

ÉTUDE CRITIQUE / REVIEW ESSAY

Alcohol and Temperance

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Emmanuel Akyeampong — *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996. Pp. xxiii, 189, illustrations, maps, notes, index, bibliography.

Sharon Anne Cook — *“Through Sunshine and Shadow”: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993. Pp. xi, 281, illustrations, appendix, notes, index, bibliography.

David M. Fahey — *Temperance and Racism: John Bull, Johnny Reb, and the Good Templars*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996. Pp. xii, 209, illustrations, appendices, notes, index.

David W. Gutzke, comp. — *Alcohol in the British Isles from Roman Times to 1996: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1996. Pp. xvii, 266, index.

IN *ALCOHOL in the British Isles from Roman Times to 1996: An Annotated Bibliography*, David Gutzke has compiled a very informative overview for scholars. As he states in the introduction, the text is “the first comprehensive list of historical studies on alcohol, and the first to annotate critically their theses” (p. ix). He cites not simply the work of historians, but that of sociologists, anthropologists, architects, archaeologists, political scientists, geographers, and economists. He references nearly 2,200 entries, mostly secondary sources. His subjects range from Brewing Ingredients to Consumption Trends, Science and Technology to Inn Signs and Temperance, with specialized headings for Beer, Whisky, Wine, and Cider. The entries are exhaustive, from “A Directory of Aston Pubs and their Licensees” to “Ether

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Drinking in Ulster” and “Drinking with Pepys”, but also include seminal works such as Peter Mathias’s *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700–1830*. The annotations are predominantly pithy, useful, and occasionally entertaining. Under the topic “Biographies, Autobiographies and Memoirs: Publicans”, we learn of the “colorful but snobbish” Oxford-based John Fothergill; Norman Balon, the Jewish publican to the theatre crowd whose “legendary rudeness made him the Fothergill of London”; and Thomas Layton, the “updated, less obnoxious version of John Fothergill, insensitive and short-tempered”. We also learn that Lady Astor, despite four entries under her name, could use a good biography.

Social historians will encounter a methodological weakness. It is unclear what constitutes “Social History”, and the title’s scope is misleading. It appears to refer to women, labour, and popular culture, but all of these topics have been included under other subject headings. Furthermore, the lack of a category termed “Women” is puzzling (“Women” is an entry in the index). Several entries can be found under “Pubs, Inn and Beerhouses” as well as under “Regulation, Crime and Medicine”. These minor reservations aside, *Alcohol in the British Isles* will be a welcome resource to researchers of drink, British history, and popular culture.

Sharon Anne Cook’s *“Through Sunshine and Shadow”: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874–1930* fulfils the worst fears of the temperance advocates: a little taste leaves the imbibers wanting more. Cook’s argument is that

the culture characterizing the women of the Ontario WCTU in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was based on an evangelical vision for society, which in turn created a liberated climate for women that some scholars have termed “evangelical feminism”. It was evangelicalism’s emancipating theology that originally empowered women and caused them to approach temperance as a moral and religious issue, not simply a social one. (p. 7)

Where the text is strong, it is very strong. The first chapter provides a very useful and succinct summary of evangelical thought, and Cook’s comments on education are interesting, reflecting her own background in education, but frustratingly few. Her discussion of the Young WCTU is thoughtful and animated. Cook’s sources — minute books of individual rural, town, and urban WCTU unions — display the common strengths and weaknesses of such material. They are strong on administrative detail yet repetitive, are consciously formal, and require extensive contextual analysis for the purposes of social history. The statement, for example, that an alcoholic woman sent to the YWCTU Friendless Home and greatly concerned about the fate of her children was an “unworthy mother” is presented without comment (p. 163), yet it begs gender analysis. Furthermore, the testimonial and sentimental rhetoric of evangelicalism is evident in the minutes but not always helpful to the historian. The morality tales and inspirational songs scattered throughout

the text add little after the first few. The logic of the division of chapters is not always clear and reflects the limited nature of the sources. For instance, the chapters on Ideas and Strategies tend to be repetitive and the distinctions forced. Why were the Social Purity, Education, and Dress Reform campaigns not discussed as units?

