image of the spendthrift aristocrat whose pension was filched from the public purse and whose lands had been stolen at the Norman Conquest or at the Reformation. [...] In the temperance movement, the respectable members of both middle and working classes united against the [feudal] aristocrat who encouraged the worst recreational tastes of the poor. (Harrison 26-27)

Thus, the temperance movement in all its stages was also strongly supported by members of the trading classes, who expected the movement to help them in creating a “disciplined work force,” which would moreover spend its income on other goods than drink (Harrison 95), especially food:

[t]he temperance movement was above all designed to alter public attitudes to diet [..., since especially in times of hunger,] people tended to buy drink instead of food, for they could not always afford both [...] drink could provide relaxation and sociability and could temporarily assuage hunger-pains. Faced with this situation, early temperance reformers aimed to switch expenditure from drink to food. (Harrison 33)

The work of the early temperance movement was also fuelled by national prejudices and imperialist rhetoric. As Harrison tells us, “[n]ineteenth-century Englishmen [...] suffered from an inferiority complex about their drinking habits” (Harrison 102), especially when compared to the French and the inhabitants of the colonies (see 102-103). According to their logic, if “an avenging God bestowed material power only in return for superior morality, Englishmen must engage in temperance reform from motives of national defence” (Harrison 103).

Originally, the main institution of the temperance movement was the moderationist British and Foreign Temperance Society, which embraced the *moderate* consumption of wine and beer in a spirit of “benevolent paternalism” (Harrison 107). Its representatives were not people who had openly suffered from alcohol-related problems themselves, but well-to-do philanthropists up to the Queen herself, who patronised it from 1837 onwards. Their main instruments in the fight against drunkenness were the pledging of new members to abstain from spirits, widely distributed tracts and contacts with the clergy of the established church, doctors and, indirectly, with politicians, but despite all this, they remained relatively powerless until the rise of the teetotal

movement (see Harrison 108-113). The movement was heavily criticised for one-sidedly agitating against the drink of one part of the poor, namely, spirits, while ignoring the primary intoxicant of the better-off, i.e., wine, and the beer of some working-class areas; for thus not really advancing sobriety; and for its emphasis on prevention rather than on “reclaim[ing] the drunkard,” because its members still thought that “drunkards were irreclaimable” (Harrison 113-114). They saw the drinker as having “failed to exert his willpower and deserv[ing] denunciation,” while the increasing number of teetotallers in the middle of the 1830s, who promoted abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, were of the opinion that “the drunkard’s will had been paralysed by alcohol and [that] he deserved sympathy” and therefore made the saving of drinkers their “leading objective” (Harrison 115), an objective achieved by providing constant help for the former alcohol-victim, “pioneer[ing] many of the remedies which have since been rediscovered by Alcoholics Anonymous” (116). These methods, which, on another level, are also alluded to in George Eliot’s “Janet’s Repentance,” included “regular meetings,” and “visitation[s],” “‘pairings off’ with reformed drunkards” and the creation of a new structure of life for the former drinker, in order to “keep the drunkard out of the drinking place, provide him with the companionship he had sacrificed, and give him a shield against the ridicule faced by any working man who tried to rise out of his station” (Harrison 115-116). The teetotal “conversion experience” for the drinking person had a religiously inspired structure, which is one reason why Janet’s turning away from drink in Eliot’s text resembles it structurally: it began with “the drunkard’s recognition of his misery,” which then led to the signing of the pledge, followed by the stage of public “recantation” in stereotyped speeches about one’s own past sinfulness (Harrison 131). The last stage was that of “justification,” in which the reformed drunkard experienced and spoke about the positive effects of his abstinence and his completely changed lifestyle, usually now centring on religion, work, charity and political activism, since at that time, recreational possibilities apart from drink were scarce (see Harrison 132). Different from the moderationist movement, the teetotal movement mainly attracted members of the crafts and trades as well as lesser-skilled workers (see Harrison 125 f.).

The period from 1834 to 1848 was marked by the conflict between moderationists and teetotallers and their diverging views on the drinker and the respective preference for the “short pledge” (forbidding the consumption of spirits) and the “long pledge,”

which prohibited all alcoholic drinks and even the offering of alcohol to others (see Harrison 127 and 143-145).

The teetotal movement had very articulate front-men, many of them themselves rescued former alcoholics, and these came to be widely known throughout Britain through the various temperance and religious magazines and, thus, presumably inspired Victorian conceptions of the reformed drunkard (of the lower classes). Harrison's biographical analysis of such prominent members of the teetotal movement gives us some insights into how the typical (reformed) drunkard was presented to his contemporaries. Temperance activists came from all age groups and usually had an urban working- to lower middle-class background (see Harrison 147-148), all of them being in everything – up to their freedom from drinking problems – incarnations of the contemporary ideal of the self-made *man*. The drunkard, also usually defined as male, by opposition, was the one refusing “to make himself a man.” Women featured as activists, but rather not as reformed drunkards, at least according to Harrison (see, for example, 174). Upper-class people, especially from the ranks of landowners, who took the pledge, were always seen as eccentric exceptions from the rule (of corruption and indifference) among their peers (see Harrison 157). The individualist teetotallers were seen as “serious-minded, afraid of laughter, hostile to horse-racing and theatres, thrifty in time, money and opportunity,” whereas the drunkard was seen as diametrically opposed to this image (Harrison 158). For obvious reasons, their political allegiances were with Radicals or Liberals, rather than with conservative Tories (see, for example, Harrison 160-163 and 280).

In the course of the 1850s, the teetotallers' attention turned away from voluntarism to legislation in a move for state prohibition, influenced by developments in American society (see Harrison 196). Once again, the main culprits for corruption were the aristocrats: “[p]rohibitionists' social pathology was conducted in terms of aristocratic corruption and oppression; a different diagnosis, which attributed drunkenness to the less creditable aspects of industrialization, could hardly be expected from an organization so heavily dependent on wealthy industrialists and ambitious tradesmen” (Harrison 222). One of the main leaders of the prohibitionist cause constructed his own “demonology” on this basis, speaking of “pleasure-loving aristocrats who encouraged working men into wrong courses – through the racecourse, the public-house, the election bribe and brutal sports” (Harrison 223), those “feudal relics” (Harrison 149). This, of course, also included the gentry as presented in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and

also applies in a different version to the middle-class persons who fuel the mob's protests against Mr Tryan's Sunday lecture at the local working-class drinking places in "Janet's Repentance."

Throughout the 1860s, the prohibitionists' pressure on the government to take legal action to counter the drink problem increased steadily and rapidly (see Harrison 247 f.). Their efforts were reinforced by growing support for the assumption that the drinker was ill rather than immoral or criminal (see Harrison 22). This led the government to "reverse [...] free trade policy and to revert in 1871-2 to the restrictive policy which had prevailed before the 1820s" (Harrison 19-20), restricting licenses and opening hours, raising fines for "public drunkenness" and forbidding children under sixteen to enter public houses (Harrison 272). Furthermore, legislation with regard to drunkards was changed: "[d]runkenness had traditionally been viewed indulgently by magistrates and was often treated as a practical, though not formal, excuse or mitigation. However, with the rise of the temperance movement, it began to be taken more seriously. Drink became perhaps the leading explanation for crime" (Wiener 78-79). Thus, "[g]iven the assumption that so much crime was related to drink and that its cravings could generally be resisted, any serious war on crime had to involve a stern attitude toward drunkenness" (Wiener 80), and drunkenness became an aggravating aspect for jurisdiction, and, indeed, a crime in itself if out in public (see Wiener 150 and 155). After government had taken the above-mentioned restrictive measure concerning the trade in drink, in the 1880s and 1890s, also because "drunkenness seemed at last to be in retreat," the drunkard came to be seen as a patient rather than a criminal (Wiener 188), a person who could not be "expected to save himself," but rather required timely medical treatment (Wiener 189). Within society towards the end of the 1870s, "[m]oral tales of individual surrenders to and triumphs over the temptation of drink began to be challenged by more determinist stories of weakened men and (increasingly) women succumbing to their pathological environments and constitutions" (Wiener 294).

With this half-triumph over free licensing, the influence of the temperance and prohibitionist movements began to decline (see Harrison 20).

The religious context of the temperance discussion presumably influenced both writers to be discussed in this paper, since both had a lively interest in religious matters. Brian Harrison tells us that, in the 1830s, "teetotalism was opposed by many religious bodies," since "[m]any religious leaders feared that teetotalism was substituting a

purely secular and ethical crusade for the reliance on divine grace” (179); thus, leading heads of most denominations were “hostile or indifferent to teetotalism” (180). This attitude is illustrated in Anne Brontë’s vicar Millward, who fiercely opposes Helen’s condemnation of all alcohol. Only in the 1850s, the Evangelical party of the Anglican Church renounced its denunciation of teetotalism, based on the assumption that “drinking customs frustrated [...] efforts for the social and religious improvement of the people” (Harrison 182). Others followed their example, and by the 1870s, temperance had become exclusively linked with Christian missions as opposed to its radical political and even atheist-materialist overtones in earlier decades (see Harrison 184-186). The early temperance movement even turned to Bible criticism and provided “glosses [...] on the real nature of the wine mentioned in the Bible, and abstruse [...] discussions were conducted on what really happened at Cana” (Harrison 186). They also argued that “the Bible message was conceived in conditions quite different from those of the modern world, and that therefore its injunctions could not be followed literally in every case” (Harrison 186). In the course of time, these arguments started to ring true even with members of religious denominations – at least as far as wine drinking was concerned – with church and pub turning “against one another” (Harrison 187). The original aversion of various religious groups to total abstinence may be one explanation why the Evangelical clergyman Tryan in “Janet’s Repentance” (though abstaining himself and helping Janet to get her drinking under control) is not shown to fight intemperance in general, although he does much to help with social problems.

1.5. Drink and Literature

Closely linked to all the information presented so far are the literary uses to which alcohol was put.

Martin’s study of the development of the relationship between alcohol, sex and gender throughout the centuries in Western Europe, covering the period from the Middle Ages to Early Modern days, provides some very interesting details on traditional alcohol-related literary motifs, motifs which were apt to occur also in the writings of Victorian authors either as clichés or for reasons of reconstruction.

One of the most frequently used alcohol-related tropes has always been that of alcohol as either a metaphor or a substitute for love and sex (see Martin 30). This was a most persisting figure, as we can see from Kathleen McCormack's analysis of *George Eliot and Intoxication*, which still influenced the period from which my primary texts date: "[a]mong nineteenth-century authors, the Romantics, whether British or American, receive most credit or blame for demonstrating two connections between intoxicating substances and literature: their role as stimuli to artistic creativity and their roles as metaphors for intense and dangerous love" (McCormack 1).

McCormack continues to outline how the typical Victorian literary attitude to intoxication evolved, based on those two Romantic tropes: presumably through their increasing fear of the social evils encouraged by drink (and drugs), the first assumption – that it stimulates creativity (and thus, by implication, effectively constructive action) – was given up. Nevertheless, McCormack observes a trend in Victorian authors to continue associating "intoxication and love;" a love, however, which is rather "dangerous, intense, possibly illicit [...] and its objects, especially women, [...] poisonous" (McCormack 2). Interestingly, the relationship between Janet and Robert Dempster, which is said to have been one of passionate love in its beginnings, is presented to us as the union of two persons dependent on alcohol; and in Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the most prominent and psychosocially poisonous drinking figure – Arthur Huntington – is also the one who arouses passionate (physical) attraction in Helen and who is sexually promiscuous.

One could perhaps sum up McCormack's findings by saying that in Victorian realism, there is a general shift of attention to the physical effects of alcohol, be they good or bad, also due to the increasing medical and temperance interest, and to the link between sensuality/sensual love and intoxication (see McCormack 2). In modernist writings, the "association [between] intoxication and artistic creativity" was taken up again, which also means that it was never really far from people's consciousness (McCormack 2).

In addition to the frequent use of drunkenness as an image for love and sensual ecstasy or as an ingredient in scenes depicting sexual encounters (see, for example, Martin 40), throughout the period studied in Martin's book, fictional texts also often featured drunken men and women in non-sexual contexts – the former being commonly portrayed as violent and the latter as unruly, disorderly and sexually promiscuous (see Martin 10 and 96-118).

Interestingly, intoxicated women were traditionally not shown drinking (alone) at home, which – as we heard before – seems to have been their general practice, but rather at taverns in groups of “gossips” (Martin 99); it seems that this only started to change from the eighteenth century onwards (see Martin 96-104). An important difference Martin observes in the traditional literary treatment of drinking men and women is that women were usually depicted as hiding their drinking from the eyes of men, especially their husbands: characteristically, “[i]n short, they had a jolly good time and got drunk but retained enough cunning to hide all traces of their unruliness” (Martin 97). Interestingly, “according to the male construction of female drinking behavior in traditional Europe, drink empowered women” (Martin 136). Furthermore it made them “disorderly” both in housekeeping and in their sexual conduct (Martin 136). However, “the disorder and violence attributed to drinking women both in works of fiction and legal cases were minimal in comparison with” that of men (Martin 137).

As to drinking men, Martin demonstrates that they were frequently shown to meet up in public drinking places in order to complain about “their wives’ behavior” and to “drown their sorrows in drink” (Martin 109). They were frequently presented employing alcohol “as an antidote to love and to women”: “[a] common theme was the use of alcohol to cure [male] lovesickness and its use as a substitute for sex” (Martin 109). Typical “macho drinking contests” and their results on community life and the atmosphere of the public drinking place also featured in literary texts (Martin 96), where “[v]isitors could accept challenges in defense of the reputations of their villages,” with “[t]he tensions resulting from this rivalry and these challenges” growing with “the loss of honor that accompanied defeat in the battle of the half pots” (Martin 111). This was often described as “chang[ing] the atmosphere of alehouses and taverns from sociable to threatening” (Martin 111). Indeed, “both works of fiction and legal cases portray drink as a factor in the violent comportment of men” (Martin 137):

[d]espite the male construction of unruly drinking women as wasting money on drink, men were the wastrels in taverns and alehouses, spending their money, wasting their time, and drinking until incapable of productive labor, while the women and children suffered at home. Such was the picture that emerged from popular literature, legal cases, and the complaints of the godly and the authorities; another way of putting it, such was the male construction of male drinking behavior. The male construction of drinking behaviour indicted men more often than women, except for sexual activity, with perhaps an equal number of indictments. (Martin 137)

However, “[u]nlike [Germany], the consensus in England, France and Italy was that drink affected men and women in the same manner” (Martin 119): both would overstep their boundaries “in acts of violence” and sexual comportment (Martin 119), either as likeable “[g]ood fellows and shrewish wives” (Martin 120) or with the men as brutes, perpetrating domestic violence (see Martin 128-133).

All the above were traditional representations which were at the disposal of the Victorian writer, who would employ them as motifs within the confines of Victorian realism and the ideology of domesticity. Generally speaking, representing drunkenness was indispensable within the realist spirit of the age: “[t]he realist aesthetic of the period also contributes to the popularity of references to drinking and drug taking” (McCormack 2). Realist writers tried to represent society and human beings as they were, and in the England they wrote about, they were seemingly often enough indulging in alcoholic drinks, up to the point of real drunkenness (see McCormack 2). Thus, we can say, that the fact that writers, even if they were “respectable” women, presented drunkenness in their stories does not come as a surprise. An interest in all the physical and mental states of the individual – its health and sickness – was of utmost importance to the age, as we have said before. This point is also made in Geoffrey Sill’s study on the origins of the English novel. Basically, he argues that the novel was invented as an instrument of curing the human passions: “[t]he art of regulating the passions requires some understanding of their nature,” and thus they had to be studied in detail in works of fiction (Sill 1). In the context of the Victorians’ obsessive discourse on health and physiological psychology, this study of human nature had to include all aspects that physically influenced the mental state of the individual – such as drink, drugs and medicines, for example. As Athena Vrettos says, “fictions of illness make their appearance in multiple and shifting areas of Victorian thought. It is difficult to find many Victorian novels that do not participate in a general dialogue about sickness and health, whether through sustained representations of physical affliction and exertion or passing metaphors of bodily sensitivity and threat” (Vrettos 1). For all these reasons, one is led to expect great detail in the depiction of the physical and mental effects of drunkenness and its accompanying diseases in Victorian works of fiction.

What has been said so far about the health of the individual was also true for speaking of society, which Victorians tended to represent “not only as a human body, but an ailing human body” (McCormack 2). Drunkenness, which I have shown to have

been a topic of great public interest, partly because of the work of the temperance movement, was such a problem of the social body (usually, as has been said, perceived in the working-class organs thereof), and as such had to be studied and represented as well – of course with the objective of reformation in mind (see also Sill 3; Vrettos 3).

Furthermore, alcohol and the places of its consumption also had a literary history as political and social markers. As Susan J. Owen outlines in her essay on “The Politics of Drink in Restoration Drama,” to be a Tory traditionally meant to indulge in alcoholic drink, whereas the Whig (and later the Liberal) was defined by his sceptic (or hypocritical) abstinence from such beverages (see Owen 43-44), associations kept alive in the rhetoric of the temperance movement. In addition to that, as has been said before, the various drinking establishments all carried their range of connotations concerning their uses and clients. As attitudes to (middle-class) drinking changed in the course of the nineteenth century, so did the functions of the drink setting. As respectable (middle-class) life withdrew from the taverns, inns and coffeehouses to the private or semi-private sphere of the club and home, so the associations of the drinking establishments must have changed. As has been said before, a Victorian middle-class man drinking at a pub was *per se* a breach of the rules of respectability. From all this and from what has been said about Victorian attitudes to health and temperance, we can infer that in Victorian days, drinking, and especially public drinking, by men increasingly took on the function of indicating a lack of respectability or an overt conservative or working-class political statement – and as such an indicator it could also be employed in the literary writings of the time.

In the case of women, this must have been seen differently, since women in themselves were defined as the keepers of standards of respectability. By implication, a woman who drank must have been seen as a woman refusing to fulfil her natural duties as “the modern bourgeois subject” (Vrettos 10), in a way different from but related to the traditional representations mentioned above. However, woman’s use of intoxicating substances was not only part of the realist agenda or a signifier of a breach of natural and domestic rules in an act of (misguided or unconscious) rebellion; rather, according to Infantino, the female addict has also always played a another crucial role in literature: that of the “sin-bearing” victim that “lends unity and definition to the greater community” (Infantino 91).

Although not always literally murdered, the female characters in representations are made to undergo spiritual and corporeal effacement, trials and treatment by one or more others reducing them to a debased and somewhat dehumanized status

by virtue of a process of addictive dependency. The term “addiction” is intended here in its largest sense: a subject’s induced physical and/or psychological attachment to the influence of an external agent. (Infantino 92)

The woman must “experience death or its analogies before attaining the ultimate freedom of relinquishing herself to yet another role assigned by her savior and his community” (Infantino 93). To my mind, Janet Dempster’s story is a very good example of this traditional literary use of the female addict figure, with Janet originally being the sin-laden, drinking representative of an older form of society to be saved from drink and the remnants of a feudally-inspired past – as incorporated by her husband, the other addict-victim, who has to die – by her saviour, Tryan. Interestingly, a similar role is ascribed to Anne Brontë’s Arthur Huntington – it seems that, here, alcohol-based intoxication offered the opportunity for a gender-role reversal within the old motif of the addict – presumably simply because the drunkard was stereotypically defined as male in the public’s consciousness.

2. THE TEXTS

2.1. Anne Brontë: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

2.1.1. The Author’s Background Relating to Alcohol

“Presently the door opened cautiously, and a head appeared. It was a mass of red, unkempt, uncut hair, wildly floating round a great gaunt forehead; the cheeks yellow and hollow, the mouth fallen, the thin white lips not trembling but shaking, the sunken eyes, once small, now glaring with the light of madness, – all told the sad tale but too surely” (Barker 566, quoting Grundy 91). These are the words of Francis Grundy, recalling the last occasion on which he saw his long-time friend, Branwell Brontë, who died only a short time afterwards, on 24 September 1848, from the physical effects of his addiction to alcohol. Approximately three months before, the first edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* had been published by T. C. Newby: Anne Brontë had written her book on the disastrous consequences of debauchery and alcohol consumption while

witnessing (and being inspired by) the final decline of her brother, whose real-life end was thus tragically anticipated by the literary death of Arthur Huntington (see Leaver 228-230). The crucial difference between Arthur Huntington and Branwell was that the latter found his way back to the Christian God in repentance of his sins at the very last moment (see Barker 567-568). In addition to her observation of Branwell, a further source of Anne's inspiration was the story of "Mrs Collins, a formerly abused wife who had managed to preserve herself and her children after her husband abandoned them" (Colón 21); this husband also was a notoriously violent drunkard, whom Patrick Brontë had recommended Mrs Collins to leave for good (see Barker 341-342 and 530).

However, the Brontë siblings' knowledge about and some attitudes to alcohol and intoxication reached further back, even to their childhood. The much-cited stories, plays and chronicles (mostly set in the imaginary countries of Gondal and Angria), which the four young Brontës produced from a very early age on, show the signs of strong influences from two very different major sources, which both contained abundant references to alcohol and also its abuse. On the one hand, there were the classics and the famous literary *Blackwood's Magazine* (see Barker 166). According to Juliet Barker, the children were particularly fascinated by one section of the journal entitled "Noctes Ambrosianae," which recorded the proceedings and talks of the "members of an informal drinking club [...] at Ambrose's Tavern, Elysium" (Barker 149). To these, Barker traces back "the conversational style and tavern setting of many of [the young Brontës'] writings" (Barker 149). The original fascination with drink was obviously still increased by the children's direct and indirect knowledge of Romantic poetry and its writers, especially Lord Byron and his companions. Regarding Anne Brontë, Stevie Davies claims that even her novels, especially so *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, still echo the children's "[a]ddictive childhood reading of Moore's life of Byron, with its account of wild Regency womanizing, gaming, shooting, carousing, and those more recondite pleasures of sacrilege exemplified in dressing as monks and drinking from 'a human skull filled with burgundy'" (Davies, Introduction viii). Undoubtedly, such descriptions leave a strong impression on the minds of children and teenagers. Their importance, especially in the shaping of Branwell and Charlotte's childhood heroes (see Barker 155), is also underlined by F. B. Pinion (see Pinion 45). Newspaper reports on life in London and foreign countries also left their traces, for example, in the description of the capital Great Glasstown with its "fashionable aristocratic society [...] and its low life haunting the inns in the manner of pre-revolutionary France" (Barker

155). Summing things up, Barker maintains that the young Brontës' writings showed an obsession with drunkenness, especially also with its use as "the backdrop to creativity" (Barker 166).

