

zealot and leader appear in Russia, he would do well to read this instructive book before turning to radical measures.

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Nicholas O. Warner, *Spirits of America: Intoxication in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.

Nearly fifteen years ago, at a convention of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco, Nicholas Warner and a few other English professors met over lunch to discuss how to advance their common interest in alcohol-related research. One outcome was the founding of the journal *Dionysos*, which published during its ten-year run a lot of the pioneering scholarship in literature and alcoholism. Warner, who was to serve on the editorial board of *Dionysos*, had already made a start on *Spirits of America*, one of several books that have explored the place of drinking in the work of major American writers. None of the other studies, however, has focused on the early and mid-nineteenth century.

Warner's objective is to examine "the varieties of intoxicated experience" among major figures of the American Renaissance - Emerson, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville - as well as in Cooper, Dickinson, and some popular female authors. All these writers reflect how the "literary and social discourses of intoxication mesh and diverge from one another" during the antebellum period, "when questions of intoxicant use, abuse, and abstinence reached unprecedented - and, to many modern readers, unbelievable - levels of intensity and influence." Only incidentally biographical, Warner's chapters investigate the literal and metaphoric apprehension of drinking as it arises from individual imaginative works.

In Emerson's poetry and essays, for example, Warner detects ambivalence toward drinking in "his various stances as Bacchic

celebrant, as wine connoisseur, as merry tippler, as serene temperance supporter, and as ecstatic water-drinking prophet of spiritual intoxication.” In effect, Emerson’s variety of rhetorical poses covers the entire spectrum of contemporary American attitudes: from love to dread of inebriety as well as a complex blend of “attraction and repulsion, whether the intoxication be spiritual or not.”

Dickinson, who has been read as Emerson’s faithful disciple, nonetheless does not share his “association of intoxication with creativity.” By contrast, Dickinson’s treatment of drinking is nearly always purely metaphoric, and intoxication is characteristically invoked “to mediate between the perils and promises of imaginative exploration, on the one hand, and the demands of a narrowly pragmatic, rationalistic society, on the other.”

As for Poe, the only confirmed inebriate under consideration, Warner discerns a consistent preoccupation with alcohol but no prevailing representation of its effects. Poe’s tales of intoxication range from the savage nihilism of “Hop Frog” to the parodic send-up of temperance fiction in “The Black Cat.” But Poe’s “explorations of intoxicated perception are just that - explorations - some of them suggesting negative, others positive qualities, rather than being out-and-out condemnations or celebrations of such perception.”

Hawthorne and Melville are likewise shown to exhibit indeterminate attitudes toward alcohol and thus ultimately to share in the period’s contradictory understandings of intoxication. The same is largely true for Cooper, a voice of an older generation and a more self-consciously aristocratic class. Warner demonstrates Cooper’s gentlemanly impatience with the whole business of temperance reform, which he expressed at times in celebrations of Falstaffian drinking as hearty fun.

Unlike Dickinson, whose self-imposed privacy afforded her freedom of thought and expression than she would not likely have enjoyed in a public career, female writers of this period had

little choice but to hew to the reformist party line. Warner shows how overwhelmingly consistent women writers were in taking “a rigidly protemperance perspective, in which almost any use of intoxicants was defined as addictive and in which teetotalism and prohibitionism edged out other approaches to intoxicant use and abuse.”

An informed reader of *Spirits of America* might conclude that, after all, Warner tells us nothing really surprising. What he finds in the key writers of the period is what we might have supposed he would find: a variety of conflicting attitudes among male writers, versus unanimity of opinion among women writers bound by Victorian gender codes. I think, however, that the usefulness of this modest, rigorous, and well-written book - one that eschews the theoretical flashiness of what often passes these days for literary “scholarship” - consists precisely in the unremarkability of its claims. That they square so completely with what we already know from the work of temperance historians serves to strengthen a scholarly consensus that has not heretofore taken into such exhaustive account the literary historical record of writers who lived amid the swirl of nineteenth-century temperance activism.

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Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*.  
Cambridge University Press, 1997.

“First and foremost,” as Diane Kirkby writes, this book is “a history of work.” It situates barmaids and over a century of their waged labor in Australian pubs within a feminist historiography of work. Like secretaries and actresses, barmaids have been ill served by historians and by a “male misreading of female culture” that represents them not as workers, but as sexualized “attractions to trade.” Meditating on how this came to be so, Kirby’s book is also about ideas and their power to shape women’s working