Cook describes temperance lodge life, differentiating it from the fraternities of the time, which favoured ritualism. Perhaps the women avoided rituals because they were attempting to appear businesslike; also, comparative medieval ritualistic imagery of women as serving wenches or princesses in the towers was unlikely to be appropriate for fledgling feminist organizations. The insistence that temperance leader Lady Henry Somerset never be identified with a first name of her own is a minor quibble. Cook's critical comments concerning other historians interrupt the flow of the text and should have been in the introduction, but this too is a minor complaint. *"Through Sunshine and Shadow"* is a useful contribution to the fields of Canadian temperance and women's history.

David M. Fahey's *Temperance and Racism: John Bull, Johnny Reb, and the Good Templars* examines the Independent Order of Good Templars, an international fraternal temperance society which provides "a new perspective for investigating racism in North America and transatlantic racial attitudes after the Civil War" (p. 1). Based upon the *Proceedings* of the IOGT's Grand Lodges (international conferences), *Temperance and Racism* does provide fascinating insights into the empire-building ambitions and bitter politics of the organization's leadership. Fahey's study reveals the validity of the theory that the male struggle for bourgeois status necessitated the elbowing out of women and non-whites, and his international perspective — there were Good Templar lodges in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii as well as the United States and Great Britain — demonstrates regional variations in this struggle. Women in the IOGT were elected to higher offices, but not the highest, and were relegated to supervising children's lodges in some jurisdictions, but the British were most reluctant to allow female lodge leaders.

The pivotal event in Fahey's book was the Great Schism of 1876 to 1887, which was the culmination of years of conflict over the admissibility and status of black lodges. The Kentucky Grand Lodge, headed by John Hickman and allied with the Canadian leadership, called for a separate black fraternal temperance society to avoid the *de facto* integration of southern U.S. lodges. This prospect, along with the Templars' identification with prohibition and the northern women's rights movement, rendered it difficult to attract white male members in the reconstruction southern states. The Hickmanites were opposed by the British Templars, led by Joseph Malins, who wanted racial equality; along with being a laudable ideal, this stance was far less controversial in Britain's industrial cities. The Malinites also were supported in the northeastern United States, particularly the abolitionist stronghold of Boston.

Fahey writes a moving chapter on the black Templars: their commitment to sustaining lodges amidst grinding poverty and illiteracy and their exultation at interracial comradeship at the Grand Lodges. Another article remains to be written on the Canadian leader, Oronhyatekha, an Ontario Mohawk and a physician who supported the southern lodges and refused to sit for a photograph with a black leader. Fahey's coy question — was he a racist? — is not the interesting one. Rather, a more complex enquiry would be what aspects of Oronhyatekha's struggle for bourgeois status in racist Canada were reflected in his subsequent attitudes and behaviour. If the WCTU society records are sweetened with the cordial of evangelicalism, the Good Templar papers are soured (but in a lively way) by self-righteous machismo and personal attacks of the lowest nature. However tempting it might be to explain the differences by reference to gender or religiosity, the spectre of the bleeding wounds of the Civil War, reflected in segregation and battles of words instead of bullets, cannot be ignored. The narrative in *Temperance and Racism* occasionally gets lost in the morass of details regarding votes, lodges, and dates, and a few too many references are made to the Great Schism, but this is an important book, crossing the disciplines of temperance, class, and gender studies.

We have to go beyond Great Britain and North America to examine one of the most structurally imaginative recent works, Emmanuel Akyeampong's *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*. Akyeampong successfully integrates both anthropology and politics in his study of the meaning of alcohol in Ghanaian society from its ancient roots to the post-colonial period. He states that "with political authoritarianism and economic decline in independent Ghana, alcohol remained a symbol of protest while offering an 'exit' option" (p. xv). Akyeampong relates the ritualistic significance of fluids such as water (representing purity and the spirit of the Supreme Being) and blood (representing fertility and power); alcohol served as a bridge with both elements, specifically as a facilitator of communication between the spiritual and physical worlds. In Ghanaian society, alcohol was linked to power due to its values as a "cultural artifact, a ritual object, an economic good, and a social marker" (p. 14). Male elders attempted to control the use of wine to preserve its sacred links but also their authority over younger men and all women. During the colonial period, with the growth of towns and alternative economic opportunities, young men and women travelled to the towns, got drunk, and no longer were deferent to their elders. The chiefs joined the Christian missionaries in utilizing Victorian temperance strategies to take back their traditional authority. Akyeampong renders his social control argument with clarity and logic. *Drink, Power and Cultural Change* is highly recommended for its cross-disciplinary insights.