Furthermore, there were the Bible, which has been quickly discussed in my introduction, as well as the Methodist magazines and tracts owned by the children's aunt, Elizabeth Branwell, who was at least partly in charge of their education and was of particularly great importance for Anne's moral and philosophical development (see, for example, Talley 127). This is demonstrated once again by Juliet Barker, who emphasises the slight degree of ridicule with which the elder children (especially so, Charlotte and Branwell) regarded their deceased mother's and aunt's religiously edifying journals (see, for example, Barker 146), and Melody J. Kemp, in her article on *Tenant*, makes clear the decisive difference in attitude between Anne and the other Brontës with reference to these texts:

Although Anne Brontë cannot be labelled a "Methodist", many of her religious beliefs were compatible with Methodist doctrine, and she shared the Wesleyan antipathy for [Calvinist] Predestination – a doctrinal stance that was undoubtedly integral to her beliefs about character. The belief that some men are unconditionally predestined to salvation and that others are predestined to damnation not only denies free will but also implies that character is predetermined. [...] Charlotte Brontë's use of phrenology further [...] shows] that she believed character to be predetermined; Anne Brontë, on the other hand, believed that character could be self-determined. (Kemp 196)

The said journals typically contained accounts of how believers overcame their weaknesses – including drinking problems (see Kemp 197).

As far as Branwell Brontë's drinking career is concerned, Juliet Barker's reconstruction thereof is presumably the best one extant. Branwell is usually characterised as a sanguine personality, "delicate [and given to] outbursts of temper" (Pinion 45), and he is said to have been, like his siblings, of an extremely vivid imagination that sometimes confused his sense of reality (see, for example Barker 154). Since surviving autobiographical comments by Anne Brontë are scarce, we have to rely mainly on her sister Charlotte's description of Branwell's deathbed in a letter to William Smith Williams, her confidant at the publishing house of Smith and Elder, in order to get an impression of the family's general attitude to him:

Branwell was his Father's and Sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since Manhood, the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, await his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled, to experience despair at

last; and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career.

[...] There is such a bitterness of pity for his life and death – such a yearning for the emptiness of his whole existence as I cannot describe – I trust time will allay these feelings. (Manuscript letter from Charlotte Brontë to William Smith Williams, 2 October 1848. As quoted in Barker 568.)

Closer analysis of this passage reveals the main attribute of Branwell in his family's eyes to have been that of "absence" in several senses of the word: he was frequently absent from the places he was supposed to be in and from the social functions he was expected to fulfil; furthermore, he himself appeared to be "empty": the feelings and ambitions he was expected to have he did not have – at least according to his sister's view. I am tempted to say that it was this image of Branwell's "emptiness" that helped shape Anne Brontë's rather "empty" Arthur Huntington (a similar idea is put forth in Davies, Introduction xvi and xviii).

2.1.2. The Text

For a short time, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*⁵, which was first published in 1848, enjoyed a quite surprising success with the Victorian reading public. On the other hand, most of the literary reviews it got were rather stern and negative – due not so much to matters of style but rather to Anne Brontë's daring choice of topic and "her decision to depict vice so graphically" (Barker 564).⁶

In the author's 1848 preface to the second edition of the novel, we find some preliminary allusions to its dominant themes – male licence and debauchery –, as Stevie Davies points out in a footnote on the interplay of two different types of metaphors Brontë uses to describe the respective spheres of the male and female author and the differences in their way of finding out essential truths (see Davies, Notes 492, footnote 3). While the former is most "romantically" compared to an almost heroic, adventurous "diver," who brings up from the bottom of a muddy well the jewel of truth *he* is to present and defend, the latter is likened to a cleaning lady keeping up order in a bachelor's flat and thereby eliciting reproach "for the dust *she* [emphasis added] raises"

⁵ The unconventional punctuation of Brontë's is kept in Davies edition and my quotes from it.

⁶ For examples of the contemporary reviews, see: Jacobs 217-219, and Barker 563. Juliet Barker continues to inform us that "[d]espite – or possibly because of – the reviews" the book "sold extremely well" (564), leading to the publication of a second edition, only six weeks after the first, to which Brontë added her famous preface, which is discussed above.

(Brontë 3). As Davies argues, the said cleaning women are the objects of scorn “because they reveal [and deal with] the filthy conditions in which privileged males live” (Davies, Notes 492, footnote 3). And this is exactly what Brontë is about to do in her novel, at times in a most brutally realist fashion, spiced up with some Gothic elements.

The preface not only reveals Brontë’s view of her own work, but also alludes to the function as a sincere chronicler of events and defender of faith and a new kind of social order driven by middle-class values of self-improvement, of a “domesticated gentry,” which Helen Huntington is to fulfil within the text (Wagner 119; see also Hyman 451 and 464). Furthermore, Helen’s “word builds on the Word [i.e., the Bible]” (Davies, Introduction xiii), a fact that makes her the text’s representative of Christian virtues, together with her brother and the reformed Gilbert Markham. Her story is that of an intelligent and independent-minded but sadly inexperienced young woman who – partly out of idealist, domestic delusions (see Davies, Introduction xxvi-xxvii) – marries Arthur Huntington, a man who, not without the aid of a number of “jolly companions in debauchery,” develops from a careless sensualist to a disgusting, though indeed essentially boring family tyrant and chronic drunkard. When Helen finally escapes from her married home in order to save her son, Arthur junior, from his father’s bad example and dangerous indulgence, she ends up living incognito at her maternal home, Wildfell Hall. This hall is situated in the rural home area of Gilbert Markham. The latter’s narrative, presenting the development of his (finally requited) feelings for the heroine and the conservative environment’s incredulous to hostile reactions to her, frames Helen’s diary account of her previous engagement and disgusting married life. When Helen returns to her husband to nurse him through the last stages of his alcoholic decline, her experiences with him are reported in letters incorporated into Markham’s story, which ends with a short account of his and Helen’s married life together after her husband’s shocking death.

2.1.3. Room for Alcohol

Already on the first pages of the novel, Anne Brontë skilfully establishes the atmosphere as well as the ideological, social, spatial and temporal limits within which alcohol will predominantly “take its place” in the course of the novel.

2.1.3.1. The Broader Social Context

In the introductory letter to his friend, the “old boy” Halford (Brontë 9), for whom the subsequent story, including the copy of the female protagonist’s diary, is intended, the first narrator, Gilbert Markham, introduces us to his jocular style, well suited to his role as “the respectable Victorian husband, father, and landowner, looking back in 1847 on the wild days of his Georgian youth” (McMaster 353). As McMaster tells us, Anne Brontë presents us with a “period commentary, a Victorian view of certain dominant manners and mores of the preceding generation,” since “[t]he Victorians were fond of defining themselves by contrasting their values with those of the Regency and George IV” (McMaster 352-353). As Tamara S. Wagner argues, Anne Brontë’s *Tenant* is firmly linked to the so-called “silver-fork, or fashionable fiction,” capitalising “on the attraction of a once culturally dominant aristocracy” while “re-view[ing] the introduction of bourgeois values into [it]” (Wagner 118). Brontë’s means of establishing a contrast between those propagated bourgeois values and the still feudally-inspired society she portrays are Helen’s contributions to discussions and her diary where, according to Carnell, she “allows her heroine, Helen Huntington, to speak out in the manner of the exceptional eighteenth-century woman writer and to make broad claims about nature, culture, and education: Helen thus emblemizes the rationality of the public sphere” (Carnell 10).

Within the Regency setting presented and commented on by Enlightened (proto-Victorian) narrators, the text is mainly preoccupied with characters coming from the leisured gentry or, like Gilbert Markham, from the orders of yeoman farmers and other country gentlemen. As Carol A. Senf says,

Brontë’s novel could accurately be described as the portrait of an age rather than of one individual, and the characters she paints represent almost every kind of individual who might inhabit the English countryside during the third decade of the nineteenth century: aristocrats like Lord Lowborough, members of the gentry like Huntington and Hargrave, commercial newcomers like Ralph Hattersley. (Senf 450)

Even those characters in the novel who do not come from a true leisured-class background are nevertheless presented in this light, usually shown only in their leisure time – and, with the exception of Markham’s work on the farm, which is, however, for the main part managerial, and Helen’s painting, regular professional work simply does not feature as a topic of explicit interest in *Tenant*. This also holds true for the servants portrayed in the text. Their work as such is not a focus of interest. Although their

various activities are mentioned, and although Helen's maid, Rachel, is somewhat more than a mere cipher in the novel, it is social interaction with and the question of appropriate non-condescending, polite behaviour towards servants which lends any interest to the services they are shown to be performing, as in the scene where Arthur (under the effects of alcohol) is swearing at his butler for no good reason (see Brontë 254) – an “archetypal example[...] of ungentlemanly behaviour,” as Thormälén tells us (Thormälén, “Villain” 837). Apart from using them for these kinds of contrasts between characters' decency and indecency, the servants' situation as a type of professionals is not at all represented.

Markham begins his account by taking us back to the year 1827, in a description which does not differ much in tone from the other short references to his situation exactly twenty years later at the beginning and end of the book. Thus, it is rather surprising that Markham himself declares his tale to be an “old world story” (Brontë 10), implying that times have indeed changed, a view which contemporary readers would doubtlessly have shared. The discrepancy between tone and message might of course be reasonably explained by referring to Jacobs's argument that the male narrator is “a mature man only half aware of the extent to which his younger self was ridiculous” (Jacobs 221)

The male narrator's idea that he is handling an “old world story” is taken up again in the said opening chapter, in which he immediately refers to a persisting conflict between his own youthful ambitions and the “good old way” represented by his father, who “thought ambition was the surest road to ruin, and change but another word for destruction, [and] would listen to no scheme for bettering either my own condition or that of my fellow mortals” (Brontë 11). By contrast, the reader is repeatedly shown that Gilbert, already quite educated, is a man given to some degree of further self-education in such fields as science, in part also for the sake of universal progress: in the first chapter, he remarks that if he “devote[d] his talents to the cultivation of [his] farm, and the improvement of agriculture in general,” he would also “benefit [...] mankind at large” (Brontë 11). Thus, we are indirectly made to see Markham as a representative of an emerging individualist bourgeois consciousness in an age of growing social mobility, which is at conflict with the hierarchical rural community still extant but already on the decline in the period he writes about.

The idea of an old, conservative, feudally-inspired world already almost dead, in an advanced state of decay and fragmentation, is reinforced by Gilbert's description of Wildfell Hall at the beginning of the second chapter:

Near the top of [the] hill, about two miles from Linden-Car, stood Wildfell Hall, a *superannuated* [emphasis added] mansion of the Elizabethan era, built of dark grey stone, – *venerable and picturesque* [emphasis added] to look at, but, doubtless, *cold* and *gloomy* [emphasis added] enough to inhabit, with its thick stone mullions and latticed panes, its time-eaten airholes, and its too lonely, too unsheltered situation, – only shielded from the war of wind and weather by a group of Scotch firs, themselves half blighted with storms, and looking as *stern* and *gloomy* [emphasis added] as the Hall itself. [...] [B]efore it [...] was a garden, – once, stocked with such hardy plants and flowers as could best brook the soil and climate, and such trees and shrubs as could best endure the gardener's torturing shears, and most readily assume the shape he chose to give them, – now, having been left so many years, untilled and untrimmed, abandoned to the weeds and the grass, to the frost and the wind, the rain and the drought, it presented a very singular sight indeed.(22-3)

Stevie Davies also emphasises this passage of the text, regarding which she notes in her introduction that “the hall [...] is the decayed relic of an outworn patrician class, whose armorial bearings dominate the church but whose pretensions are mocked by the recrudescence of mansion into moor” (Davies, Introduction x), in an attempt of Brontë's to take the mystery out of Gothic: “[i]t is simply dilapidated, damp and unwelcoming” (Davies, Introduction xi). For obvious reasons, Davies interprets the mansion and plants representing “[n]ature, ‘tortured’ to an art which represents nature (the boxwood swan, the lion) [...] in process of reverting to nature” as a metaphor for the fate of “a dynasty which has died out, subverted by nature” and an allegory of “human aspirations [...] in process of recrudescence, paralleling the disintegration in the ethical sphere of the novel” (Davies Notes 495, footnote 5). Yet, there is even more to this scenery. I would like to argue, it is about one of the most direct, though symbolical, comments on the state of Early Victorian society to be found in the whole novel. It does represent the disintegration of a whole worldview: the gentry and aristocracy as a whole, which were once seen as the upholders of order and morality, are on the decline, leaving behind a wasteland of disorientation. From outer structures, responsibility has been transferred onto and into the individual. The traditional organic view of the world – so typical for the Renaissance, of which the *Elizabethan* hall is an apt indicator – has finally fallen away almost completely. The only remnants of these good old feudally-inspired days are the dilapidated mansion itself and, perhaps, Reverend Millward, who shares several attributes with the *stern*-looking hall and the mentioned gardener, among

them brutal (rhetoric) force in cutting people to purpose – Millward interestingly also being the “patron” of the traditional national drinks, beer and ale, the so-called “malt liquors” (Brontë 19). Thus, we can conclude that alcohol takes its place in a social sphere and age of confusion, where such gardeners do not perform their work any longer, and where no grey stone citadel incorporates universal order in an increasingly diverse and, thus, weakened community – there are, by implication, no more hardy (British) plants in the narrator’s world. New values have to be found, as Gilbert does find them in Helen, the one reinvigorating a part of the old mansion, in a spirit different from its feudal heritage. The middle-class spirit in which she does this, as an emerging professional artist, is clearly described in chapter 44: “I know that I am paying my way honestly, and what little I possess is legitimately all my own” (Brontë 393). The old structures are taken over by a system of middle-class work-ethic and renewed Christian morality.

2.1.3.2. The Settings

So far, I have established the broader social, temporal and ideological frame in which drinking occurs. Let us now turn to the concrete scenery. As has been said, the setting of the novel is almost exclusively rural, and glimpses of and references to society life in London are rare. Within both these two different spaces – the rural and the urban –, the actual acts of drinking and drunken behaviour only occur in a closely circumscribed, almost claustrophobic, environment in various senses of the word. For one, we only encounter them in indoor settings; and, what is more, they never occur in public (i.e., in the presence of strangers) – the circle of witnesses, apart from the occasional servant, are usually of almost equal social standing and quite well-acquainted with one another, spending time together at various private houses or semi-private clubs. Indeed, one is tempted to say that the text’s rural spaces consist of private houses only: although we learn on page 61, with reference to Rose Markham’s social habits, that Markham’s farm cannot be too far from a larger village or small town, and despite the fact that necessary aspects of local infrastructure are occasionally mentioned, village (or small town) life does not once feature in the text. The same holds true for the area around Grassdale. The few urban sites mentioned are likewise treated like private “enclosures” – at least in those contexts where any attention is drawn to the consumption of alcohol, something which does not explicitly happen during Helen’s attendance of London balls.

The given characteristics of the private indoor drinking settings are sparse indeed. About the Markham's parlour we only learn that it must be rather spacious, containing more than one table, usually has a cheerfully blazing fire and contains "good old solid oak" furniture "that [shines] like polished ebony" (Brontë 12). It also holds a piano (see Brontë 41). The atmosphere appears cosy and comfortable, an image of ideal respectable domesticity. The indoor settings at Grassdale, usually either the dining room or the drawing room, in which the members of the rich gentry consume their spirits or "show off" their intoxication, are likewise none too excessively described, to say the least. From the description of Grassdale Manor, as seen from without through the eyes of Gilbert Markham in chapter 52, one can infer that the interior must be as splendid as the whole estate: Grassdale Manor is "a stately mansion in the midst of [...] expansive grounds" (Brontë 469). Yet, the only elements of furniture which are repeatedly mentioned in an "alcoholic context" in Helen's diary are sofas and ottomans, especially when Arthur Huntington, drinking or having drunk on his own, is lounging on them like a cliché woman invalid; but even on those occasions, no particulars about them are given (see, for example, 224 and 255). Thus, we can only say that alcohol there takes its place in a scenery of luxury where there is an emphasis on those articles of the furniture that signify repose.

The London club at which Arthur Huntington and his friends regularly meet is not depicted in detail either, although it is mentioned several times. This is, presumably, for one part due to the female narrator's lack of personal experience of such surroundings. Her knowledge of it stems exclusively from her husband's accounts. Where there is any mention of the "club" in a spatial sense – and most of the time, the usage of the word "club" in the text seems to denominate a social rather than spatial entity – in Helen's perception it is even somehow equated with London as a whole (we never hear of the Huntingtons' private rooms in London). In the following example, which compares decent "rural domesticity" and sinful or at least unhealthy city life on an occasion when Arthur Huntington tries to dissuade his wife from staying with him in London (too long), we learn that the town is in itself no healthy place, which seemingly contaminates "pure" country people who go there: "[h]e [...] said there was no need of much preparation, as he should not be staying for long, for he did not wish me to be Londonized, and to lose my country freshness and originality by too much intercourse with the ladies of the world" (Brontë 216). There is no more to London than its detrimental social life. The same idea is reiterated on page 225, where Helen thinks

about her Arthur, “confined amid the dust and smoke of London, – perhaps, shut-up within the walls of his own abominable club.” The town is a place of vice and dirt, and it is there that the men assemble to make merry and drink, when they do not unite at Grassdale. What is furthermore worth noticing is that the club is at least once called the gentlemen’s true “home,” as different from the places where their wives and families live (Brontë 188) - and indeed, according to Arthur’s first account of his and his friends’ London life, they seem to spend every single day at this substitute home (see Brontë 187-196).

The only occasion on which truly public drinking places – more precisely: multifunctional inns – are mentioned is in the account of Markham’s hasty journey to Grassdale Manor and Staningley. All we hear is that he changes transportation at an inn (463), on which a gig driver working there as an ostler merely comments that it is better “in comfort and freedom, though inferior in outward respectability” (469) than his former workplace with the gentle but impoverished Hargrave family. From this we can infer that what the text calls an “inn” is no longer seen as the meeting place of respectable people. A further inn is mentioned in passing, and yet again the only function it is assigned is that of a place of accommodation and refreshment (see Brontë 471-172). No drinking or drunken customers are shown. Thus we can say that those public places explicitly built for the consumption of alcohol do not feature as such in the text at all. They are only represented by those very functions which have *not* to do with alcohol. According to the construction of the text, drinking is, thus, only an act of private or semi-private space, always performed in seclusion – at least for members of the middle and higher classes.

2.1.4. Drinking

Throughout *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, drinking procedures are for the main part at least to some degree ritualised. This is true for both the rural, proto-“middle-class” setting of the first part of the novel and the circle of the landed and even aristocratic members of society we are made to observe in the second part. The only character shown to depart from the quasi-ritualised drinking in groups is Arthur Huntington, when he is alone with his wife.

In the case of the rural “middle-class” and genteel community surrounding and including the Markhams, drinking alcoholic beverages is regarded and practised as an integral, customary aspect of social gatherings – as such it is spoken of by the various people discussing Helen’s attitude to drink and as such we see it performed. In the process, hardly any differentiations based on gender alone seem to be made. The first such instance occurs when Helen first visits Linden-Car. The women of the house almost urge cake and the accompanying wine onto both Helen and her child. Their refusal thereof is seen as shocking and ridiculous, *especially* so little Arthur’s shrinking from “the ruby nectar [...] in terror and disgust” (Brontë 30). This already clearly demonstrates to what extent the consumption of alcohol by virtually everybody, even children, is seen as normal (see Brontë 31). This does not only hold true for light drinks such as wine, or the home-brewed ale so strongly appraised by Mr Millward (see Brontë 41 and 97), the vicar, who is accordingly offered a “china jug of [the] best ale” produced under the close supervision of the lady of the house (Brontë 41), but also for spirits, even the contested gin: the reader is made to see Mrs Markham handing “a smoking tumbler of gin-and-water to Mrs Wilson, who affirmed that wine sat heavy on her stomach, and whose son Robert was at that moment helping himself to a pretty stiff glass of the same” (Brontë 42). The only observable difference here, as elsewhere in the text, is that the women are usually served by their hosts, whereas the men generally serve themselves.⁷ This last aspect is indeed based on gender, not on social standing or age, since even the eminent vicar pours out the ale for himself “in a long stream, skilfully directed from the jug to the tumbler, so as to produce much foam without spilling a drop” (Brontë 41); and Mr Lawrence is not offered a further glass but the whole bottle, in order to serve himself (see Brontë 43).

Arthur Huntington and his companions in debauchery also seem to drink according to a specific group ritual, differing from the above characters insofar as they explicitly assemble in order to consume drinks – their drinks do not accompany meals nor are they used for celebrations. Thus, drinks are disconnected from any special external cause for their intake; their consumption becomes almost a “ritual” in its own right, for the purpose of which the men assemble. The drinking ritual is never presented directly, since the narrator has no chance to observe it, yet some aspects can easily be inferred

⁷ This observation, however, is only valid for alcoholic drinks. Tea and coffee are *always* served to the men by a female host, although the further modifications – the addition of sugar and such like – is often left to the male individual after he received his cup from the respective woman.

from the accounts given by Arthur himself. Davies calls Arthur and his friends the “fraternity of the bottle” (Davies, Introduction xvii).

No matter where, be it in London or on the country estate, the men prefer to drink in the seclusion of “a room of their own,” although they often leave that enclosure when they have reached a certain level of intoxication. While the women withdraw to the drawing room, *they* stay behind in the dining room, by implication assembling or remaining in a sort of circle around the table, same as in their club meetings described in chapter 22. Depending on the state the individual is in, he serves himself or is served by one of the others, either wine, port or brandy-and-water, and sometimes even gin, as we hear in chapter 41 (Brontë 370). As Hyman observes in her article on Arthur Huntington’s gentlemanly drinking habits, he (and by implication his friends) – as a representative of the gentry – thus, by drinking gin aligns himself “with that other ‘leisured’ class, the other site of gross corporeality, the unemployed poor” (Hyman 460).

Since it is only on occasions where one character is already too drunk or – as Lowborough frequently seems to be when he still joins the group, before he forswears all gambling and drinking – too distraught to cater for himself, being served one’s drink is unfailingly recognised as an indication of unmanly weakness in the recipient. The mock-maternal behaviour and words accompanying such “supportive” acts underline this. A good example thereof can be found in Arthur’s first account of club life, where Lord Lowborough’s progression from an addiction to gambling to alcoholism is presented. After a devastating loss at gambling against Grimsby, Arthur takes “him home – that is, to our club – for he ... [is] submissive as a child, and plie[s] him with brandy and water till he beg[ins] to look rather brighter – rather more alive, at least” (Brontë 188):

“We meant it in kindness – we couldn’t bear to see the poor fellow so miserable: – and besides, he was such a damper upon us, sitting there, silent and glum, when he was under the threefold influence of the loss of his sweetheart, the loss of his fortune, and the reaction of the last night’s debauch; whereas, when he had something in him, if he was not merry himself, he was an unfailing source of merriment to us.” (189-90)

The men assembled around a table – on which are the glasses, bottles and other utensils needed for preparing various drinks (see Brontë 188 and 190-191) –, sometimes mimic parliamentary sittings, everyone making his contribution in the form of toasts, speeches or songs; this allusion to parliament is made explicit in the exclamation “[h]ear, hear!

Lowborough's going to give us a speech" (see Brontë 190-191). It is also for this reason that I said before that the club procedure seems to mock the *symposion* of Greek antiquity, where the representatives of civic society assembled in order to celebrate their (political) brotherhood.

It is not surprising that, considering its mock "debating" character and its exclusive seclusion, the round of men also refers to itself as a "society" with its own set of rules, to which its members have to stick or be expelled (Brontë 192). On the occasion of the club meetings, only Lord Lowborough's drinking is presented in some detail: he usually takes drink in greedily but almost in passing, trying to escape observation (see Brontë 191). On one occasion, like in a premeditated ritual, all the other men "push[...] up their glasses to him, and [...] set them in a semicircle" in front of him, while Huntington supportively pats him on the shoulders (Brontë 193). In the end, Lowborough even drinks from the bottle itself, like a baby (see Brontë 193).

At Grassdale, the man usually drink in the dining room after eating and in the evenings, as in the case of chapter 31, when – on observing that the women leave the dining-room, Arthur exclaims: "[n]ow then, my lads, what say you of a regular jollification" (Brontë 270). However, there also is wine in the drawing room, as we see when Helen refuses Hargrave's offer of a glass of wine in chapter 27 (see Brontë 233), a gesture indicating his sexual pursuit of her, in keeping with literary tradition. In order to keep Arthur from excess, Hargrave on occasion brings "him from the dining-room in good time" (Brontë 261). By implication, drinking in the drawing room is more moderate or even suppressed, according to the rules of decorum set forth by the women who dominate the place, usually serving coffee there after dinner and tea in the evening as substitutes (see Brontë 271-273).

When Arthur Huntington starts drinking on his own in Helen's presence, his act is compared to eating: he is "lunching at two on another bottle of soda mingled with brandy," and since his dinner disgusts him, he "toss[es] off" a "tumbler of wine and water" (Brontë 253). He also seems to greedily employ alcohol as a medicine – to assuage the effects of having drunk too much before (see Brontë 257, 253 and 260). Both aspects indicate, as Helen observes, that "[h]is appetite for the stimulus of wine has increased upon him. It is now more to him than an accessory to social enjoyment": it has become "his medicine and support, his comforter, his recreation, and his friend" (Brontë 260).

2.1.5. Drinking Characters: Physiological and Psychological Aspects

Interestingly, we encounter heavy drinkers only in the ranks of the landed gentlemen presented in Helen's diary. In the context of Markham's narrative of his own environment, on the other hand, one only gets a few impressions of what might, at least at first glance, be labelled moderate social drinkers, for the most part from the middle class.

2.1.5.1. Immoderate Drinkers

In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, we encounter a set of five completely different characters who get at least quite heavily intoxicated on a more or less regular basis and more or less "in the reader's sight", all of them primarily portrayed within Helen's narrative: Arthur Huntington, Lord Lowborough, Ralph Hattersley, Walter Hargrave and Grimsby. As I will argue, Anne Brontë uses the first four personages to represent the four different types of temperaments as elaborated by Galen and his followers. In her article on "The Villain of Wildfell Hall" Marianne Thormälen also tries to show that two characters in the novel – Huntington and Lowborough – are constructed according to pre-established types; however, she does not take into account the temper(ament) more or less obviously attributed to the other two, Hattersley and Hargrave (Thormälen, "Villain" 832-833). She upholds that Brontë wrote under the obvious influence of Macnish's popular treatise *The Anatomy of Drunkenness*, in which the author presents two kinds of drinkers:

Some are drunkards by choice others by necessity. [...] The former have an innate and constitutional fondness for liquor, and drink *con amore*. Such men are usually of a sanguineous temperament, of coarse intellectual minds, and of low and animal propensities. They have [...] a flow of animal spirits which other people are without. They delight in the roar and riot of drinking clubs. [...]

The drunkard by necessity was never meant by nature to be dissipated. He is perhaps a person of amiable dispositions, whom misfortune has overtaken, and who, instead of bearing up manfully against it, endeavours to drown his sorrows in liquor. It is an excess of sensibility, a partial mental weakness, an absolute misery of heart, which drives him on. (Macnish 26-27, as quoted in Thormälen, "Villain" 832)

This observation of Thormälen's is interesting and certainly true. However, Anne Brontë decidedly made Ralph Hattersley into a choleric drinker and turned Hargrave into something resembling a phlegmatic person – as I will show in the character

descriptions below. But let me first quickly present the idea of the temperaments as seen in the nineteenth century.

One can reasonably argue that the before-mentioned nineteenth-century “physiological psychology” was founded, among other things, on the ideas derived from Greek antiquity, with its various theories of the temperaments (see, for example, Haley 30). The best-known of them is that of the famous Greek physician Galen (see Haley 24):⁸

Galenic tradition had associated each of the four humors [in this context, the term “humour” stands for one of four bodily fluids: blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm] with its own characteristic disposition as well as its own physiognomy. By the nineteenth century, medical thought had abandoned the role of humors in both psychology and medicine, but not, as some dictionaries and health manuals show, the roles of physiognomy and temperament” (Haley 30).

In everyday Victorian life, “the temperaments theory was so pervasive” that people, patients and doctors alike, simply were not in the position to make “the sort of diagnostic and therapeutic distinctions between mental and physical ailments” which are common practice today (Haley 32). With reference to Victorian health manuals, Haley gives the following account of the four different types of temperament:⁹

For one, there was the *phlegmatic* person, who was said to be physically recognisable by pale, cold colours, with regard to both hair and complexion; by grey eyes; and a big and strongly-built body which nevertheless lacked power (see Haley 30). According to Kant’s influential *Anthropologie*,

[p]hlegma means lack of emotion, not laziness; it implies the tendency to be moved, neither quickly nor easily, but persistently. Such a person warms up slowly, but he retains the warmth longer. He acts on principle, not by instinct; his happy temperament may supply the lack of sagacity and wisdom. He is reasonable in dealing with other people, and usually gets his way by persisting in objectives while appearing to give way to others. (Kant 115, as quoted in Eysenck and Eysenck 44)

In the *sanguine* character, the warm aspects predominated; he was in excellent physical shape and well-proportioned (despite a certain tendency to grow fat later in life), sportive, and of healthy and warm colours. The hair was said to be brown; the eyes, blue. A person of this temperament was supposed to take things easy, being “open

⁸ See also: Schott, “Biographisches Lexikon”, s. v. *Galen*: Galen, a philosopher, scientist and physician, lived in the second century but remained of some importance well into the nineteenth century and his influence still survives in some of the concepts of modern alternative healing practices.

⁹ The following description of the different categories is for the most part taken from Haley, *Healthy Body*, 30-31.

and genial, [but ...] lack[ing] self-control,” and as lively as his pulse (Haley 30).

According to Kant,

[t]he sanguine person is carefree and full of hope; attributes great importance to whatever he may be dealing with at the moment, but may have forgotten all about it the next. He means to keep his promises but fails to do so [...] He is very sociable, given to pranks, contented, does not take anything very seriously and has many, many friends. He is not vicious, but difficult to convert from his sins; he may repent, but his contrition (which never becomes a feeling of guilt) is soon forgotten. He is easily fatigued and bored by work, but is constantly engaged in mere games – these carry with them constant change, and persistence is not his forte. (Kant 114, as quoted in Eysenck and Eysenck 43)

The *choleric* had “black, curly hair, dark eyes [and] a swarthy complexion” (Haley 30), and his altogether hairy body was firm and energetic. Once again following Kant, we learn that the choleric was seen thus:

[h]e is said to be hot-headed, is quickly roused but easily calmed down if his opponent gives in, he is annoyed without lasting hatred. Activity is quick, but not persistent. He is busy [...]; he prefers to give orders, but does not want to be bothered with carrying them out. He loves open recognition, and wants to be publicly praised. He loves appearances [...]; he is full of pride and self-love. [...] He suffers most through the refusal of others to fall in with his pretensions. (Kant 115, as quoted in Eysenck and Eysenck 44)

The last temperament type was the *melancholic*, in whose appearance the dark colours predominated. He tended to look not very healthy. Everything about this kind of person was supposed to be thin and longish, from the body to the lips (for all, see Haley 30). Kant says that

[p]eople tending towards melancholia attribute great importance to everything that concerns them. They discover everywhere cause for anxiety, and notice first of all the difficulties in a situation, in contradistinction to the sanguine person. [...] All this is so not because of moral considerations, but because interaction with others makes them worried, suspicious and thoughtful; it is for this reason that happiness escapes them. (Kant 114, quoted in Eysenck and Eysenck 43)

One further point of interest about the theory of temperament is that at least since the sixteenth century (and there is no reason to suppose that this idea had disappeared by the Victorian Age), alcohol had been said to affect the different temperaments in different ways: “[i]m Rausch [treten] die Charakteristika des Cholerikers und Phlegmatikers, des Melancholikers und Sanguinikers stärker hervor [...], indem der eine streitsüchtiger, der zweite stumpfsinniger, der dritte trauriger und der vierte sinnlicher wird” (Diepgen 16).

In addition to the four virtual personifications of the temperaments – sanguine, melancholic, choleric and phlegmatic – there is one more heavily drinking character in the novel, Grimsby, who does not seem to fit into any of these categories, but rather resembles a demon without personality. Furthermore, we learn that Helen's father, who is just mentioned in passing a few times, without references to his temperament, also belongs into the group of more or less chronic drunkards and occasional excessive social drinkers. And, finally, there is also Helen's son, little Arthur, who also drinks quite heavily for a while.

Arthur Huntington – the Sanguine

Like his wife, Arthur Huntington is a member of the rather well-to-do (or seemingly well-to-do) gentry of the 1820s, the son of a late friend of Helen's uncle (see Brontë 135). He is around thirty years old (see Brontë 284). He, just as all the other drinkers in the story, is never directly accessible for the reader, as a simple consequence of the narrative points-of-view employed in the novel.

Arthur is first introduced to us indirectly, by the means of a portrait painting Markham discovers in Helen's studio at the Hall. He describes it thus:

It was the portrait of a gentleman in the full prime of youthful manhood – handsome enough, and not badly executed [...] There was a certain individuality in the features and expression that stamped it, at once, a successful likeness. The bright, blue eyes regarded the spectator with a kind of lurking drollery – you almost expected to see a wink; the lips – a little too voluptuously full – seemed ready to break into a smile; the warmly tinted cheeks were embellished with a luxuriant growth of reddish whiskers; while the bright chestnut hair, clustering in abundant, wavy curls, trespassed too much upon the forehead, and seemed to intimate that the owner thereof was prouder of his beauty than his intellect – as perhaps, he had reason to be; - and yet he looked no fool. (Brontë 48-9)

As Stevie Davies says in her second footnote on the chapter, Markham's description of Arthur Huntington "is revealing of the levity, narcissicism [sic], lively sensuality and personal beauty of its as yet unknown subject" (Davies, Notes 499).

In the diary, the female narrator's first emphasis is on his behaviour rather than his looks. At this point, he is presented as

[a] gentleman, who had been watching our [i.e., Helen's and Mr Boarham's, a boring elderly suitor's] conference for some time, evidently much *amused* [emphasis added] at my companion's remorseless pertinacity and my manifest annoyance, and *laughing* [emphasis added] to himself at the asperity and uncompromising spirit of my replies. [...] I found [him] a very lively and entertaining companion. There was a graceful ease and freedom about all he said and did, [sic] that gave a sense of repose and expansion to the mind, after

so much constraint and formality [...] There might be, it is true, a little too much careless boldness in his manner and address, but [...] it did not anger me. (Brontë 135)

Before ever describing his actual looks, we are made to hear Helen defend her liking for Arthur Huntington to her aunt by “reading” his physiognomy, a fact which appears most ironically telling, considering the further plot developments:

I am an excellent physiognomist [sic], and I always judge of people’s characters by their looks – not whether they are handsome or ugly, but by the general cast of the countenance ... [B]y Mr Huntington’s [physiognomy I should know] that he was neither a fool nor a knave, though, possibly, neither a sage nor a saint. (136)

Laughter and smiles are the characteristics of Arthur Huntington most frequently cited throughout Helen’s account – the only thing that changes are the different qualities attributed to these, in every sense truly sanguine *and*, as we said, also Dionysian, aspects of behaviour. In the beginning, it is “complacent” (Brontë 156), full of “self-sufficiency” (157), also tyrannical¹⁰ and “presumptuous” (158), but also “so sweet, so bright, so genial” (158). The descriptions of this feature continue in the same vein until after their engagement has taken place. Then, in the course of Helen’s disillusionment, paralleled by alcohol-induced changes in Arthur Huntington, the meaning attached to the smile changes accordingly. As Juliet McMaster observes in her article, “Arthur’s laughter and cheerfulness, originally so attractive, become marks of a congenital inability to be serious about anything. His good cheer and high spirits themselves are not attached to any real cause; and increasingly we see him as incapable of being moved to anything *but* laughter, in any situation;” his laughter even turns into a sign of sadism in the course of the story (McMaster 359; for the idea that Arthur is sadistic, see also Stewart 88).

What is also repeatedly hinted at or outspokenly referred to, even before Helen does go into any details of Arthur’s “fascinating physiognomy” (Brontë 156), are the two only great interests in life which he has: music and hunting. Quite often, the later fact takes on an at least subliminally threatening aspect: the text evokes the feeling that Arthur is not just a sportsman, but a born predator,¹¹ for example, when he starts to play a harassing game with Helen during his first visit to Staningly:

¹⁰ See Brontë 158, where Helen is resolved not to “submit to be tyrannized over by those bright, laughing eyes.”

¹¹ Stevie Davies makes similar observations, for example in footnotes 7 and 12 on chapter 18: Davies, Notes 507 and 508 respectively.

I ventured out [of the library] ... But Mr Huntington had lingered behind the rest; he was just at the foot of the stairs when I opened the door; and *hearing my step in the hall – though I could hardly hear it myself* [emphasis added] – he instantly turned back, [...] placing himself in the doorway before me. And he seized my hand, and held it much against my will. (157)

Here, the reader can already see that Arthur's strength lies in his senses – and later on it becomes clear that they form indeed his only – and decidedly ambiguous – “strength.”

We always see him make promises of improvement, which he usually does not even try to keep, except when they appeal to his vanity, as in the case of his mistress's wish that he moderate his consumption of drinks and his behaviour for the sake of his appeal to her (see Brontë chapter 33 and 317). Furthermore, he is idle and thus constantly bored, as Helen notes with worry in chapter 24 (Brontë 208 and 211), lacking even the perseverance necessary to read a book. This gives the reader the impression that he is completely empty of all ambition, devoid of plans and meaning, although he is not really stupid - as shows, for example, in his attempts to manipulate Helen's aunt (see Brontë 179). When he is bored, his only possibility of distraction is drink (see Brontë 212). He likes to excite jealousy (see Brontë 208) and is himself extremely jealous (see Brontë 235), not only of other men, but of all that interests Helen, even her religion (see Brontë 204). His possessive interest in Helen is mainly physical, sensual (see, for example, Brontë 202). A further characteristic of him is that he does not really trust in people or in himself. This is partly attributed to his parents, described as “a bad, selfish, miserly father, who to gratify his own sordid passions, restricted him in the most innocent enjoyments of childhood and youth, and so disgusted him with every kind of restraint” and “a foolish mother who indulged him to the top of his bent, deceiving her husband for him, and doing her utmost to encourage those germs of folly and vice it was her duty to suppress” (Brontë 177). On this basis, Arthur seemingly does not believe in the worth of human beings, including himself. As Melody J. Kemp argues, in his view of himself and others, Arthur Huntington appears to believe, like a Calvinist, that his character and fate are predetermined (see Kemp 202; compare Brontë 205). Insofar, Huntington cannot even be labelled an “accomplished hypocrite” – as Helen correctly recognises (see Brontë 202) – also because he is too careless to hide his real egotistic character, as in the scene where he looks at one of Helen's paintings, speculating on the thoughts of the represented girl, who, he believes, is dreaming about how tender she will be to her husband, but not her husband to her (see Brontë 160).

Originally, Arthur Huntington, the sanguine, drinks for the “manly” fun of it and for sensual pleasure; later on, he drinks to assuage the effects of drinking itself and of existential boredom. In his vice, Arthur Huntington is shown to be inaccessible, because he does not really value women, as shows in the use he makes of them as sexual objects and mere servants to his emotional and physical needs, transgressing the bounds of Victorian sexual morality in keeping with the literary cliché of the drinker. And just as he does not seriously listen to Helen’s moral exhortations, he does not pay attention to higher religious precepts. This moral and spiritual barrenness, combined with his idle station in life, his false aristocratic ideology and his inherited pleasure-loving temperament, turn him into a “profligate” beyond saving.

Lord Lowborough – the Melancholic

Lowborough is the only member of the aristocracy (as opposed to the squirearchy) featuring in Brontë’s text.

His physical characteristics as well as his personality are presented in some detail. At the point where he enters the narrative, he is “a *desperate* man [... who] has dissipated his fortune in gambling and other things” (Brontë 176) and, as he himself states in a conversation reported by Arthur, “ruined” and “deep in debt” (Brontë 188) Helen immediately wonders if he could indeed be given to vice: “no-one could call *him* a jolly companion [...], he appears too sober and gentlemanly in his demeanour, to merit such suspicions. He is a tall, thin, gloomy looking man, apparently between thirty and forty, and of a somehow sickly, careworn aspect” (Brontë 154). And indeed, there is nothing “jolly” about Lowborough – he is the text’s figure of incarnate (self-inflicted) suffering: a melancholic. From Arthur’s account of the times in London when Lowborough turned into a heavy drinker, we learn that Lowborough has a preference for hopeless causes: he likes gambling, and he clings the more to the idea of the woman he has loved after losing her (see Brontë 187-189). As different from Huntington, he is presented as an openly pessimistic figure, always peevishly worrying about the future and mistakes of the past (see Brontë 189-191), without being able to fundamentally change his ways until after the end of his marriage to Annabella Wilmot, when he finally finds a sensible wife for a sensible, rational life-style (see Brontë 348 and 456-457). Although he is such a pessimist by nature, he is extremely easily fooled, especially by women – in whom he sees his only chance of redemption (see Brontë 195) –, as shows in his marriage to Annabella Wilmot. In consequence of his discovery

of the affair between his wife and Huntington in chapter 38, he considers killing himself, for the simple reason that, according to Helen, he lacks “self-esteem” in affliction (Brontë 346-347). We learn that he is a rather sensitive person when we hear that he observed the change occurring in Helen in the course of her marriage (see Brontë 343); however, self-pity is closer to him than compassion (see Brontë 343). This lack of connection with others might be the basis for his lack of enthusiasm, except for people or things in which he perceives a possible redemption. That he is generally boringly sombre, we learn from the following account:

Even Lord Lowborough caught the general contagion: his dark, greenish eyes were lighted up beneath their moody brows; his sombre countenance was beautified by smiles; all traces of gloom, and proud or cold reserve, had vanished for the time; and he astonished us all, not only by his general cheerfulness and animation, but by the positive flashes of true force and brilliance he emitted from time to time. (Brontë 297)

This is indeed the only instance we ever see him smile.

When the melancholic Lord Lowborough drinks, he does so for reasons of despair and group pressure (see Brontë, chapter 22). But although Lowborough drinks for melancholia, he is also saved by this very character trait, since it makes him aware of the (eternal) consequences of his behaviour and the precepts of a higher authority. The text constructs his reliance on and fear of God as his redeeming features (see Brontë 190 and 344), but belief is only open to him thanks to his temperament, considering that, as different from Huntington, he originally has nobody by his side to help him in his plans of reform. Keeping in mind what Thormälen said about Lowborough with reference to Macnish, we know that Lowborough does not drink for love of drink itself but by psychological “necessity” (see Thormälen, “Villain” 832). Once such a character has found a substitute for drunkenness as a means to forget his worries, he is safe, as the text shows us; at least as long as the substitute for drunkenness is not in itself dangerous or morally detrimental, as are Lowborough’s laudanum or his first wife.

Ralph Hattersley – the Choleric

There was no other to preserve my name from being blackened and aspersed among this nest of boon companions, and through them, perhaps, into the world; and beside my abandoned wretch of a husband, the base, malignant Grimsby, and the false villain Hargrave, this boarish [sic] ruffian, coarse and brutal as he was, shone like a glow-worm in the dark, among its fellow worms. (361)

Thus comments Helen Huntington on Mr Hattersley, after she has almost been raped by his friend Hargrave in chapter 39.

Ralph Hattersley, a mid-twenties friend of Huntington and later husband of Helen's friend Milicent, quite surprisingly in the end turns out to be almost the least disgusting among Huntington's long-term "partners-in-debauch." He is the other one, besides Lord Lowborough, to whom the narrative finally grants a new start on life, just as he is the only friend who really stands by Arthur Huntington during his final decline (see chapter 49). As will be shown, the reasons for this reformation are in part, but not only, to be found in matters of physical constitution and temperament, Hattersley showing all the signs of a true choleric. Furthermore, his social background differs greatly from that of his friends.

Although we never see *him* at work, we learn that he comes from a professional background, being "the son of a rich banker" (Brontë 222). However, he does not seem to ever enter this profession himself, since Markham informs us towards the close of the story that

[a]voiding the temptations of the town, he continued to pass his life in the country immersed in the usual pursuits of a hearty, active country gentleman; his occupations being those of farming, and breeding horses and cattle, diversified with a little hunting and shooting, and enlivened by the occasional companionship of his friends (better friends than those of his youth), and the society of his happy little wife (now cheerful and confiding as heart could wish) and his fine family of stalwart sons and blooming daughters. (458)

This description sticks so closely to the rules of poetic justice that it sounds almost ironic to modern ears. Besides fulfilling the obligatory purpose of showing "virtue rewarded," this passage also has a function going beyond the individual character of Hattersley in the world of the novel. As Kemp reminds us, Hattersley is used to show us that, according to the slightly Methodist ideology inspiring the text, useful "occupation is a necessary component of successful reformation" (Kemp 200).

Hattersley's physique is referred to many times, but even before we first "see" him, loud noise announces him. In his case, as different from Arthur Huntington's, this noise is not predominantly laughter but mere shouting, although the first characteristic mentioned by Arthur is Hattersley's "riotous mirth" (Brontë 190) – as we gradually discover, the emphasis is to be seen on "riotous." Hattersley's letter to Arthur on the occasion of the latter's engagement to Helen is said to be "stuffed full of railing accusations, bitter curses, and lamentable complaints" (Brontë 184); and Milicent's first

(and long lasting) impression of her husband(-to-be) is that he “frightens” her “with his abrupt manners and strange hectoring ways” (221) and his “loud voice” (227).

In voice, behaviour and physique, the contrast between the two partners in marriage could not be more striking, and this very contrast is repeatedly employed for purposes of characterisation. A good example thereof can be found in chapter 31, so tellingly entitled “Social Virtues.” After disgracing himself in front of all the women (and servants) assembled in the drawing room by his violently bullying behaviour towards almost everybody in the room, including his host, and loudly rejoicing in the use of the most un-gentlemanly language, drunken Hattersley

threw himself on to the ottoman beside the window. The door being now free, Milicent attempted to make her escape from the scene of her husband’s disgrace; but he called her back, and insisted upon her coming to him.

‘What do you want Ralph?’ murmured she, reluctantly approaching him.

‘I want to know what’s the matter with you,’ said he, pulling her on to his knee like a child. ‘What are you crying for Milicent? – Tell me!’

[...]

‘Do let me alone Ralph! Remember we are not at home.’

‘No matter: you *shall* answer my question!’ exclaimed her tormentor; and he attempted to extort the confession by shaking her and remorselessly crushing her *slight arms* [emphasis added] in the gripe of his *powerful fingers* [emphasis added]. (Brontë 277)

The scene continues in this vein when he proceeds to give his wife “a shake and a squeeze that made her draw her breath and bite her lip to suppress a cry of pain” (Brontë 278), until she finally admits to crying for shame, which results in his cursing her and “throwing her from him with such violence that she fell on her side” (Brontë 278).

One can extract a lot of important information from the above passage. As to his body – by means of the metonymical use of “fingers” instead of hand, which makes these appear bigger than his wife’s complete arms – we are left with the impression that, in addition to being quite overwhelmingly strong, Hattersley must also be of gigantic proportions. Hargrave once explicitly calls his brother-in-law’s body “a pretty substantial one” (272). In addition to this, we see here that Hattersley is absolutely devoid of cunning: his questions, demands and threatening behaviour are usually straightforward. Despite the fact that such basic honesty is rare in the male population of the novel (neither in threats or statements is it frequently observed), for a simple reason, this is no particularly admirable characteristic: it is, for one, simply natural to Hattersley; and, for someone as powerful and *sure of* this power as he, it is also easy to

perform – it does not require any particular courage. At this stage, Hattersley cannot be called “upright;” rather, he is simply domineering – like a true choleric. This is aptly illustrated in chapter 32, where it is said about him that he “stood, with arms akimbo, expanding his chest, and gazing round him as if the house and all its appurtenances and contents were his own undisputed possessions” (Brontë 286).

Ralph Hattersley, the choleric drinking for fun (though not out of real boredom as does Arthur Huntington) and for the heightened activity made possible by drunken behaviour, is (like Lord Lowborough) almost ruined but at the same time saved by his very character. It is his temperamentally founded wish for recognition by his wife and children (see Brontë 290 and 378-381) which leads to his final reformation, combined with his inborn need for physical activity, which finally finds a better outlet in the form of useful work as a country gentleman. Here, as well, drunkenness is replaced by something else, something less detrimental, linked with a healthy world-view and nature – a healthy view of the world as imparted to him by women (see Brontë, chapter 42).

Walter Hargrave – the Phlegmatic

Since Walter Hargrave is an immediate neighbour of the Huntingtons and also of equal social standing, it remains to be inferred that he might have been one of the earliest companions in Arthur Huntington’s career of debauchery. The only extant piece of information about his youth is given towards the end of the text, when an ostler informs Gilbert Markham that “he was quite a young gentleman; and a proud ’un [sic] he was, and a wilful” (Brontë 469).

Hargrave is first mentioned in chapter 20, when Helen – far from being convinced herself – tries to use his sister Milicent’s praises of him as a means to dispel her aunt’s prejudices against Huntington and his companions: “he is but a little lower than the angels, if half ... [Milicent] says is true. She is continually talking to me about him, [sic] and lauding his many virtues to the skies” (Brontë 176). The reason why Hargrave never sinks as low as his companions in his drinking behaviour is simply to be found in his particular brand of enormous vanity and longing to impress others, which he shares with his mother. In the name of duty to one’s reputation and status, both sensuality and feelings can easily be suppressed, moderated or at least disguised. His very “discretion” and superficial “tact” are finally revealed to be nothing but a stickling about perfect phrasing and gesturing, devoid of (Christian) sympathy. In him, self-consciousness

replaces conscience; an overdeveloped sense of honour, courage and uprightness, - as we see in the scene where he offers Arthur a duel after he nearly raped Helen (see Brontë 358-360).

In the chapter “The Neighbour,” Helen analyses her instinctive dislike of this character as follows:

He seemed bent upon doing the honours of his house in the most unexceptionable manner, and exerting all his powers for the entertainment of his guest, and the display of his own qualifications as a host, a gentleman, and a companion; and actually succeeded in making himself very agreeable – only that he was too polite. And yet, Mr Hargrave, I don’t like you; there is a certain want of openness about you that does not take my fancy, and a lurking selfishness, at the bottom of all your fine qualities, that I do not intend to lose sight of. (Brontë 250)

Walter Hargrave, the conceited phlegmatic, who is very persistent in his various pursuits, drinks neither for mere fun nor from boredom, nor against despair, but simply in order to make his habits go along with his social standing – he is constructed as a prestige drinker. Such being the case, it is his temperament’s tendency to act on principles (according to his egotistical needs) rather than spontaneously that keeps him from following his friends’ example in abandoning himself completely to drunkenness. Although Hargrave is far from being represented as a positive character, the text nevertheless uses him to demonstrate that it is principle which is needed in order not to ruin oneself by drink if one is constantly tempted by it. Although Hargrave does not succumb to drunkenness as an outlet for his moral weakness (this rather shows in his immoral, harassing pursuit of Helen), he is never healed of his flaws themselves, since he is basically inaccessible by female virtue, as embodied by Helen, whom he simply does not understand (see also López 178).

Grimsby – the Demon

We learn hardly anything about Grimsby, despite the fact that he is almost always present during Arthur Huntington’s periods of debauchery. Interestingly, Brontë hardly ever allows us to approach this character at all, since Helen pays less attention to him, compared to the other three companions of her husband: neither does she go into the details of his physical appearance, nor does she waste any space in her diary on speculating about his personality and motivation. We shall see, however, that this does *not* imply that Grimsby is a figure of minor importance. As a matter of fact, closer analysis reveals that quite the opposite might be regarded as true.

This is already hinted at when he first enters the narrative in a London setting in chapter 17. Helen comments on him as “a man I very greatly disliked: there was a sinister cast in his countenance, and a mixture of lurking ferocity and fulsome insincerity in his demeanour [...]” (Brontë 143). This description lends an uncanny air of mystery to the figure of Grimsby: he immediately sticks out – and will continue to do so – as inscrutable, constituting a Gothic overtone and a question mark within a realist text full of debate and analysis in the tradition of enlightenment.

A few chapters later, this impression is reinforced in Arthur’s report back to Helen on the “congratulatory” letters he received from his friends on the occasion of their engagement: “[t]his is Grimsby’s scrawl – only three lines, the sulky dog! He doesn’t say much, to be sure, but his silence implies more than all the others’ words, and the less he says, the more he thinks – G- d-n him!” (Brontë 184). Grimsby’s script, just as his face, is presented as almost illegible; his utterances are not representative of his inner life – he is a man of masks, double-faced and double-tongued. This is echoed again and again in comments about him, for example, in Arthur Huntington’s in chapter 25, when he tells Helen whom he intends to invite to join them at Grassdale: “he’s a decent, quiet fellow enough – you’ll not object to Grimsby?” (Brontë 226). Helen’s reaction is as “un-Christian” as when she first met him: “I *hate* [emphasis added] him; but however, if you wish it, I’ll endure his presence for a while” (Brontë 227). To modern ears, this sounds rather harmless – but such words from the lips of a nineteenth-century woman, both as pious and rational as Helen, constitute incredibly strong language indeed. Despite the fact that there are no direct comments about Grimsby *in particular* in Helen’s previous diary entries (not even in her conversation with Arthur about his London life recorded in chapter 22), she insists, on the above occasion, that she has “solid grounds for ... [her] dislike” (Brontë 227). Later on, we learn that he is a real hater of women and human goodness: “[t]hat is Grimsby[.] ... He has no love for you, Mrs Huntington – no reverence for your sex – no belief in virtue – no admiration for its image” (Brontë 357). He is ironically spoken of as a “philosopher” (Brontë 275).

Fully integrated into the social group of drinkers, Grimsby might still be called the one person who, by his very untouched distance, showing in his pervasive sarcasms and indirect way of speaking, most cunningly reinforces the various other characters’ tendencies towards destructive or at least excessive drinking. A good example of this procedure is rendered on page 272, where Hargrave reports on how he escaped the jolly dining-room company: “I had much ado to get away [...]. Ralph attempted to keep me

by violence; Huntington threatened me with the eternal loss of his friendship; and Grimsby, worse than all, endeavoured to make me ashamed of my virtue, by such galling sarcasms and innuendoes as he knew would wound me the most'" (Brontë 272).

It fits in with Grimsby's mysterious function that we are never informed about his exact social background and occupation. In the end, when Gilbert Markham sums up the various characters' careers after they ceased to be of any real relevance to his and Helen's fate, we hear the following about Grimsby:

If you are at all interested in the fate of that low scoundrel, Grimsby, I can only tell you that he went from bad to worse, sinking from bathos to bathos of vice and villainy, consorting only with the worst members of his club and the lowest dregs of society – happily for the rest of the world – and at last met his end in a drunken brawl from the hands, it is said, of some brother scoundrel he had cheated at play. (Brontë 457)

Why Grimsby drinks, is never made clear, apart from the fact that he does not believe in any virtues. As I would like to argue, the figure of Grimsby – with his galling sarcasm – is likened to a malicious demon and to alcohol itself, which also brings out the worst in every character, as we shall see below. In a way, it seems that Grimsby is indeed Brontë's personified "demon drink," just as he is the general tempter to vice (see, for example Brontë 189). Of course, there is no saviour in this world for a cynical man like Grimsby, who hates virtue as such as well as social norms, apart from those praising "bold" manly licence (see Brontë 270-271), and who is beyond the influence of the virtuous female principle of the text.

Helen's Father

Helen Huntington's father is a further heavy drinker mentioned in the text. No details about him or his exact drinking habits are ever given, which makes it appear probable that he is only there to illustrate a few further points about the drink problem.

For one, the very reluctance to speak about him, which is clearly visible in both Helen's diary and her brother, Frederick Lawrence's, secluded habits – one of the reasons for Gilbert Markham's troubles with him is "[h]is excessive reserve upon all his own concerns" (40) –, is indicative of the strength of the taboo to talk about real domestic problems. Helen's case drastically illustrates how very problematic the lack of experience resulting from this kind of silence is. She knows that her father is an alcoholic but she does not seem to know enough about the details of this condition to read the warning signs in the case of her husband(-to-be). Thus, without the empirical

data forming their basis, the warnings of her aunt must perforce result useless. These “data” are also withheld from the reader.

As a matter of fact, it is (once again) Arthur Huntington who states, with a characteristic indifferent frankness on revolting subjects and out of pure selfishness, what was really the matter with the late Mr Lawrence. He does so on the occasion of forbidding his wife to attend her father’s funeral in chapter 31:

“[...] Why should you sigh and groan, and I be made uncomfortable because an old gentleman in –shire, a *perfect stranger* [emphasis added] to us both *has thought proper to drink himself to death?* [emphasis added] [...]”

He would not hear of my attending the funeral, or going for a day or two, to cheer poor Frederick’s solitude. It was quite unnecessary, he said, and I was unreasonable to wish it. What was my father to me? *I had never seen him, but once* [emphasis added] since I was a baby, and I well knew he had never cared a stiver about me; – and my brother too, was little better than a stranger. (Brontë 268)

Apart from finally making explicit the cause of her father’s miserable state which Helen mentioned before, alcoholism induced by selfishness, this (reported) speech underlines the incapacitating degree of secrecy surrounding the “family drunkard”. The one occasion of her seeing her father, which Arthur refers to, was just three months earlier. In her report on this, Helen, who finds such strong words for her husband’s condition, just enigmatically remarks the following: “[I was] to go and see my *unfortunate* [emphasis added] father, who is very ill, and my brother, who is very unhappy in consequence of both the illness and its cause” (Brontë 266). Something we can also gather from the above quotation is that Helen’s father must have shared one characteristic with the worst of the other drinkers in the story: a complete lack of real affection, at least for his daughter.

Arthur Huntington, Junior

My decision to group such a young child as Arthur Huntington, junior, among the immoderate drinkers of the story might at first appear exaggerated, considering that he is not often shown in an intoxicated state. As we shall see further below, however, the symptoms little Arthur displays on the frequent occasions when his father induces him to take alcohol (see Brontë 350) – we never hear how much of it – quite closely resemble those to be found in the other gentlemen, once they have taken considerably too much. As Helen tells her diary: “he [...]is inordinately fond of intoxicating drinks,” their consumption having become a “habit” for him (Brontë 369).

In Helen's narrative, the birth of little Arthur is the sign that "God has sent [her] a soul to educate for heaven," a task which also fills her with anxiety since "[h]e may live to curse his own existence" (Brontë 239). This anxiety is not diminished by the fact that according to her, her son looks "the tiny epitome of [his] father" (Brontë 240). Nevertheless, on page 239, she also calls the child "flesh from *my* [emphasis added] flesh." Finally, after Helen has lost all hope as to her husband, she prefers to settle for the view that the child does – in whatever sense – hopefully resemble his uncle, Mr Lawrence (see Brontë 372) – the uncle who is the only one sympathetically portrayed moderate drinker in the story.

When we first see little Arthur in chapter 2, within Gilbert Markham's narrative, five-year-old Arthur is said to have "deep blue eyes," "light brown hair" and a pale skin (Brontë 24), indicating a sanguine inheritance from his father. Furthermore, the boy is repeatedly said to be "healthy but not robust" (Brontë 243) from his infancy onwards. These features are the same throughout the text and there is no reason to suspect authorial sloppiness in the said ambiguous attributions of resemblance. Rather, this narrative manoeuvre serves to show that a child still is an open book, being a person who can still be educated in the right kind of behaviour, no matter what his predisposition is, although all attempts to "educate" his sanguine father fail.

2.1.5.2. Moderate Drinkers

The moderate drinkers we encounter in the text belong almost exclusively to the rural community assembling at Markham's Linden-Car farm; and there, hints at the differences between men and women are minimal, as we have also seen further above. As has been said, members of both sexes consume alcohol as a quite "natural" activity forming part of a social gathering, be it a party or just a family meal, and not even children are necessarily excluded from its intake.

All things considered, it is interesting that more attention is paid to the males who drink in moderation. The women taking their share, such as Mrs Wilson, a "narrow-minded, tattling old gossip, whose character is not worth describing" (Brontë 20), are hardly more than mere ciphers. All the other women who are at least of some interest to the story – such as Rose Markham, the narrator's sister, or Eliza and Mary Millward, are never shown to drink even the smallest amount. In the case of the latter two, this is especially remarkable, since it is their father, Reverend Millward, who is the one "moderately" drinking man depicted in most detail and acts as the staunchest defender

of alcohol consumption, being a true “patron of malt liquors” (Brontë 19). Indeed, the preaching of reasonable alcohol consumption forms an integral part of his “doctrines,” which he imparts in a fashion suiting his “disciplinarian” character (Brontë 19). When Mrs Markham asks for his opinion regarding alcohol consumption in general and Helen’s decided stance against it in particular, he first assures her that “[wine and spirits] are all blessings of mercy, if we only knew how to make use of them” (Brontë 42), continuing to criticise Helen’s apparent attitude and education of her boy in order to make him hate alcohol as “criminal, I should say – criminal! – Not only is it making a fool of the boy, but it is despising the gifts of Providence, and teaching him to trample them under his feet” (Brontë 42). In itself, despite the vicar’s judgmental and self-satisfied way of presenting it, this view, at first, is not subverted, but only contradicted by Helen’s outspoken arguments. However, later in the text, we find an all too uncanny echo of this view in a character seemingly diametrically opposed to the vicar: speaking of Lord Lowborough’s “provoking” resistance to join drinking, Arthur uses the phrase that “he refuse[s] to drink like an honest Christian” (Brontë 192). As N. M. Jacobs puts it in her article, these “attitudes, which seem harmless traditionalism, are shown in Helen’s diary to be essentially identical with those that produce the domestic hell at the center of the novel” (Jacobs 223). Although not one of the moderately drinking characters in the framing story is represented as disgusting because he/she drinks or even as in any way affected by the drink he/she consumes, they are not among the most lovable creatures in the book, and the views they put forth are also mouthed by the most depraved, permanently drunken characters in the framed story. Indeed, Mr Lawrence, Helen’s brother, is the only person of good character to be shown drinking in moderation while at the same time propagating abstinence for people with an inherited weakness for drink (see Brontë 42-43). It seems that it is Lawrence’s approach to the topic that Anne Brontë is presenting as the only correct one in her book.

2.1.6. Drunkenness: Its Qualities, Effects and Functions

Some of the qualities of drunkenness are the same for all the drinking characters analysed above, while some attributions differ greatly between the various intoxicated personages, due to their different temperaments.

What all the characters, even Lord Lowborough, have in common is that, at first, alcohol “elevates” them, increasing their liveliness. This is demonstrated in the example

of Walter Hargrave, who never seems to drink more than necessary to achieve this elevation (see Brontë 279), which leaves him “just a little flushed, his dark eyes sparkling with unwonted vivacity” and lends him even more rhetoric “brilliance and fluency” (Brontë 272 and 273). The said elevation shows in an increase in volume and in laughter (see, for example, Brontë 270-272), as well as a propensity to behave with melodramatic theatrical exaggeration. Arthur laughs and smiles continually when under the influence of alcohol (see, for example, Brontë 355 and 274), and so does his little son in chapter 39, where we see the “half tipsy” child “cocking his head and laughing at” his mother; he also curses her in the fashion of Hattersley (Brontë 351).

Arthur Huntington is the best example for the mocking resort to melodramatic behaviour the text constructs as typical of the first stages of drunkenness, for example, when he and his friends try to get Lowborough to join them in drinking (see Brontë 190 and 193); or in chapter 27, when “affected with wine,” he goes down on his knees to plead forgiveness from Helen in “mock humiliation” (Brontë 233). The same is true for Hattersley, who also exaggerates his own behaviour under the influence of alcohol, turning to melodramatically overdone expressions of aggression in the form of elaborate curses, as, for example, in chapter 31, where he “burst[s] into the room with a clamorous volley of abuse in his mouth” (Brontë 274), or in chapter 39, where Hargrave reports a drunken conversation between Hattersley and Huntington, with Hattersley exhorting his friend in melodramatic indignation and childish language to “turn over a new leaf, you double-dyed scoundrel,” and to “beg your wife’s pardon, and be a good boy” (Brontë 355).

A further aspect that the characters have in common is that at a certain progressed stage of intoxication, alcohol makes them physically clumsy, as, for example, Lord Lowborough, who “walk[s] rather unsteadily, for the liquor had got to his head” (Brontë 189) and, “if not merry himself,” is an “unfailing source of merriment” to the others (Brontë 190), once even “dropp[ing] from his chair, disappearing under the table amidst a tempest of applause” (Brontë 193). On one of their great nights of debauchery at Grassdale, the men join the ladies for tea in a severe state of intoxication, of which the text makes fun by showing, in detail, their incapacitation: Grimsby pours the cream in the saucer rather than the tea; and, while holding a “philosophical” speech, he puts six lumps of sugar in his tea, which he then empties into the sugar- instead of the slop-basin (see Brontë 275-276). The narrator also observes that he drawls (Brontë 274), and notes his “strange uncertainty of utterance” (275). (However, although the clumsiness

in the speech of drunken persons is noted by the narrator, it is not represented in the discourse itself.) Finally, when the men all go to bed, not one of them does walk “quite steadily,” Arthur being quite “sick and stupid,” unable to walk by himself (Brontë 279).

Let us now turn to those qualities of intoxication that differ from character to character. Generally speaking, it brings out in everyone the worst aspects of his inborn temperament. In the case of the melancholic Lowborough, increasing drunkenness, after an initial rise in liveliness mainly leads to a “soften[ing of] his heart,” making him dwell on his past mistakes and sigh “dolorous[ly]” (Brontë 189). It also drives him to brooding on the dark side of his and his friends’ fate, on the hereafter (see Brontë 190). Although he mainly joins Huntington’s drinking club because he “can’t bear his own thoughts” (Brontë 191), too much alcohol brings him back to where he started from, and with a vengeance, making him contemplate the prospect of hell awaiting (see 190 and 194). As we see, drunkenness in the melancholic has the quality of exceeding sentimentalism and fear.

With the cynical, “fiendish” Grimsby (Brontë 345), drunkenness shows quite differently, in that, instead of getting depressed, he shows his most sarcastic and “philosophical” side, as we hear in chapter 31, where he first “endeavour[s] to make” Hargrave “ashamed of his virtue, by such galling sarcasms and innuendoes as he [... knows] would wound” him most (Brontë 272), Grimsby being later on, with still greater intoxication, depicted as reduced to mere empty “sententious gravity,” culminating in a pseudoscientific speech on the different build of people’s brains (Brontë 274). Even Grimsby, the demonic figure and person who changes least under the influence of drink, is in the last stages of drunkenness reduced to something lower than his normal, mysterious self: in his case to a ridiculously wordy know-all.

In Hargrave, drunkenness also takes on the qualities typical of his character. This is best illustrated in chapter 39, where we see that, under the influence of the lesser amount of alcohol he allows himself to drink, Hargrave turns more openly proud and sadistic: Helen observes “a gleam of hard, keen sombre satisfaction” in the face of her “impotent wrath” at the men who make her little son drunk (Brontë 351).

As for the choleric Hattersley, progressed drunkenness with him has the quality of physical and verbal violence and obscenity. The latter is indirectly shown on page 355, where Hargrave insinuatingly tells Helen that Hattersley “added some praise of you, which you would not thank me for repeating – nor him for uttering; proclaiming it aloud, as he did, without delicacy or discrimination.” He also speaks to Annabella

Lowborough full of “absurdity and rascally impudence” (Brontë 274). His proneness to verbal and even physical violence against men and his wife once again shows best in chapter 31, where we first hear that he tries to keep Hargrave in their circle by violence (see Brontë 272). When he has had even more to drink, he joins the ladies in the drawing-room, together with the others, “shaking his formidable fist at his brother-in-law,” threatening that he will “demolish [... him] in the twinkling of an eye, and give [... his] body to the fowls of heaven and the lilies of the field,” thus violently and melodramatically misusing the language of the Bible (Brontë 274; Davies, Notes 519, footnote 6). His threats of violence are not mere jokes, as shows in his “rudely seizing [... Lowborough by the arm” and trying to drag the poor man from the room in order to force him to join him in drinking, (Brontë 276). Only a burning candle can keep him from committing further violence against his “friend.” Then follows his violent abuse of his wife, cited further above, and finally he starts “hurling” a “footstool” and books at his laughing host, Arthur Huntington (Brontë 279). Since, during their stays at Huntington’s place, the men seem to be almost perpetually intoxicated, we might assume that he is also drunk when he tries to incite Lord Lowborough to a duel with Arthur Huntington (see Brontë 344).

Regarding the quality of Arthur Huntington’s drunkenness, we can say that, with him, severe intoxication mainly shows in uncontrollable laughter, as different from his cronies. In the famous scene in chapter 31, we see him almost permanently incapacitated by “imbecile laughter” (Brontë 279). First, there are still external causes for his laughing, as when he seems to sexually molest Milicent Hargrave in front of the others and is highly amused at her flight from him, “deliver[ing] himself up to a paroxysm of weak, low, foolish laughter” (see Brontë 274). Yet, in the course of the scene, his laughter grows more and more senseless and incapacitating. On page 276, he can no longer interfere in the events: he can do “nothing but laugh.” As he says himself, he could not “do anything [...] if [...] his] life depended on it” (Brontë 276). He is even incapable of self-defence when Hattersley begins to throw things at him, sitting “collapsed and quaking with feeble laughter, with tears running down his face” (Brontë 279).

Having said so much about the different qualities of drunkenness, let us now turn to its (long-term and side) effects on the characters when they are not acutely intoxicated. As it is, the book only represents such effects on two of the three most heavily drinking

men, namely on Huntington and Hattersley, in some detail. Concerning Hattersley, Helen states that her friend

Milicent's satisfaction in her choice [of husband] is not entirely feigned: she really loves her husband; and it is too true that he loses nothing by comparison with mine. Either he is less unbridled in his excesses, or, owing to his stronger, hardier frame, they produce a much less deleterious effect upon him; for he never reduces himself to a state in any degree bordering on imbecility, and with him the worst effect of a night's debauch is a slight increase of irascibility, or it may be a season of sullen ferocity on the following morning: there is nothing of that lost, depressing appearance – that peevish, ignoble fretfulness, that wears one out with very shame for the transgressor. But then, it was not always so with Arthur: he can bear less now than he could at Hattersley's age; and if the latter does not reform, his powers of endurance may be equally impaired when he has tried them as long. (Brontë 284)

While under the acute influence of alcohol, Hattersley is violent and obscene; in its aftermath, he is irascible, but not depressed. Thus, we can say that for him – also due to his shorter drinking career and hardier frame, as the narrator suggests – drunkenness in its quality resembles drunkenness in its effects. In the case of Arthur Huntington, the heaviest drinker, this is different. In the earlier stages of his development, the after-effects of drinking leave him weary, peevish, and also to some degree irascible and unjust (see Brontë 253-254, 259 and 321). Drinking and debauchery also render him “feverish, listless and languid” (Brontë 224), full of a “fretfulness and nervous irritability” (260), the depressing “after consequences” of taking alcohol leaving him moaning about his mistakes – all these aspects being absolutely contrary to his temperamental nature. His addiction to drink makes him feel “an infernal fire in [... his] veins that all the waters of the ocean cannot quench” (Brontë 253), a physical feeling of craving paralleled by the increasing empty “tedium of absolute idleness” of his life (Brontë 261). Permanent drunkenness makes Arthur change physically: from a handsome, energetic man, he changes into a fatter, sick shadow of his old self: his eyes are “dull” and his “face red and bloated” (Brontë 322). In his final illness, caused by the mixed effects of a minor accident and long-term alcohol abuse (see Brontë 423-424), his degeneration is further described. When Helen returns to him on this occasion, he is in a state of delirium and does not even know her at first, then being filled with fear when he finally begins to recognise her (see Brontë 424-425). He is full of “feverish excitement” (Brontë 426), with a “fiercely flushed face and wildly gleaming eyes” (427), and so affected by his weakness that he is hardly able any longer to write down his own name (see 426). Once again, he suffers from a “cursed thirst that is burning his

heart to ashes” (Brontë 427). Psychologically, he varies between “fretful reproaches” and “deprecatory self-abasement” (Brontë 433), between sensual approaches to Helen and childlike behaviour. After a relapse to drinking when he finally seems to physically improve, “internal inflammation” sets in, causing him “paroxysms of pain and irritation” (Brontë 440), accompanied again by a “burning thirst” (441). In this situation, he reveals to Helen that he does not really believe in God, his life having turned him into a sceptic or even atheist, while, at the same time, he is shaken by fears that he might be mistaken in not believing (see Brontë 441-442). For the first time, he really regrets not having listened to Helen’s advice all along (see 443), but he cannot find his way to God even in dying (see 446-447).

Concluding, we can say that in the case of Arthur Huntington, alcohol effects a situation which resembles a hell on earth, an impression created by his pains, his spiritual anguish and the repeated use of images of fever and fire. Alcohol does not only lead down the road to hell within the ideological framework of the story, but its long-time abuse also creates a hellish state within the individual drunkard while still alive. Arthur Huntington is a rather empty figure from the beginning, and in the course of the story, drinking seems to “burn out” the little of affection and trust and interests that was inside him, just as it physically makes his body burn with fever. Furthermore, due to drunkenness, Arthur loses all his power over others, like his servants (see Brontë 423), and finally his very life. Here, drunkenness effects the final and total incapacitation of the individual.

As to the functions of drunkenness in the text, we can say that apart from but connected with the social, sensual and “medicinal” functions attributed to drinking by the characters, drunkenness has further functions in the text: the narrative function of driving the plot, helping with characterisation and of defining a whole class of people.

Drunkenness is at the heart of the novel – without it, the story as a whole would not exist. It is drunkenness that makes the Huntington marriage develop along the lines it does, combined with other forms of debauchery; and it is this alcohol-induced state of the marriage, which endangers her son’s physical and spiritual well-being, that brings Helen Huntington to Wildfell Hall. In this place of refuge, it is community gossip – sometimes linked to the group consumption of alcohol (though not drunkenness), especially so in the figure of the vicar – that once again disturbs Helen’s life (see also Gordon 722). The physical effects of Arthur’s chronic alcoholism are the reason why

Helen returns to him in the last section of the book, as it is alcohol that finally frees her from this marriage by slowly killing her husband. Furthermore, it is drunkenness, combined with other kinds of immorality, that dictates the low-life end of Grimsby, just as, by contrast, it is abstemiousness or at least moderation (combined with useful occupation) that finally leads to Lowborough's and Hattersley's happiness. Thus, alcohol and drunkenness, always secluded in privacy and shrouded by secrecy against outsiders, are constructed as effectively ruling the goings-on in a whole part of the (narrative's) world.

This impression that alcohol and drunkenness rule a part of the world, a part of the world defined as male and leisured, is reinforced by the fact that drunkenness is used as a means of characterisation for the members of this class. As has been shown above, drunkenness, before changing people's character in the story, is actually a state that reveals their real character. It helps the narrator uncover the temperament and moral state at the core of the individual male figures. And those temperaments, reinforced by the exaggerating influence of drunkenness, have consequences in characters' behaviour and, thus, in the action of the novel. The more Huntington indulges in drink, the more he turns into and reveals himself as immoral and weak, thus finally necessitating his wife's flight. The more alcohol Hattersley takes, the more brutal he gets, causing the inner withdrawal of his wife, Milicent. The more drunk Lowborough gets, the more melancholic and full of existential fears he appears.

Gwen Hyman, in keeping with what has been said before about the function of alcohol as a political definer of the Tory and of the aristocrat and about its use as a means of expressing a nostalgia for the good old feudal days, puts forth an interesting idea *why* drunkenness is accorded enough importance by the text and its characters for it to rule the said section of the world: According to her, drunkenness has the function of reassuring Huntington (and his cronies) of their social status:

Huntington must swallow the fare that allows the gentlemanly body to insist on its own validity beyond the moral strictures and social insistences of the rising [middle] classes: fare that is anti-productive, anti-orderly, irrational. To save himself, the gentleman [...] must re-embody the body, making himself corporeal, even grossly so, in order to preserve his status as a member of the elite [...]. (Hyman 457)

This signifies that Arthur drinks as part of an act of social resistance against changes in his leisured status: "[d]rinking obviates the problem of boredom: his refusal of the productive, rational, Godly order Helen represents is made manifest in 'madness, folly

and brutality' [...], the triumph of the irrational body over the mind" (Hyman 459). Hyman continues to state that "while drink makes him weak, tired, sickly, and cranky, this in and of itself separates him from the coffee driven, suppressed, and repressed middle-class body: drink makes it clear that Arthur Huntington is not a productive corpus, a well-functioning mechanism subject to the tyranny of the clock" (Hyman 460). Thus, we can say that in the text, a section of the world is represented as driven by alcohol and its effects in an attempt to define itself against other classes and a new world-order, as embodied by Helen and also Gilbert Markham, who is "never seen to touch a drop of wine or ale" (see Hyman 458 and 454), – although the latter is, at best, a "flawed hero" (Westcott 213). Drunkenness also drives the plot, because it is constantly necessary for the men to prove their manliness, as Annabella's deprecating comments on her sober husband show (see Brontë 270-271). And by those very functions drunkenness takes on for the self-definition of the males at the heart of the novel, the text itself employs it as a means of defining them.

2.1.7. Conclusion: the Construction of Drunkenness

Let us now conclude this discussion of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and its representation of drunkenness by summing up the central findings and adding some thoughts on the text's attitude to alcohol abuse and its possible cures.

As I have shown, the book divides the world in two: for one there is the realm of emerging meritocratic bourgeois values of moderation and godliness, as opposed to an old-fashioned aristocratic world driven by debauchery and drunkenness. Outside this feudally-inspired class and their clubs and mansions, there is no drunkenness, as the text tries to show us, though there might be some drinking, as depicted in the moderate middle-class drinkers of the story meeting at a farm. The division between middle class and aristocracy (including the gentry) is, in a way, mirrored in the binary oppositions between country and town and inside and outside as constructed in the text. Urban and feudal rural indoor settings are used to contain and represent drunkenness and sinfulness. We see this best in the scene where Helen thinks about her husband and his dissipation:

[a]ll the sweet summer is passing away without one breath of pleasure to me or benefit to him. And I had all along been looking forward to this season with the fond, delusive hope that we should enjoy it so sweetly together; and that, with

God's help and my exertions, it would be the means of elevating his mind, and refining his taste to a due appreciation of the salutary and pure delights of nature, and peace, and holy love. ... [When] I open the window to inhale the balmy, soul-reviving air, and look out upon the lovely landscape, laughing in dew and sunshine, – I too often shame that glorious scene with tears of thankless misery, because *he* cannot feel its freshening influence; [...] the greater the happiness that nature sets before me, the more I lament that *he* is not here to taste it: the greater the bliss we might enjoy together, the more I feel our present wretchedness apart (yes, ours; he must be wretched, though he may not know it); and the more my senses are pleased, the more my heart is oppressed; for he keeps it with him *confined amid the dust and smoke of London, – perhaps, shut up within the walls of his own abominable club* [emphasis added]. (Brontë 223-4)

Outside nature represents and produces healthiness, whereas London and the indoor space of the club (or the dining-room) represent and contain sinful sickness. By this narrative manoeuvre, drunkenness itself becomes a form or symptom of sickness. As an antidote to the sickly elevation produced by drinking, the text presents us with the reviving energy of nature, the only legitimate way to achieve such elevation (see also the description of Hattersley's redeeming preference for outdoor "animal" activity (Brontë 284 and 458)). Nature is thereby also constructed as belonging to the ideological space of the enlightened, Christian, middle-class ethic which Helen has been shown to represent. Helen, the one who knows how to appreciate the energy and beauty of nature, is also the one person to represent what health means for the text, in accord with the general Victorian attitude as outlined further above: she is a constantly developing personality, capable of adapting to circumstances and of producing "useful creative labor" (Haley 21), as opposed to the drinking characters, who are for the most part unproductive and incapable of growing and adapting to their situations within the bounds of Victorian morality.

Furthermore, the text also constructs a binary opposition between male and female, as represented by different spaces: the feminine living- and drawing-room as opposed to the male dining-room and club. According to the construction of drunkenness in the text, it does only originate in male-dominated space among men, although it does tend to invade the spatial sphere of women. Where women are, drunkenness does not originate, though there might be some drinking in the presence of women, and despite the fact that the women have to bear with drunken behaviour. Although Arthur is shown to drink on his own and also in the presence of his wife, drinking to get drunk is constructed as a predominantly social activity of the male club and dining-room as separate from the women's drawing-room at Grassdale or the living-room at Linden-

Car, where there is drinking but no drunkenness in the presence of respectable women, a moderate drinking in which some of the women even partake. I would like to argue that the text thus develops a scheme of “clean” drinking and “problematic” drinking, as two differently gendered and spaced procedures. “Clean” drinking is different from “problematic” drinking in that the former is an accompaniment to other social activities that does not result in drunkenness, whereas the latter is represented as an end in itself and produces morally detrimental effects and intoxication. The impression that clean drinking is defined as “female” is reinforced by the fact that not one of the women of the text is ever seen drunk, as opposed to about half of the men.

As I have also tried to elaborate, within the “ungodly”, unmeriting world of the well-to-do, Brontë employs a temperament scheme in her main drinking characters. Thereby the text creates the impression that, given the right circumstances of a lack of occupation and principle, no-one (since the temperament scheme was said to cover the whole of humanity) – at least no man – is by nature exempt from the temptations of drink. Drink produces some observable physical changes in the drunken characters, which are the same for all the men, such as physical clumsiness and debilitation. In addition to this, the narrator witnesses to changes in keeping with the original temperament of the drinker, drunkenness bringing out and reinforcing the worst in each, with the text thus constructing drunkenness as a symptom of a socially-constructed sickness with varying physical and mental side-effects. By employing the temperament scheme, the text shows that within the “sick” social frame, there are various roads to ruin by drink. Each of the four temperamental types drinks for intoxication’s sake, but each of them does so for different underlying reasons, reasons which also help the text establish a scheme of cure and redemption.

Whereas Hattersley and Lowborough have been shown to be reclaimable by virtue of their interest in others’ opinions and higher ideals, the two more prominent unredeemed drinkers, Grimsby and Huntington, are constructed as two cases of incurable spiritual corruption, as born out by chronic drunkenness.

We can argue that in the core case of the most notorious and most thoroughly analysed drunkard of the story, Arthur Huntington, Brontë presents us with an explanation of “problematic” drunkenness which is threefold: it is a social problem, originating in and affecting society and its norms; it is a matter of personal spiritual weakness; and it is the result of a physiological predisposition. As I think, Brontë’s text constructs the social aspects facilitating drunkenness – ideology, one’s station in life,

group pressure and the social construction of manliness as defined and strengthened by exposure to vice which is so bitterly satirised by Helen in chapter 3 (see Brontë 31-35) – as the most important, by showing that it are these aspects, which also shape personal spirituality, that affect all the drinking characters, despite their different temperaments. The difference in temperament only gives the specific form to drunkenness and determines the importance the individual selectively attributes to various social norms and religious laws.

Where the said three aspects – the social, the spiritual and the physiological – combine, as they do in Arthur Huntington, saviour is impossible, leading up to a narrative closure where, unconventionally, “the sinner [is allowed] to be unrepentant” (Jackson 200), as Helen has to learn painfully, counter to her original hopes and plans:

“I long to deliver him from his faults – to give him an opportunity of shaking off the adventitious evil got from contact with others worse than himself, and shining out in the unclouded light of his own genuine goodness – to do my utmost to help his better self against his worse, and make him what he could have been if he had not, from the beginning, had a bad selfish, miserly father, who to gratify his own sordid passions, restricted him in the most innocent enjoyments of childhood and youth, and so disgusted him with every kind of restraint; – and a foolish mother, who indulged him to the top of his bent, deceiving her husband for him, and doing her utmost to encourage those germs of folly and vice it was her duty to suppress, – and then, such a set of companions as you represent his friends to be [.]” (Brontë 176-7)

This emotional speech of Helen’s, held in defence of her feelings for Arthur Huntington in front of her aunt, sums up neatly some of the basic assumptions regarding drunkenness and other vices which are propagated by the text – and, by its contrast with what really happens in the Huntington marriage, also serves to show that all words cannot help, as long as society does not change: only by changing the people that surround them and, with them, their values and norms of behaviour can Hattersley and Lowborough finally escape Huntington’s, Grimsby’s and Helen’s father’s fate of dying of the effects of drunkenness and debauchery: although Lowborough abstains from drink through the main part of Helen’s diary, in Arthur’s circle he is permanently in danger of being led back to drinking through social pressure, as represented by his wife, who scorns him for not drinking (see Brontë 270-271), and by Hattersley, who physically tries to force him to drink (see Brontë 276-277).

When such a change of society – or at least one’s own social sphere – are not possible, only drastic measures can be of any help against drunkenness in one as temperamentally susceptible as Arthur junior might be. Those drastic measures are

shown in the account of how Helen weans her little son of his growing fondness of drink: she combines her efforts at an oral moral education with what we would nowadays call “physical conditioning:”

I [...] gave him quite as much as his father was accustomed to give him – as much indeed, as he desired to have, but into every glass I surreptitiously introduced a small quantity of tartar-emetic – just enough to produce inevitable nausea and depression without positive sickness. Finding such disagreeable consequences invariably to result from this indulgence, he soon grew weary of it, but the more he shrank from the daily treat, the more I pressed it upon him, till his reluctance was strengthened to perfect abhorrence. [...] [A]nd once or twice, when he was sick, I have obliged the poor child to swallow a little wine and water *without* the tartar-emetic, by way of medicine, [...] because I am determined to enlist all the powers of association in my service[.] (Brontë 369-370)

This method, and the underlying teetotal stance (see Hyman 461), are defended by her brother, Mr Lawrence (who, according to Russell Poole, represents the true Law in Brontë’s text (see Poole 866)), arguing against vicar Millward that “when a child may be naturally prone to intemperance – by the fault of its parents or ancestors, for instance – some precautions are advisable” (Brontë 42). From this statement, we can also infer that, in addition to propagating a temperamental susceptibility to indulgence in drink, the text also constructs chronic drunkenness as an inheritable trait in itself, in keeping with emerging contemporary medical ideas.

Summing things up, we can say that the text constructs drunkenness as a dangerous and debilitating symptom of a social and spiritual “sickness” – i.e., a lack of socially useful Christian values – a symptom the development of which is furthered by some physiological predispositions. The said sickness dominates a whole part of the world presented in the story and its symptom, drunkenness, determines the whole *private* life of this section of society and the action of the story. The only way to deal with this underlying sickness as well as with drunkenness is to eradicate them – by an education and a social, ideological change encouraging useful occupation and abstemiousness rather than idleness and indulgence. Within the world of the text, this profound change is finally achieved, as indicated by the reformation of Lowborough and Hattersley and by the virtual erasure of the chronically drunken figures of Grimsby, Lawrence senior and Huntington, in a gender-reversed play on the traditional literary motif of the female “sin-bearing” addict, whose disappearance from the text serves to reaffirm, in this case, the triumphant new world-order, based on the values personified by Helen, within the story (see Infantino 91).

2.2. George Eliot: “Janet’s Repentance”

2.2.1. The Author’s Biographical Background Relating to Alcohol

Concerning George Eliot’s literary use of references to drugs and intoxication, Kathleen McCormack tells us that

[...] George Eliot’s drug metaphors begin with but extend far beyond the traditional interpretation of them as interpretations of her characters’ dreams, hallucinations, and illusions. Indeed, George Eliot’s fiction demonstrates how she distributes references to alcohol and opium plentifully to create an elaborate and comprehensive pattern of metaphorical figures and plot-level facts which draws often on the contents of a well-stocked pharmacy of substances related to the medical, recreational, linguistic, social, physical, political, and artistic causes and effects of nineteenth-century intoxication. (McCormack, ix)

Compared to the other author’s, George Eliot’s experiences of and with drunkenness and its effects at first glance appear rather limited. Unlike Anne Brontë, she probably never had to witness the slow destruction of the lives of close relatives by alcohol, although McCormack finds some indications in the biographical work of Marganita Laski of George Eliot’s uncle having drunk himself to death (McCormack 28, referring to Laski 6). Furthermore, in the epilogue to her analysis of George Eliot’s literary use of intoxication as theme and metaphor, McCormack tentatively suggests that indeed her very mother, Christiana Pearson Evans, might have suffered from alcohol addiction. She bases this idea on the fact that, after the death in childbirth of twin sons, Mrs Evans spent the rest of her life as an invalid and thus had ample possibilities and a convincing “excuse to resort to such remedies as her early nineteenth-century environment supplied her, remedies whose ingredients consisted almost entirely of alcohol and opium” (McCormack 204). McCormack cites as potential evidence the fact that another critic, Sheila Shaw, argues that “mid-nineteenth-century physicians knew less than George Eliot about alcoholism” and the stages of recovery from it (McCormack 202, referring to Shaw 176). In addition to a possibly drinking mother, there are “no reasons to believe that [... George Eliot] was sheltered from the drinking around her” (McCormack 28), since “social occasions at Griff House [i.e., her childhood home] did not exclude strong drink” (30). On such occasions, she closely observed her acquaintances, among them “Mr and Mrs J. W. Buchanan,” who definitely served her as models for the “drinking Dempsters in ‘Janet’s Repentance’” (McCormack 30).

Generally,

sources for [her] drug figures range[d] from the dialogues of Plato, possibly the most securely high-culture figure in Western intellectual history, to the public-house culture unavoidably part of the lives of every early nineteenth-century man, woman, and child (whether or not they drank) because of the physical conspicuousness of public houses in the landscape and their diverse roles in nineteenth-century daily life. (McCormack 15)

As McCormack suggests, George Eliot's work is inspired by impressions of "[t]he bright twelve-year-old who walked the streets of Nuneaton at the time of the First Reform [and] missed nothing that went on in this community, [... including events] at the rowdy public houses" (McCormack 208).

George Eliot's radically Evangelical stance in her youth is a well-known fact, and it can easily be inferred that it must have influenced her original position on intoxication. As McCormack informs us, in those days her recorded "reactions concerning drinking" were very "strong," and once she even attempted to take "the pledge" herself (McCormack 16). Later on, however, these views changed, also because "George Eliot's intimacy with Lewes probably contributed to a relaxation of whatever Evangelical attitudes toward alcohol survived her move from Coventry to London in the early 1850s. Lewes included wine and cigars among his daily relaxations" (McCormack 16). Reports on their joint travels both in Britain and on the continent frequently contain descriptions of their drinking habits. They usually chose to drink according to local customs, be it beer, wine, or cider (see McCormack 30-33). Inspired by Lewes, George Eliot thus became opposed to the idea of teetotalism (see McCormack 16-18). Nevertheless, McCormack has found that, as part of her "realist project," Eliot went along with "many of her contemporaries," especially Thomas Carlyle, in "blam[ing] some aspects of the precarious Condition of England on the lures of escapism and self-indulgence," dealing "with problems that stem from intoxication and with intoxication itself as a social problem" (McCormack 20).

2.2.2. The Text

George Eliot's "Janet's Repentance", the third story to be included in a collection called *Scenes of Clerical Life*, was first published in serialised form in 1857, almost ten years after Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Janet Dempster, wife of the increasingly chronically drunken lawyer Robert Dempster, is the name-giving heroine of this story, which records – among other things – her recovery from an addiction to drink under the guiding influence of the Evangelical Reverend Edward Tryan, whom her husband has declared his arch-enemy in the social setting of the fictional town of Milby. Dempster tries to represent the good old ways of the traditional Anglican Church and English society, as opposed to the new “Methodist” attitudes introduced by the new curate. The story depicts lawyer Dempster’s hate campaigns, all of them linked in some way to the town’s main public drinking places, against the curate and the reactions of Tryan and his followers to this campaigning, which fails in the end to harm the spread of Evangelicalism and a new kind of piety and moral of duty in Milby. Furthermore, in a parallel, alternating construction, the narrative presents us with Dempster’s and his wife’s increasing alcohol abuse and the domestic hell – including physical abuse – he creates for her as a consequence of his drinking, up to the point where he throws her out of the house in the middle of the night. She takes refuge with one of Reverend Tryan’s followers and, with the curate’s sympathetic help, overcomes her addiction to drink while nursing her husband, who dies of the effects of an accident (caused by his violent intoxicated behaviour) combined with the physical effects of chronic drunkenness.

A contemporary unsigned review in the *Saturday Review* from 29 May 1858 characterised the story as follows:

[The author] calls upon us to accept as a heroine a woman driven by ill-treatment and misery to that unpoetical, but unhappily too real, refuge – wine! This tragic sin is dealt with at once delicately and boldly; and the story of her repentance and victory is one of the most pathetic scenes we know. A beautiful, impulsive, loving woman is shown us in her sin and in her rescue; and the influence exerted over her mind by the sympathetic earnestness of the Rev. Mr. Tryan – whose persecutions and sorrows also form an important element in the story – is represented in a style so truthful that we seem to be reading an actual biography. (Anonymous review in the *Saturday Review*, 29 May 1858, as quoted in: Carroll 69)

As will be shown in the following analysis, “Janet’s Repentance” is the text in this paper’s sample in which the ghost of alcohol lurks around every corner. In Eliot’s narrative, there is no escaping the presence of drink and drunkenness, neither for the various major and minor characters nor for the reader. Where alcohol is not immediately present, it still occupies at least part of the dialogue. There is hardly any chapter in the text without at least some reference to the substance, to drinking and

intoxication. As a subject matter of the text and as a part of everyday life and the conversations in the fictional world of Milby, drink is quasi omnipresent.

2.2.3. Room for Alcohol

As has been said above, metaphorically speaking, the scent of alcoholic beverages fills the streets of Milby. Thus, the town itself has to be treated as a specific setting for drinking and drunkenness, a space which is then further subdivided into different, to some degree gendered and classed, spheres, where alcohol is drunk in different ways for different reasons and with different results.

After immediately throwing the reader into an atmosphere of intoxication by presenting a heated, drink-fuelled discussion at the Red Lion Inn in the very first chapter of the story, Eliot goes on to characterise the town as follows: “Milby might be considered dull by people of a hypochondriacal temperament, and perhaps this was one reason why many of the middle-aged inhabitants, male and female, often found it impossible to keep up their spirits without a very abundant supply of stimulants” (Eliot 204). Further direct and indirect allusions to alcoholic beverages, drunkenness and sobriety abound in the narrator’s depiction of the difference between contemporary Victorian Milby and the Milby of around 1830, a depiction which is highly ironic, actually revealing the changes as minimal. The former, “refined, moral and enlightened” Milby, is populated by “perfectly sober papas” and gentlemen “who fall into no other excess at dinner-parties than the [...] well-bred and virtuous excess of stupidity” (Eliot 202). The ladies equal the men in decency: “though the ladies are still said sometimes to take too much upon themselves, they are never known to take too much in any other way” (Eliot 202). However, despite references to new Milby’s sobriety, the difference between “old” and “new” Milby is referred to as the difference between “bottle-nosed Britons, rejoicing over a tankard, in the old sign of the Two Travellers at Milby” and “severe-looking gentlemen [...] sipping imaginary port” in a mid-Victorian advertisement (Eliot 202-3). Whether they really just sip it, and how much of it, remains a matter of doubt.

The comparison of the setting as a whole to a pub is telling: the whole town of the respective period turns into a seemingly classless room full of alcohol and (primitive but merry) drunkards. This seemingly nostalgic representation, however, is

immediately subverted when the narrator proceeds to compare life in “good, old Milby” to “a dismal mixture of griping worldliness, vanity, ostrich feathers, and fumes of brandy: looking closer, you found some purity, gentleness, and unselfishness, as you may have observed a scented geranium giving forth its wholesome odours amidst blasphemy and gin in a noisy pot-house” (Eliot 211). Also, the apparent classlessness of the beer-drinking community is questioned in such characterisations as that of Mr Lowme, the “most aristocratic” inhabitant of the town, who, “in spite of his condescending way of chatting and drinking with inferior people, [...] would himself have scorned any closer identification with them” (Eliot 203). All this considered, we can say that, for Eliot, nothing seems more pointedly to indicate the changes seen throughout the first half of the nineteenth century than the apparent changes in people’s drinking customs and attitudes to drunkenness. As the text ironically sums up the developments we are to witness in the course of the story:

Evangelicalism was no longer a nuisance existing merely in by-corners, which any well-clad person could avoid; it was invading the very drawing-rooms, mingling itself with the comfortable fumes of port-wine and brandy, threatening to deaden with its murky breath all the splendour of the ostrich feathers, and to stifle Milby ingenuousness, not pretending to be better than its neighbours, with a cloud of cant and lugubrious hypocrisy. (Eliot 212).

Evangelicalism itself, in the form of Mr Tryan, offers an extension of sympathy – which, according to Dentith, was what Eliot saw as the most important thing in life and literature as well (see Dentith 30) – an extension of sympathy which raises the “standard of morality in Milby” to a higher order, “but here ‘higher’ means only ‘modified’ and made more complex. The addition of the Evangelical idea of duty is to the moral life of Milby what the addition of a central Ganglion is to animal life: a principle of organization raising it to a higher level of complexity,” changing and not changing at the same time its fundamental character (Ermath 283).

As a general rule, George Eliot’s text divides the settings of drinking and drunkenness into two distinctive types: the home and the public drinking establishment. As might be expected, the public drinking establishments are strictly reserved for men (we are never made to observe a woman entering them), whereas the references to the female protagonist’s drinking and its results are restricted to the space of her home. Although we hear on occasions that people in Milby know about Mrs Dempster’s drinking because they observe her in the streets in an intoxicated state (see Eliot 221), the omniscient narrator does not approach the drunken female subject in the streets, the

only exception being the scene when her husband turns Janet out of the house in the middle of the night (see Eliot 285-288). Her husband, on the other hand, as other men, is several times reported to be out in public in a drunken state and is also directly depicted there, be it in an inn or in the street (see, for example Eliot 230).

2.2.3.1. The Settings

The three public drinking establishments mentioned in the text are the “Red Lion” inn and two lesser drinking places called the “Green Man” and the “Bear and Ragged Staff.” The narrator directly informs us that the Red Lion is an inn (see Eliot 230), and as such it is represented as a big building with an upper storey and a large parlour as well as a bar (see 230 and 197). Whereas a great amount of attention is paid to the appearance and behaviour of the customers, the physical properties of the inn are of hardly any importance to the narrator. Direct attributions do not go beyond such meagre descriptions as “very warm” (197) and “noisy” (211), which mirror the textual representation of the bodily effects of (male) intoxication to be analysed further below.

The two other public drinking places are not categorised directly, but we can infer that the “Green Man” is a kind of gin-shop, whereas the “Bear and Ragged Staff” is presumably an alehouse or early beer-shop. Both are shown, in keeping with nineteenth-century reality, to be frequented by people of lower social standing than the “Red Lion” inn, as we hear in the descriptions of the mob which are their customers in the beginning of chapter 4 (see Eliot 227-229). The “Bear and Ragged Staff” is situated in a working class street – “one of those dismal streets where dirt and misery have no long shadows thrown on them to soften their ugliness” (Eliot 227). We hear that, in the pre-concerted protests against Mr Tryan’s evening lecture, Dempster’s followers “feed the flame of orthodox zeal with gin-and-water at the Green Man” and “solidify [...] church principles with heady beer at the Bear and Ragged Staff” (Eliot 227). Thus, the text immediately constructs such working-class drinking places as settings of social unrest, as is emphasised in the biting commentary of the omniscient narrator when he says that the street outside was

in that state of excitement which is understood to announce a “demonstration” on the part of the British public; [...] it was time for Bill Powers [...], who presided over the knot of beer-drinkers at the Bear and Ragged Staff, to issue forth with his companions, and, like the enunciator of the ancient myth, make the assemblage distinctly conscious of the common sentiment that had drawn them together. (Eliot 227)

However, the socially superior “Red Lion” inn – where we are presented with assemblies of farmers (see Eliot 206), the “rich miller” Tomlinson (197), professional people like the lawyer Dempster, the doctor Pilgrim (see 199) and the currier and churchwarden Mr Budd (see 200), and gentlemen with no seeming occupations like Mr Lowme (see 230) and Luke Byles (see 198) – is as well shown to be the starting ground of social unrest, since it is there that Dempster and his colleagues plan the campaign against Mr Tryan’s evening lecture and celebrate their first victory in the matter, after Dempster’s holding a speech to the public from the window of the inn (see Eliot chapter 1 and 230). They also use the location to distribute drink to the excited mob “hoisting placards” (Eliot 224). In addition to being a place of intrigues, celebrations and relaxation, connected with these functions the “Red Lion” inn is also a place where business is conducted, as we see when Dempster is handed a business letter from a client by Boots, the man in charge of the inn (see Eliot 201). Thus, the atmosphere of the inn, just as that of the alehouse, is constructed as one of openness to the entire (male) world, a centre of social transactions, as different from the hermetically closed-off drinking spaces of Anne Brontë.

Also different from Brontë, Eliot frequently takes out drunkenness into open public space. Almost at the beginning of the story, we hear that “several friends of sound religion were conveyed home with difficulty, one of them showing a dogged determination to seat himself in the gutter” (Eliot 230). We are also made to observe the proprietor of the inn follow Dempster across the inn-yard to ensure his safety (see Eliot 230). Furthermore, we are informed that Dempster frequently drives about in an intoxicated state, “flogging his galloping horse like a madman” in front of spectators (Eliot 220, see also 297). When he is “drinking more than ever,” his clients observe that “both his temper and his driving [... are] becoming more furious” (Eliot 276). Consequently, the text has him have an accident while driving in a state of inebriation, once again publicly “flogging his horse like a madman, till at last it g[ives] a sudden wheel, and he [i]s pitched out” (Eliot 316).

Janet is likewise said to be seen out in the streets when drunk, as for example in chapter three, where we are first introduced to her through the gossip of a group of female followers of Mr Tryan, who are well aware of her drinking habits since they often see her on the street “not fit to be out” (see Eliot 221-222). However, we are not allowed by the text to approach Janet in this outdoor setting when drunk.

A further setting for drunkenness is the home. In general, the narrator delights in describing individual houses and their gardens. Therefore, it is interesting to observe that the only space of private drinking in the story – that is, Dempster's house – is described with slightly less attention to detail than other homes we are made to see. The Dempsters' home is the place where the heroine, Janet Dempster, drinks. Her husband also drinks there, as we learn when he has guests or when Janet discovers a half-empty brandy bottle of his in his study (see Eliot 334), but the emphasis is on his public drinking. As to Janet, we are never made to observe her drink at home, but only see her in the context of the house when she is already intoxicated and expecting her violent husband. Given this context, one might assume that it is symbolism rather than realism that predominates in the representation of her home. When we are first introduced to the surroundings, we hear that it is "an old-fashioned house [...] full of long passages, and rooms with low ceilings," and Janet's (drunken) appearance resembling a ghost is emphasised by telling us that "a slow step was heard on the stairs, and a distant light began to flicker on the wall of the passage" (Eliot 231). For the rest, the house seems dominated by the two mothers, Janet's and her husband's: the former's portrait – the portrait of the more sympathising witness – over the mantelpiece presides over the scene of marital violence and drunkenness in the nightly dining-room (see Eliot 232), while the latter, the one foolishly taking sides with her son, is represented by her easy-chair which dominates the descriptions of the dining-room in the daytime and is said to be the silent witness of the less violent quarrels between the couple during the day (see Eliot 241-242). The text thus implicitly hints at the possibility of parental responsibility for the fate of the couple.

A further place in the home where drinking is taking place is the Dempsters' kitchen, where we see the cook Betty warm her beer, which she seems to take regularly (see Eliot 309). Here once again, the consumption of alcohol is linked with a professional activity, as in the town inn.

2.2.4. Drinking

Interestingly, although the text shows us both Janet and her husband Robert when they are drunk, we are only made to observe the drinking of him and other male figures in the story. As Carol Martin says, "[t]he focus is rather on Janet's misery and the

aftermath of her drinking” (Carol Martin 81). The only thing that can be inferred about the woman’s drinking is that it takes place within the home, since she is never said or shown to frequent public drinking places. In general, we learn, Janet’s drinking is of the individualist, problem-centred kind, usually preceding frustrating or painful scenes with her husband in an attempt to “arm[...] herself with leaden stupor” (Eliot 277). Such is also the case when we first see her drunk in chapter 4 (Eliot 231-232). In her solitude, Janet seems to drink what is in the house; i.e., her husband’s usual drink, brandy – as we see in the scene after his death where she experiences an instant of alcohol-craving in the face of a decanter of brandy found in his study (see Eliot 334). She also tells Tryan that she started her drinking career with wine (see Eliot 298). Apart from her solitary individualist drinking, she also seems to drink in the presence of strangers during meals as a form of social ritual, and, thus, we can assume that even later, she also uses wine, besides brandy, to intoxicate her (see 283-284).

The men’s drinking is depicted with enough detail to make us aware that here also, even at the inn, the men cater for themselves, mixing their own drinks (see, for example 197), usually brandy-and-water. However, as in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*’s drinking scenes, this catering for oneself is part of a larger social ritual for which the men assemble regularly after or between regular working hours at the Red Lion inn (see Eliot chapters 1, 4, 6 and 7). It is a social ritual, insofar as the men go there regularly after work for group relaxation. The ritual character of the drinking is even more marked in the scene where the anti-Tryanites convene to celebrate their initial victory over Reverend Tryan. We hear that the men assemble in the inn’s parlour, around “[t]he most capacious punch-bowl” on the premises (Eliot 230). The brewing of the punch is ironically described as an act of “office” performed by the second most important member of the group, the born gentleman Mr Lowme, while the remaining persons, all of them male, “with the readiness of irresponsibility, ignorantly suggest[...] more lemons” (Eliot 230). The men also drink at the home in small groups for purposes of recreation linked with business affairs, just as at the inn, as we learn in chapter 14 without being allowed to observe it (see 284).

When Dempster’s problems increase in the course of the story, the narrator more repeatedly mentions that he is also drunk during the day, already drinking before he leaves his house for his job (see, for example, Eliot 296). He is also referred to more directly as spending his evenings in the company of his wife “in drunken obstinacy by the dead fire and dying lights in the dining room,” which indicates that he now more

frequently drinks alone at home instead of as part of a social gathering at the inn (Eliot 277).

What we furthermore hear about the drinking customs of the Milby of the period is that quite respectable people like the doctor, Pilgrim, as a part of their normal daily routine, drink considerable amounts of alcohol along with their food: “as each [... meal] had been followed by a few glasses of ‘mixture,’ containing a less liberal proportion of water than the articles he himself labelled with that broadly generic term, he was in a condition which his groom indicated with poetic ambiguity, by saying that ‘master had been in the sunshine’” (Eliot 199). The professional cook, Betty, on the other hand, though drinking in a space associated with her job, drinks individualistically, because she feels low, within the house – without any group and its ritual determining her consumption. However, she nevertheless sticks to the rules of class presented in the text’s division of drinking groups between the lower-class alehouse (beer) and gin-shop (gin) and upper-class inn (brandy) in her choice of drink – namely, beer.

Summing things up, we can say that the text presents us with three different kinds of drinking: gender-neutral drinking along with one’s meals at private homes, which is not presented in detail because the text takes it for granted considering the period it is set in (the early 1830s); male drinking for various social purposes at public drinking places, which is depicted in some detail, also because it is used as a means of characterisation and of establishing the major conflict at the core of the story between the followers and opponents of Tryan, between traditionalism and the innovative religious revival he represents; and the private secluded drinking of both the male and female protagonists for the individualistic sake of drunkenness, either as a means to bear reality or for habit’s and addiction’s sake.

2.2.5. Drinking Characters: Psychological Aspects

Interestingly, the text presents exactly two examples of heavy drinkers whose use of alcohol is presented in detail, one of them female, the other male. In both cases, the text offers us instances of addictive behaviour, as we see in Janet’s desperate craving for drink after she has decided to give up the habit (see Eliot 313, 329, 332 and 334-335). Though we never hear that Robert Dempster suffers from a similarly painful craving,

we are made to infer that his use of the substance is more than just habitual, by being told just how often during the day he drinks, even at ten in the morning (see Eliot 295-296).

Robert Dempster

Robert Dempster, the quarrelsome lawyer, is presented to us as a tyrant by nature, who physically and verbally abuses his wife (see Eliot 231-232, 277 and 283-285) and even his servants (see Eliot 296-297). As Roberts says, “Dempster is a completely successful portrayal of a decaying, violent egoist” (Roberts 59).

His violence exists independently of his drinking, although the two are shown to be linked in that drunkenness fuels his violence in the scenes referred to in the above-cited passages, and both are there without any reason outside Dempster’s nature:

[d]o not believe that it was anything either present or wanting in poor Janet that formed the motive of her husband’s cruelty. Cruelty, like every other vice, requires no motive outside itself – it only requires opportunity. You do not suppose Dempster had any motive for drinking beyond the craving for drink; the presence of brandy was the only necessary condition. And an unloving, tyrannous, brutal man needs no motive to prompt his cruelty; he needs only the perpetual presence of a woman he can call his own. (Eliot 278)

The text hardly lets us recognise anything about Dempster’s personality when he is not at least to some degree under the influence of drink or its after-effects. One of the rare occasions where we are allowed to glimpse his behaviour when he is not influenced by drink is in chapter 7. When he is not affected by alcohol, Dempster is capable of some good humour (see Eliot 241). It is mainly centred on his mother, whose “darling son” he has been (Eliot 241). In this good humour, he makes friendly, commonplace compliments, telling his mother, whom he childishly calls “Mamsey,” that she looks “as fresh as a daisy” (Eliot 241). We also hear that he, who is usually “hard, astute, domineering,” never gives her a “harsh word” (Eliot 242). On the same occasion where he condescends to take his mother for a walk in the garden, we hear that he calls Janet by the pet name “Gipsy” – as the narrator tells us, this is a remnant of the first days of their marriage, which were ones of “fondness,” an expression which, however, traditionally refers more to physical passion than to true love (Eliot 278 and 243). However, all this might not only be due to a soft spot in Dempster’s personality, since the text informs us that he, “like most tyrannous people, had that dastardly kind of self-restraint which enabled him to control his temper where it suited his own convenience to do so” treating people “with exceptional civility” (Eliot 296). On the other hand, he

even seems to fly at unrelated people in his passion at times, like his neighbour Mrs Pettifer (see Eliot 221). This discord in the characterisation posits drunkenness as the main cause for Dempster's impulsiveness. Sober, he is calculating and cruel; drunk, he loses control and becomes indiscriminately violent.

The personality of the protagonist is further constructed as cunning via his business behaviour. Already in the beginning of the story we hear, albeit not from the omniscient narrator but an unreliable source that, as a lawyer, Dempster is good because he is unscrupulous. He has "cheated" Mrs Linnet "out of Pye's Croft" (Eliot 220). Even before, we have heard from one of the drinking and campaigning partners at the Red Lion that Dempster "knows more about law when he's drunk than all the rest on 'em when they're sober" (Eliot 201-202). The omniscient narrator confirms this comment by giving us details about the law office at which Dempster works successfully: Dempster's senior partner Pittman seems to have tricked most of his clients and, as the text insinuates, has in turn been defrauded by Dempster, to whom he "had to resign the chief profits, as well as the active business of the firm" (Eliot 206). Dempster's general and professional attitude of depreciation towards other human beings also shows in the comment concerning one of his oldest clients – whom he is said to "like" – namely, that he is proud of "turning [... him] round his thumb" (Eliot 263). He is able to do so out of "his will to control" (Carroll, "Organic" 341) and by his lawyer's "control over language," which also shows in the scathing play-bill in chapter 9 (Fenves 423).

Telling us all the above about Dempster, the text first and foremost constructs him as a hypocrite: he campaigns against Mr Tryan because the latter believes in saviour by faith, not good works, although Dempster himself is never seen to perform a single good deed. This hypocrisy is the one thing he shares with his drinking companions and only to a far lesser degree with the sober followers of Mr Tryan and the female drinking protagonist. Apart from marking him as hypocritical, his hate-campaign against the Evangelical curate also marks him as narrow-minded, almost fanatical, and reveals the pride at the core of his personality.

Janet Dempster

The figure of Janet Dempster is mainly defined by four characteristics: her impulsive compassion for suffering people, her pride, her steadiness in loving and her childlessness. The last aspect is always emphasised as a sore point in Janet's life, as in chapter 13: it is the cause of "half of Janet's misery" and, had she children, the narrator

argues, “her poor hungry heart would have been fed with strong love, and might never have needed that fiery poison to still its cravings” (Eliot 277). After her recovery from alcoholism, this need of Janet’s is assuaged by her adoption of a child (see Eliot 350). Janet’s urgent need for love and her own steadiness in loving are emphasised in the same section, where we are told that, concerning her husband, Janet is “subdued in a moment by a word that recall[s] the old days of fondness; and at times of comparative calm w[ill] often recover her sweet woman’s habit of caressing playful affection” (Eliot 278). From her own point of view, the only thing she has ever done to her husband has been to “love him to well” and “believe in him too foolishly” (Eliot 278). The point that, in general, she is rather dependent on someone to love and be loved by is again made when we are told that “[t]he chief strength of her nature lay in her affection, which coloured all the rest of her mind [...]; it made her cling with tenacity to every object that had once stirred her kindly emotions” (Eliot 331). In chapter 16, the narrator tells us that “Janet’s nature did not belie her grand face and form: there was energy, there was strength in it; but it was the strength of the vine, which must have its broad leaves and rich clusters borne up by a firm stay” (Eliot 292). As Lansbury informs us, this is typical, since “[w]omen are born to love in Eliot’s fictional world, but equally so, the woman does not exist who is neither diminished nor destroyed by love” (Lansbury 107), as Janet almost is by her love for her brutal husband. Janet’s compassion for others is likewise illustrated repeatedly, especially so in the representation of the case of a girl suffering from consumption (see Eliot 239 and 274).

The fourth characteristic the text gives, that of pride, is referred to again and again, and it is explicitly seen as the source of Janet’s problems: “Janet’s bitterness would overflow in ready words; she was not to be made meek by cruelty; she would repent of nothing in the face of injustice [...] Proud, angry resistance and sullen endurance were now almost the only alternations she knew. [...] [V]oluntarily she would do nothing to mollify him, unless he first relented” (Eliot 278). This creates a painful vicious circle since, as the narrator informs us, for Dempster, it is “the keen retort which whets the edge of hatred” (Eliot 278). It is also pride which makes her stay with her husband (see Eliot 278) and leads her to hide her sufferings from all but her mother, “bear[ing] it all proudly to the world” (see Eliot 278).

All the said factors are said to contribute indirectly to her sufferings and thus her drinking behaviour. As Ermath says, George Eliot was “always harsh” on characters who avoided recognition of the facts of life for whatever reason, as Janet does in her

pride and her “alcoholic stupors” (Ermath 280). However, in an equally determinist mode, it are her characteristic compassion and love which help Janet in the end to cast away her pride and open up to the sympathy of Mr Tryan – an act of confession which in the story paves the way for recovery, in a process resembling that employed by the teetotal movement: finally admitting to herself and others her wretchedness and feelings of guilt (see Eliot 298-299), Janet is allowed to form plans for a change in her life and a reformation of her drinking habits, plans which are then put into practice under the sympathetic guidance of the Evangelical minister, while nursing her husband and later caring for the consumptive Mr Tryan and others become her new occupations in life, replacing drinking. As Levine says, it is part of Eliot’s realist determinism that “Janet Dempster [...] is saved from moral destruction by her own powerful desire to overcome her habit” (Levine 277).

With regard to Janet’s drinking career, we learn that originally she was exempt even from normal social drinking. Thus, her addiction to drink is shown to arise *not* from the evil influence of social customs, as in Robert Dempster, but rather out of sorrow: “one day when I was very wretched and the wine was standing on the table[...] I poured some wine into a large glass and drank it. It blunted my feelings, and made me more indifferent. After that, temptation was always coming” (Eliot 298). From then on, she drinks regularly, and we often hear in the text that she is intoxicated, though we are never allowed to observe her alcohol consumption.

Minor Characters

Most minor drinking characters in the story are male, as Robert Dempster’s drinking companions at the Red Lion and the explicitly mentioned members of the mob at the various drinking places depicted in chapter 4. All of the men assembled at the Red Lion are said to be professionals of some kind, with one or two additional persons with a leisured lifestyle. As has been said, these men are said to drink for various social reasons, such as proving their manliness, and for the purpose of relaxation. The only drinking female, besides Janet, who is mentioned in the text, is the cook Betty. Although she is a member of the working class, she, like her middle-class employer Janet, seems to drink only in the seclusion of her kitchen. She is a resolute woman, sympathetically portrayed, who also drinks for individualist reasons, in her case, as she says, “when I’m plagued,” “feel[ing] very low” or because she feels “a sinkin’ at [... her] stomach” (Eliot 309).

2.2.6. Drunkenness: Its Qualities, Effects and Functions

Let us now turn to the qualities the text attributes to drunkenness. First of all, it is interesting to note that the text presents us with two different kinds of drunkenness, that of Janet and that of Robert Dempster.

In the case of Robert Dempster, the cunning and brutal lawyer, drunkenness does not seem to affect his capabilities. As a minor character remarks in chapter one: “he’s drunk the best part of a bottle o’ brandy since we’ve been sitting, and I’ll bet a guinea when he’s got to [... his client’s] his head ’ll be as clear as mine” (Eliot 201-202). In chapter 2, some farmers approvingly observe that “he can drink a bottle o’ brandy at a sittin’, an’ yit see further through a stone wall when he’s done, than other folks ’ll see through a glass winder” (Eliot 206). We are made to see that it is rather true that alcohol, even in large quantities, does not severely affect Dempster’s abilities when he returns home after celebrating “till long past midnight” at the Red Lion (Eliot 230): although he initially hesitates to unlock his house’s door, he has no real problems to do so (see Eliot 231). He is only slower than usual, but not clumsy. This is commented on by the narrator, who insinuates that this is unexpected considering how much he has drunk. Thus, we see that the text supposes clumsiness as one attribute of drunkenness, although it is missing in Robert Dempster. No explanation for this discrepancy is given, however. That he is master of his acts even under the influence of drink is also emphasised by mentioning repeatedly that he is capable of driving his gig himself throughout the whole day, during which he is supposed to drink. Here, as everywhere, the only thing he loses control over is his violent behaviour, making him flog “his galloping horse like a madman” (Eliot 220). Only for a short period of time does he renounce driving in his gig all by himself, taking a servant with him but still driving himself if possible, at a point in time when his body is said to begin losing “that physical power of supporting excess which had long been the admiration of such fine spirits as Mr Tomlinson” (Eliot 279).

Different from the physical and the professional level of behaviour, drink and drunkenness are shown to affect Dempster’s social abilities to some degree. Although the text assures us, as has been cited above, that Dempster is cunning even in his violence, choosing to be civil to some relevant people, we are told, nevertheless, that drink makes him violent even to outsiders, such as Mrs Pettifer, a fact also referred to

in the above section. When things grow worse for Dempster, we are told that his clients “noticed with some concern that he was drinking more than ever, and that both his temper and his driving were becoming more furious,” the former showing in an “exasperation of loud-tongued abuse” (Eliot 276). When we are first introduced to his behaviour when he is drunk, the text shows him calling in a “loud rasping tone” for his wife, shouting towards her that she is “a creeping idiot” and a “pale staring fool” (Eliot 231). In an act of drunken marital violence, he pushes her before him and starts striking her (see Eliot 232). These acts of violence are represented as typical of Robert Dempster’s drunkenness, since an occasional evening where he does not drink is said to signify relief on Janet’s side (see Eliot 241). His violence is thus intrinsically linked to his intoxication, a fact which is further underlined by the text choosing to indicate the increase in Dempster’s drinking due to his failing fortunes by once again showing us Janet wondering at “dark bruise on her shoulder, which aches as she dresses herself,” and we hear that her husband is often “seated in drunken obstinacy by the dead fire and dying lights in the dining-room, rating her in harsh tones, reiterating old reproaches” (Eliot 277). On the evening which marks the turning point of Janet’s fate and the story, he is once again said to have “evidently drunk a great deal, and [... to be] in an angry humour” (Eliot 282). On this occasion, he throws clothes at his wife but gets back to self-mastery when the expected visitors come (see Eliot 283). After they have left, he threatens to kill Janet, his face “fierce with drunken rage” (Eliot 284). Although he has drunk throughout the day and the evening, his speech on this as on other occasions is not in the least impaired. Finally, he throws her out of the house. In this context, we learn that even heavy drinking does not affect his memory, since he remembers his deed the next day (see Eliot 295). His last act of violence when he is (slightly) drunk is that he strikes one of his servants in the face with his whip (see Eliot 296-297).

Only on rare occasions is drink said to completely incapacitate Dempster, by making him fall asleep (see Eliot 284).

The drunkenness of Janet Dempster is presented along completely different lines from that of her husband. First and foremost, drunkenness with Janet does not result in violence, at least not in any direct form, neither physical nor verbal. We are left to infer that alcohol might indeed lend some degree of vehemence to her words to her husband when the text mentions the “keen retort” that “whets the edge of [her husband’s] hatred” (Eliot 278). On the whole, however, intoxication is represented as taking two

different shapes in the case of Janet. One way in which her drunkenness shows is as heightened sensitivity. This is said to be the case when Janet does not consume much alcohol: “[e]verything she had taken this evening seemed only to stimulate her senses and her apprehensions to new vividness. Her heart beat violently, and she heard every sound in the house” (Eliot 284). Under the influence of alcohol and under threat from her husband, she is “on the stretch to catch every sound,” and when she is about to face him, she is said to be in a state of “flushed, feverish defiance,” her imagination kindled into believing he might kill her (Eliot 284). The impression that drunkenness can signify feverish excitement is taken up again in the next chapter, where the text tells us that her “troubles had been sinking her lower from year to year, pressing upon her like heavy fever-laden vapours” (Eliot 287), and later we hear once again that, among other things, her life has been one of “fevered despair” (Eliot 290). The heated and agitated form that drunkenness takes with her also shows in the fact that a friend excuses her drunken behaviour in the streets with headaches which “make one almost delirious”. A delirious person is flushed and – presumably – also clumsy, walking insecurely. We are also told that Janet’s mother is used to seeing her daughter “heated, maddened, sobbing [...] with selfish passion, and wildly wishing herself dead” (Eliot 237).

Furthermore, we are told that Janet’s life has also been one of “stupor” (Eliot 290), and it is this stupor that the text mainly attributes to Janet’s drunkenness. When we first see her, she is drunk, and her intoxication manifests itself in her “strangely fixed, sightless gaze” and her silence (Eliot 231), and she stands in front of her husband “stupidly unmoved” (Eliot 232). Only when Robert Dempster starts beating her is she able to scream for pity. In chapter 13, we hear that for Janet, drinking means “arming herself with leaden stupor” (Eliot 277), a stupor which shows in “sullen endurance” (Eliot 278). Quite correctly, some female acquaintance guesses that she drinks to “blunt her feelings” (Eliot 222). This stupefied aspect of drunkenness also shows in an increased clumsiness, as when she holds “aslant a heavy-plated drawing-room candlestick” in chapter 4 (Eliot 231).

As to the mid- and long-term effects of drunkenness on the drinkers, the text’s construction for Janet and Robert differs greatly. This is mainly due to the fact that the omniscient narration sometimes centres on Janet and other positive female and male characters of the novel so as to almost approach a third-person limited narration, a textual treatment which is not granted to Robert Dempster and other male drinkers in

the story, all of them presented in a negative light. Thus, we only hear that, in the long-run, drinking affects Dempster's liver (see Eliot 264), and we see him ever more irascible. Whether this irascibility is due to intoxication itself or the after-effects of drinking, like a hangover, is frequently not made clear, since – as has been said – Dempster seems to drink throughout the whole day. The long-term effects of Dempster's chronic intoxication are "meningitis and delirium tremens," as predicted by Doctor Pratt (see Eliot 280 and 317). This is presented in some detail. In his sickness, Robert's face is "purple and swollen, his eyes dilated and fixed with a look of terror on something he seem[s] to see approaching" (Eliot 321). He has hallucinations of his wife coming to strangle him with her hair, obviously for feelings of guilt (see Eliot 321), which alternate with mad feelings of rage (see Eliot 321-322). In the long-run, this delirium gives way to "intervals of stupor" (Eliot 325), Dempster now turning "pale [...] and haggard" (Eliot 327), a stupor that ultimately leads to his death (see Eliot 328).

The case is different for Janet. We are informed that, after drinking the night before, she is "feverish," full of "blank listlessness and despair" (Eliot 277), effects resembling the state she is in when she acutely drunk. According to her husband, she then "moon[s] about like Crazy Jane" (Eliot 281). In this state of listlessness, presumably accompanied by the headaches she tells her friend about, she often forgets to take proper care of her outward appearance (see Eliot 279-280 and 281). Her step is "languid," and her gaze is vacant (Eliot 281). Her feelings of despair increase in the aftermath of drunkenness (and domestic violence), causing her fits of sobbing, "hysterical passion," "spasmodic agitation" and aggression showing in accusations against others (Eliot 289; see also 281). It also brings her to the brink of suicide (see Eliot 282). The agitation also shows in her dreams, from which she wakes up "shaking with terror" (Eliot 291). Summing things up, we can say that, for Eliot's text, the effect of female drunkenness is a variation between agitation and "depression" full of "self-despair" (Eliot 292). This shows in the fact that the more Janet suffers – and, therefore, drinks –, the less does she go about "on her good-natured errands" (Eliot 279).

Another long-term effect of drunkenness is that it leaves a craving for more alcohol behind: "I was ashamed, and hated what I did; but almost while the thought was passing through my mind that I would never do it again, I did it. It seemed as if there was a demon in me always making me rush to do what I longed not to do" (Eliot 298).

A last effect of intoxication is that, different from her husband, in severe cases Janet's drunkenness also causes memory black-outs (see Eliot 277). In her situation, Janet actually longs for this effect of drunkenness.

As to the functions of drunkenness in the story, we can say that it fulfils a central function, since problematic drinking is one of the main topics of the text. As such, drinking and drunkenness help to establish a contrast between the old order represented by Dempster and other socially drinking members of Milby society and the new atmosphere of piety, compassion and seriousness as represented by Tryan and his more or less sincere followers, all of whom are non-drinkers, with the exception of Janet – who, however, stops drinking at the point in time when she decides to turn to Tryan, whose sympathy and faith help her overcome her addiction to drink. As Wiesenfarth says, in the course of the story, “Milby turns from the narrow, self-satisfied way which Dempster's bullying drunkenness exemplifies to the way of self-surrender which is Tryan's Christian message” (Wiesenfarth 73). This narrative function of drunkenness brings about its being associated with the devil since, according to Wiesenfarth, in Tryan and Dempster “Christ faces Satan” (Wiesenfarth 73), an attribution underlined by Dempster's neighbours' comparing him to Old Harry and Old Nick, names commonly used for the devil (see Wiesenfarth 71, referring to Eliot 220 and 230).

In addition to this function of defining what is wrong in Milby society, drunkenness, by virtue of its being a central topic of the story, also serves as a device of characterisation. Drunkenness is used to reveal the most abominable in Dempster, by making him more violent. It also serves to illustrate and underline the despair of the abused woman. As a consequence of determining the actions of two of the central characters of the story, drunkenness is finally also employed as a plot device. In his drunkenness, Dempster turns his wife out of the house, thus unwittingly breaking the vicious circle of her addiction to alcohol by bringing about a change in her circumstances. It is intoxication that contributes to the “convenient” accident Robert Dempster has, and it is his alcohol abuse that is said to impede his recovery from the effects of that very accident. Thus the society represented by Dempster brings about its own downfall by its very own indulgence in vice.

2.2.7. Conclusion: the Construction of Drunkenness

As Peter Fenves accurately observes, the text presents us with two different constructions of alcoholism (although the text never calls it by this name, despite the fact that Huss's ideas might have come to the notice of George Eliot). According to Fenves, the second chapter, which offers a description of Milby society, presents "excessive drinking [as] stem[ming] neither from individual weakness nor from some psychic compulsion but rather from the abundance of time and dearth of entertainment. Alcoholism is thus determined by social hierarchy, not individual psychology; it is a debt a society must pay when some of its members have too much idle time" (Fenves 427). This is already illustrated in the first chapter, where we may observe Dempster and his cronies at the "Red Lion." The impression that drunkenness arises from a lack of other occupations and entertainment is further underlined in chapter 4, where we see how alcohol turns the bored lower classes of Milby into "a crowd that is rough, iconoclastic, and given more to raucous laughter than to silence," a kind of "carnival" crowd George Eliot disliked (Butwin 350; see also 355-357). Overall, Milby as a whole is socially sick, as shows in the fact that "the lawyers are unscrupulous, the doctors are mercenary, the poor are oppressed, the rich are vulgar and pretentious, the whole picture is informed by a suggestion of a generally low moral standard," all of which shows more clearly in people's intoxication (Noble 154). From this social-moral sickness of egotism, narrow-mindedness and boredom, women are not exempt, as Almqvist Norbelie shows in her analysis of the female community in Milby (see Almqvist 73-77).

Janet's drunkenness, on the other hand, does not fall in the same category: she is not one of the "overindulgent drinkers outlined in the second chapter," and there "is never any indication that her drinking stems from an excess of time or dearth of entertainment" and is thus a sign of moral failure supported by society (Fenves 428). Rather, her abuse of drink "only corresponds to [... her] particular psychic constitution" (Fenves 435). The said "particular psychic constitution" is indirectly caused by the first kind of drunkenness, in that it creates a domestic hell for her. This leads McCormack to observe that in the *Scenes of Clerical Life* "drinking is a symptom and a cause of social sickness" (McCormack 48). Speaking more clearly, we have to say, considering the above observations, that it is a *male* symptom of social sickness, which in turn is the cause of *female* personal sickness, which again re-affects society, as when Janet gives

up her care for the poor due to the effects of drunkenness. However, sometimes this twofold construction of drunkenness, with one drunkenness a sign of social moral failing and the other one of great, sickening personal despair, is threatened to be thwarted by the narrator's and other characters' "moralizing response that is at odds with Janet's alcoholism as a symptom of [...] her intolerable domestic circumstances" (Gribble, Introduction xxx). As in the case of Betty the cook – who, as we said, also states that she drinks against feeling low and not for reasons of social ritual or entertainment – Janet's own explanation of her drinking by her personal misery might in part be an excuse. However, it would be easier to explain the moralising tone as arising from an attempt to keep the contemporary Victorian reader reading by bowing to his sensibilities. We have to keep in mind that Eliot constructs Janet's (and thus female) private drunkenness, in keeping with (and going beyond) medical ideas of her day, as a kind of addiction, an addiction which outlives its origins – as we see in Janet's temptation to drink even after the death of her husband (see Eliot 334-335 and 223). This was not yet a commonplace idea for her readers; and thus, Eliot might have been lead to ensure moral credibility by moralising, to the detriment of the text's construction of addictive drunkenness. Interestingly, as we said, there are no hints at a similar addictive craving for alcohol in Dempster, the socially sanctioned and socially-inspired drinker. His chronic abuse of drink and thus his drunkenness are seemingly not constructed as an illness in its own right, whereas his wife's drunkenness is.

That Janet's drunkenness is a sickness is emphasised by the fact that it can and needs to be cured, and the cure is more important to the text than her drunkenness itself, about which, as Carol Martin says, the narrator is rather "reticent," telling us about it but "refrain[ing] from depicting it" (Carol Martin 78), the focus being more on her "misery and the aftermath of her drinking" (Carol Martin 81). The cure, as I said, follows the scheme set forth by the teetotal movement, consisting of Janet's recognition of her misery and confession of it to Mr Tryan, her recantation of her drinking in front of him and her justification by her new lifestyle – Mr Tryan helping her all the time by meeting her and lending her a sympathetic ear.

The process of her healing from the "disease" of drunkenness is depicted in detail, thus contributing to a construction of it as a veritable sickness, as different from her husband's, which only *results* in terminal illness, but is never constructed as one. As Sheila Shaw argues, "the kind of details George Eliot describes would be known only by one who had experienced them" (Shaw 176). Shaw shows us that Eliot depicted all

the stages in a drunkard's recovery we know about today, from the first stages of "detoxification" with its emotional fits, cravings and "withdrawal pains" (Shaw 175-176), followed by a "sense of exhilaration which comes when the tremors and, for some, hallucinations, have ended" (Shaw 176). The "third stage" of recovery comes "several weeks after," as when Janet finds her husband's brandy bottle and experiences almost convulsive temptation and revulsion (Shaw 176).

Thus, we can say that male drunkenness is constructed as a social "sin" of indulgence, whereas female drunkenness is treated as a sickness arising in the face of social "sin." As I said in the chapter on the literary uses of drunkenness, the substance abuser and addict was the traditional sin-bearing victim to be either killed off or subsumed by a new dominant morality. George Eliot's text makes use of this motif in the construction of drunkenness: drunkenness indicates sinful sickness which has to be overcome, either by the death of the drinker, as in Dempster's case, which symbolically indicates a change in Milby society, or by the repentance of the drunkard, as in Janet's case. Thus, drunkenness is at once constructed as an acute personal problem and as old-fashioned, something to be overcome, by the individual and by society. According to the construction of the text, it belongs to an old world which has to be surmounted by a new spirit of sympathy and duty as incarnated in Reverend Tryan and as opposed to the egotism and self-indulgence as represented by Dempster and his cronies. As different from Brontë, the text does not use feudal, aristocratic associations of drinking to construct it as old-fashioned for the nineteenth century: in "Janet's Repentance," drunkenness is shown to be a real middle- (and working-)class problem – the aristocracy do not feature in or in any way influence the drinking mores, and a middle-class, work-ethic-based spirit alone will not change anything, according to Eliot: most of the drinkers presented in some detail are successful professionals, although they have too much spare time. The representation of Dempster, of course, shows him to be a conservative, a Tory in outlook – however, by presenting his mere egotism as the driving force of his political action, the text hinders us to see traditionalism as such as a factor influencing drinking behaviour. Moral corruption, in whatever social shape, is presented to us as the only direct and indirect cause for drunkenness. This might also be the reason why the text does not posit any prior physical susceptibilities to drink, be they temperamental or otherwise. And moral corruption, other than physical susceptibilities, can be attributed to a historical period, and can be overcome with it – or at least the text suggests as much, in an almost Utopian stance, which is helped by

exhortations to change packed into the contrast between the biting irony regarding merely superficial rapid progress in Milby, centring on “gas-light,” the railway and an only seemingly better education (Eliot 202) and the real, but slow moral change Reverend Tryan brings to Milby.

3. CONCLUSION

The aim of the first part of my paper has been to establish the cultural context of the representation of drinking and drunkenness in the two primary texts. Let us now take a concluding look at how the two texts are to be placed in this wider context.

As to the symbolical attributions to drinking and alcohol discussed in the beginning of this paper, we can observe that there is a reticence on the part of both authors to make use of them, insofar as the symbolic applications are not in the foreground of the narratives. As I have said in the discussion of the texts, the association between alcohol and intoxicating love and sensuality is there in both texts, albeit indirectly. Arthur Huntington, the central drinking character in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, inspires sexual attraction and intoxicating love in the heroine of the story and commits adultery. In “Janet’s Repentance,” on the other hand, the drinking couple, which is now linked by violence and drunkenness, was formerly connected by fond loving. In *Tenant*, we furthermore encounter allusions to the mythological figure of Dionysus as the god of friendship, since drinking and drunkenness are the affair of a circle of friends. This attribution of the spirit of friendship to spirits is, however, immediately subverted in the text, since alcohol – although it is one of the reasons the men assemble in private groups of “friends” – does not truly unite them but rather leads each of the heavier drinkers to individual incapacitation by excess. The Dionysian aspect of laughter is likewise brought into the story by making laughter the one characteristic of Arthur Huntington. On the other hand, associations of alcohol and drunkenness with fertility, in the concrete, or creativity in the abstract sense are of no importance in *Tenant* – different from George Eliot’s text, where alcohol seems partly to inspire Dempster’s vicious creativity as a lawyer and trouble-maker. That alcohol might have a link with virility and vital energy is likewise questioned by Brontë, who seems to rather emphasise the effeminising or debilitating effects of drink. Robert Dempster, on the

other hand, is a virile, vital brute, a bit like drunken Ralph Hattersley in *Tenant*, but Hattersley is so not really because of drink but because of his original temperament, the worst of which drunkenness brings out, while with Dempster, it almost seems as if his virility and violence are really increased or created by drink. Although a link between the characters' virility and drunkenness is at best doubtful in both texts, both alike show us that the society portrayed tends to define true manliness according to the men's capacity to drink. Thus, one might argue that both Eliot and Brontë, but especially so Brontë, subvert this traditional association of drink and drunkenness by depicting the in truth weakening effects of drink.

As to the utilitarian functions of alcohol, Anne Brontë does not accord them much importance. Alcohol need not necessarily accompany meals, though it can, and as a pharmacological substance, its usefulness is rather dubious according to the text. The only effect attributed to drink is that it assuages the effects of – drink. In “Janet's Repentance” alcohol is drunk along with meals, and it is used in a medicinal function by one of the two doctors, a method presented ironically, although the text unquestioningly does grant alcohol pharmacological effects at Dempster's sickbed. The utilitarian function of concrete drinks to serve as markers of class and prestige is there in both texts. As we saw, Eliot quite obviously uses different kinds of drink to indicate class: beer and gin for the lower classes, wine and brandy for middle- and upper-middle-class persons. Brontë also generally sticks to these rules for distributing types of drink, and employs the associations of gin as a lower-class drink to indicate the sinking-lower of Arthur Huntington and his drinking companions. In addition, both texts, in ironic realist fashion, show drinking and drunkenness as prestige factors for the male characters, connected with the symbolic association of alcohol with true virility.

Public drinking places are used in a similar fashion in Eliot's text, in keeping with the associations they had in the minds of the Victorian reading public. Different public drinking places stand for different classes and consequently offer different drinks to their customers. In keeping with Victorian prejudices, the public drinking place is identified as a starting point of social unrest by Eliot, something missing in Brontë, since Brontë exclusively presents alcohol abuse as a problem of the hermetically closed-off private and semi-private space of the genteel classes, who do not frequent public drinking places, although they might still have done so without a breach of social rules in the period in which the text is set. For Eliot, drinking – with the exception of women's alcohol consumption – is mainly public and linked to public as well as private

problems, whereas for Brontë it is private and only causes private problems. This is mirrored by the chosen settings

Concerning the construction of health and healthiness, both texts are in accord with their cultural context. Both Eliot and Brontë show health to signify a state of balance, development and an integration with higher precepts, whether inspired by the laws of God or the concept of duty to oneself and one's neighbours. Drinking is constructed by both authors to contrast with the text's idea of health. Drunkenness is not celebrated as liberating, inspiring creativity and real joy, but rather is presented depressingly as bringing out the worst in everyone's temperamental nature (Brontë), or as making the drinker aggressive, malicious or indifferent (Eliot). Thus, sick drunkenness, in itself constructed by both women as a symptom of underlying social and psychological evils as well as physical predispositions (the latter only in Brontë's text), as a symptom of narrow egotism and social malaise accompanied by some form of pride or other which keeps the individual from adopting to circumstances and living up to values as Victorian ideas of health would have required, is exclusively presented as something negative, although in Brontë's text, characters, originally at least, feel elevated by drink, the main reason *why* they like to drink, a sick elevation contrasted with the healthy one offered by nature itself. This idea of elevation by drink is of no great importance for Eliot's characters. The final results of intoxication are, in both narratives, with the partial exception of Robert Dempster, clumsiness and debilitation to the point of incapacitation and, in certain instances, violence.

For both texts, drunkenness has associations of being unhealthy, sick; yet drunkenness is not consequently presented as a sickness in its own right in the two texts. Although Brontë's narrative contains thoughts that there might be physical predispositions contributing to characters' attitude to drink, social factors are presented as more important. Psychological factors (which were of course seen as linked with one's physical constitution) are equally relevant for characters' drinking behaviour, and it is this emphasis on psychological and social aspects at work in bringing about intoxication and alcohol abuse that leaves the reader of *Tenant* with the impression that problematic drinking is first and foremost a moral failing, in keeping with the ideas of doctor Rush and the temperance movement presented in the respective introductory chapters. As I have tried to show in my discussion of the drinking characters in *Tenant*, in keeping with Thormälen's suggestion, Brontë might also have been inspired by Macnish's idea that there exist drunkards by choice and drunkards by (psychological)

necessity. George Eliot also seems to follow Rush's and the temperance movement's concept of drunkenness as a failing of the moral will. Far more convincingly than Brontë, Eliot demonstrates that, as Rush had said, drunkenness is first choice, then habit, and then addictive necessity, by showing in detail the daily craving for drink and then the painful withdrawal symptoms of Janet Dempster, a craving and pains that are almost non-existent for Brontë's text.

Finally, we can compare the two texts' constructions of drunkenness. What immediately comes to mind as a crucial difference is that Eliot sees drunken characters both among men and women of all classes (with the exception of the aristocracy, a group missing in the text). Although treated with reticence as regards direct depiction, female drunkenness is there, and it is not much better than that of men, although, as has been said, it is constructed as arising from other causes than the drinking of men and is shown as different in the shape it takes, namely passive "sullenness" as opposed to male drunken bullying. In Brontë's text, women might occasionally drink, but drunkenness is exclusively male, occurring in men of all ages, even children. Both authors attribute alcohol abuse to social and psychological causes, but these causes are not identical. While in the case of the aristocratic drinkers of Brontë, a lack of useful occupations is seen as the prime reason for indulgence in drink, in addition to wrong, "un-Christian," old-fashioned values, George Eliot's drunkards are all usefully occupied, but their values in life are all more or less wrong and thus exclusively to blame for the substance abuse. In both cases, however, a change in society which affects the individuals' values is necessary to put an end to sick intoxication. What these changes are is different for the two narratives. In Brontë's text, a change to *feminine* Christian middle-class values and a kind of work-ethic accompanied by useful employment is seen as a satisfactory solution. In Eliot's case, the changes have to be more profound on the individual level: only by becoming less egotistic and more guided by compassion and a sense of duty to others and oneself, also values traditionally seen as *feminine*, can the individuals free themselves from evil habits, detrimental social customs. A mere change of ideology will not do for that.

Although the two authors represent drunkenness differently and assume slightly different solutions for the problem, they coincide in that it has to be overcome, that it can be overcome, and that this is to be done by a feminisation of society.

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APPENDIX

Abstract in English

The aim of my paper is to present and analyse the representation of drunkenness in two texts by Victorian women writers: Anne Brontë's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and George Eliot's short story "Janet's Repentance."

In order to establish a context for the analysis of the texts, I first present some general anthropological findings on the role of alcohol in human societies. Alcohol is usually attributed symbolic values, which affect its functions within a given society. Furthermore, alcohol can always be put to purely utilitarian uses. Both aspects are considered within the traditional Western (i.e., the European) context.

In order to historically contextualise the representation of drinking and drunkenness in the two texts, the paper next looks at some key aspects of the Victorian discourse on health and the body and tries to establish a survey over the various developments in the field of medicine concerning alcohol and drunkenness, from the use of alcohol as a pharmacological substance to the creation of the concept of "alcoholism," a disease which was truly a new invention of the nineteenth century.

Some aspects of alcohol's role in nineteenth-century everyday life in Britain are presented next: the importance of various alcoholic beverages as a part of people's diet and the various public places of its consumption, all of them with their specific connotations.

Furthermore, nineteenth-century social policies regarding drink and the main aspects of the temperance movements of the age, with their particular view of drunkenness, are discussed in a separate section.

A final introductory subchapter deals with the connection between drink and literature in the Victorian age, referring to alcohol and the drinker as literary motifs and to the representation of drunkenness as part of the Victorian realist agenda.

The second part of the paper is dedicated to the analysis of the representation of drinking and drunkenness in the two primary texts. Both are analysed according to the following scheme: first, the author's biographical background relating to alcohol is briefly sketched, followed by a short description of the text itself. Then, I try to analyse where alcohol consumption and drunkenness take their place within the respective text, taking into account both the social context and the physical settings. The next point of enquiry is how drinking is actually performed in the text and whether it is presented

directly. Who the drinking characters are and how they are characterised is the topic of discussion in the next subchapter. The depicted qualities, effects and (narrative) functions of drunkenness are presented next. In a conclusion for each of the analyses, I try to sum up the findings about the construction of drunkenness and express some of the assumptions about its causes and cures to be found in the respective primary text.

The final conclusion of the paper tries to summarily compare the findings about the two primary texts with each other and the Victorian context

Abstract auf Deutsch

Ziel meiner Arbeit ist es, die Darstellung von Trunkenheit in zwei Werken viktorianischer Autorinnen zu präsentieren und zu analysieren: Anne Brontës Roman *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* und George Eliots Novelle „Janet’s Repentance.“

In der Absicht einen Kontext für die Textanalyse zu schaffen, präsentiere ich zuerst einige allgemeine anthropologische Erkenntnisse zur Rolle des Alkohols in menschlichen Gemeinschaften. Dem Alkohol werden für gewöhnlich symbolische Bedeutungen zugeschrieben, die seine Funktionen innerhalb einer gegebenen Gesellschaft beeinflussen. Außerdem findet der Alkohol immer auch rein utilitaristische Anwendungen. Beide Aspekte werden im traditionellen Kontext der westlichen (d.h., europäischen) Kultur betrachtet.

Um die Darstellung des Trinkens und der Trunkenheit in den zwei Texten historisch zu kontextualisieren, wendet sich die Arbeit als nächstes einigen Schlüsselaspekten des viktorianischen Diskurses über Gesundheit und den Körper zu und versucht sodann, einen Überblick über die diversen Entwicklungen bezüglich des Alkohols und der Trunkenheit auf dem Gebiet der zeitgenössischen Medizin darzustellen – von der Verwendung des Alkohols als pharmakologischer Substanz bis zur Entstehung des Konzepts des „Alkoholismus,“ einer Krankheit, die in der Tat eine neue Erfindung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts war.

Einige Aspekte der Rolle des Alkohols im täglichen Leben des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in Großbritannien werden als nächstes dargestellt: die Bedeutung alkoholischer Getränke als Teil der Ernährung der Leute und die verschiedenen öffentlichen Orte ihres Konsums, allesamt mit ihren jeweiligen Konnotationen.

Weiters werden in einem separaten Abschnitt zeitgenössische viktorianische sozialpolitische Maßnahmen bezüglich Alkohol und die Hauptaspekte der diversen

Abstinenzbewegungen der Epoche samt ihres speziellen Blickwinkels auf die Trunkenheit besprochen.

Ein letztes einleitendes Unterkapitel behandelt den Zusammenhang zwischen Alkohol und Literatur anhand des Alkohols und des Trinkers als literarische Motive und in Anbetracht der Darstellung der Trunkenheit als Teil des Projektes des viktorianischen Realismus.

Der zweite Abschnitt der Arbeit ist der Analyse der Darstellung der Trunkenheit und des Trinkens in den zwei Primärtexten gewidmet. Jeder der beiden wird nach folgendem Schema analysiert: Zuerst wird kurz der biographische Hintergrund der Autorin bezüglich des Themas Alkohol skizziert, gefolgt von einer Kurzbeschreibung des Texts. Daraufhin versuche ich zu analysieren, wo Alkoholkonsum und Trunkenheit verortet sind innerhalb des entsprechenden Textes, wobei sowohl der soziale als auch der räumliche Kontext besprochen werden. Nächstes Thema ist die Frage, wie tatsächlich getrunken wird, und ob dies direkt dargestellt wird. Wer die trinkenden Charaktere sind und wie sie charakterisiert werden, ist das Anliegen des nächsten Unterkapitels. Die dargestellten Eigenschaften der Betrunkenheit, die Auswirkungen der Trunkenheit und die (narrativen) Funktionen des Betrunkenseins werden als nächstes besprochen. Abschließend versuche ich, die jeweiligen Erkenntnisse zur Konstruktion der Trunkenheit im Text zusammenzufassen und einige der impliziten Annahmen zu ihren Ursachen und ihrer Heilung darzustellen.

In den Schlussfolgerungen versuche ich, die Erkenntnisse zu den beiden Primärtexten zusammenfassend zu vergleichen.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Barbara Stadler

Adresse: Holzing 5, 3252 Petzenkirchen

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Schulischer und akademischer Werdegang:

23.März 1979: geboren in St.Pölten, Niederösterreich.

1985-1989: Besuch der Volksschule in Petzenkirchen an d. Erlauf, Niederösterreich.

1989-1997: Besuch des Bundesgymnasiums Wieselburg an d. Erlauf, Niederösterreich.

9.Juni 1997: Abschluss der Matura am BG Wieselburg mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg.

ab Oktober 1997: Studium der Lehramtsfächer Anglistik und Hispanistik an der
Universität Wien

Jänner 2000: Abschluss der ersten Diplomprüfung aus beiden Lehramtsfächern.

September 2000 – Juni 2001: Erasmus-Auslandsjahr in Royal Holloway, University of
London

.

2003: Abschluss der letzten Lehrveranstaltungsprüfungen aus den beiden
Lehramtsfächern.

Frühling 2009: Einreichung der Diplomarbeit aus dem Fach Anglistik an der
Universität Wien.

Lebenslauf in Worten:

Ich, Barbara Stadler, wurde am 23. März 1979 in St.Pölten geboren. Ich wuchs auf im niederösterreichischen Mostviertel, nahe der Stadt Wieselburg. Nach dem Besuch des Gemeindekindergartens und der Volksschule in Petzenkirchen an der Erlauf erlaubten mir meine Noten den Besuch des BG/BRG Wieselburg. Dort entschied ich mich aufgrund meines Interesses an und Begabung für Sprachen für den neusprachlichen Zweig, wo ich Englisch, Latein und Französisch lernte. Daneben begann ich in meiner Freizeit auch, mir selbst Spanisch beizubringen. Im Juni 1997 legte ich die schriftliche Matura in Englisch Deutsch und Mathematik ab. Mündlich maturierte ich in Französisch, Englisch und Bildnerischer Erziehung. Weiters hatte ich eine Fachbereichsarbeit aus Englisch über das Werk der Schwestern Brontë verfasst. Ich schloss die Matura mit Auszeichnung ab und nahm mir vor, an der Universität Wien ein Lehramtsstudium für Fremdsprachen zu belegen. Daher inskribierte ich im Herbst 1997 an der Universität Wien das Lehramtsstudium Englisch und Spanisch. Gleichzeitig belegte ich anfangs auch einige Lehrveranstaltungen aus Französisch. Im Jänner 2000 hatte ich den ersten Abschnitt des Lehramtsstudiums Englisch und Spanisch abgeschlossen und konnte mich für ein Erasmusstipendium aus Englisch bewerben. Ich bekam einen Platz am Royal Holloway and Bedford New College der University of London in der englischen Grafschaft Surrey. Dort besuchte ich zahlreiche interessante Lehrveranstaltungen aus dem Fach Englisch. Zurück in Wien setzte ich mein Studium nach Anrechnung der in England absolvierten Lehrveranstaltungen fort und hatte mit Frühling 2003 alle Prüfungen erfolgreich absolviert. Ich suchte mir ein Diplomarbeitsthema, allerdings machte ich aufgrund zwischenzeitlich aufgetretener schwerer Erkrankungen bis 2008 keine nennenswerten Fortschritte. Jetzt, im Frühling 2009, nach einem Themen- und Betreuerwechsel kann ich nun endlich die Diplomarbeit aus Englisch mit dem Titel „Drink, Drinking, Drunkenness: Representations of Drinking in Victorian Women’s Writing“ zur Beurteilung einreichen.