Waking Dreams: Modernist Intoxications and the Poetics of Altered States

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Waking Dreams: Modernist Intoxications and the Poetics of Altered States

by

Jason Ciaccio

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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by Jason Ciaccio

Adviser: John Brenkman

Intoxication as a poetic principle is often identified with the romantic imagination. The literature of the intoxicated reverie is commonly thought of as synonymous with works such as Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” DeQuincey’s accounts of numerous nightmares and reveries, a number of Keats’ odes, Novalis’ hymns, E.T.A. Hoffmann’s stories, and Poe’s oneiric Gothic tales. Each of these, in part through their opiation or the incorporation of various other draughts, evokes a realm of dreams and visions of various sorts that are commonly associated with romantic poetic practices. The ecstatic trance, the sense of passing into another domain that is cognitively, perceptually, and affectively differentiated somehow from the restraints of modes of normality and quotidian experience, receives unique articulations in each of these works and authors—indeed no two intoxicated modes of consciousness, much less their literary formulations, are ever quite the “same.”

And yet if intoxication is commonly explored in relation to romantic poetic practices, its significance for the modernist imagination has received far less scholarly attention. I argue that the intoxicated reverie is a particularly significant modernist poetic category: I bring together Thomas Mann’s The Magic Mountain, James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake, Walter Benjamin’s writings on drugs and on the figure of the flâneur, and Friedrich Nietzsche’s various formulations of intoxication and dream, to suggest
that the intoxicated reverie is given a rich variety of articulations in the era of literary modernism, and has a considerable bearing on modernist modes of knowing, creating, and embodiment. In an era in which intoxicants of all varieties for the first time become subject to widespread legislation, and likewise one in which dreams come to have increased relevance to understandings of the self, the intoxicated reverie becomes a particularly significant dimension of the literary imagination, and the figure of an inebriate visionary a recurring trope. I explore the various social, cultural, and political inflections of intoxicants of all sorts in these texts, as well as the broader historical and ontological concerns in relation to which they are situated—I do so with an eye turned in particular to the multiplicity of ways that texts incorporate intoxicated states. I argue that the materiality of the substance and the alleged inauthenticity of the experience it produces resonates both with the modernists’ heightened concern with the materialistic and corporeal, and with the questionable status of any definite signifiers to ensure the sobriety of representation. That intoxication opens an ambivalent space for the tensions between the divine and the material, or between the transcendent and the mundane, is a concern of mine throughout—I track the theological residues of the tropes of intoxication, and read the inebrieties that I address as part of a highly charged engagement with divinity and the western metaphysical tradition in the modernist era. The ephemeral or even illusory nature of the alterity of intoxication I understand in relation to the various enchantments and disenchantments of a distinctly modernist attunement. This study reflects an attempt to understand a social, cultural, and creative phenomenon that is both deeply rooted in human history and yet is often neglected by scholarship.
Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank John Brenkman for his faith in this project from its earliest stages, and his guidance throughout its development; his rigorous intellect was always a source of insight and inspiration, and I can only ever hope to emulate it. Evelyne Ender offered help and encouragement throughout which has been greatly appreciated, and Moshe Gold and Josh Wilner provided useful insights at crucial junctures as well. A sadly belated thank you to Eddie Epstein, whose strains still echo, and whose joys still rejoice.

for Julie.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Towards a Poetics of Intoxication—from Romanticism to Modernism

Euripides’ “The Bacchae” begins with Dionysus himself on stage. He tells the audience he has come from abroad—from Lydia, Phrygia, Persia, Bactria, Media, and Arabia Felix. “All Asia is mine” (396) he proclaims, identifying himself with no single location other than in antithesis to Greece. Accompanied by his female Bacchantes, he seems to represent everything antithetical to the Attic male citizenry that comprises the audience. The play’s topography, which juxtaposes the social order of the polis with the wilderness of the mountains, reinforces that clash of oppositions: in Dionysus, Greek urban life encounters its other. The unfolding of the play’s events is perhaps well-known: Pentheus comes under the sway of Dionysus; his desire finally provoked, he agrees to let Dionysus dress him as a woman, and pursues and spies on the revellers in the mountains. He is ultimately noticed, apprehended, and dismembered, his head carried through the streets in triumph by his own mother.

The play is, of course, exceedingly rich in ambiguities, and perhaps nowhere more so than in relation to the issue of intoxication. On the one hand, “The Bacchae” seems to offer a strongly ambivalent warning against both the excesses of inebriation and the excesses of sobriety, while offering no successful ideal of moderation. Euripides’ play in fact very effectively dramatizes a host of tensions that surround intoxicants and their concomitant states. Dionysus is himself a foreign substance—not only is he consubstantial with the wine he brings, but he is clearly presented in the text as something external to the body of the polis of Thebes. The difference of his geographical origin resonates with the different modes of consciousness and perception that his
consumption produces. He appears to Pentheus as a stranger, as a handmaiden, and as a bull—as protean as any god of liquids might be. The play itself can be read as the enactment of his incorporation not simply by individual revellers, but by the polis itself—his effect is not limited to those who ingest him, but rather resonates throughout the entire body politic. Thebes itself is rendered inebriate.

And yet while Dionysus is on the one hand foreign, his genealogy is decidedly culturally interior. He proclaims himself at the outset of the play to be the son of Zeus and of King Cadmus’ daughter Semele—the most culturally interior figures of the Greek city, Thebes. His conquest is on the one hand an act of foreign domination, and on the other hand a reclaiming of his homeland and affirmation of his Greek lineage. He claims to have conquered Asia as well, which seems to echo his ambivalent cultural identity—both foreign and native, divine and corporeal, Euripides’ Dionysus embodies a host of indeterminacies. King Pentheus by contrast seems to embody the sobriety of rationally organized life, and looks to preserve the ordered social codes of the polis. And yet, while he insists on the alterity of the foreign god, he not only reveals himself to be entirely susceptible to the god’s effect, but is himself a direct cousin of Dionysus, related through Cadmus. His intense repression of the influence of Dionysus in the play’s first half is ultimately overthrown by his tremendous desire for the foreign god’s lures. Dionysus is ambiguously intoxicant and placebo—it is not clear whether he is himself a causal agent of the madness of Thebes, or merely a marker of the surfacing of something already latent. Pentheus fears being supplanted by the wine god, yet ironically takes place of Dionysus Zagreus in the sparagmos at the play’s conclusion. The foreign in Euripides’
play is never wholly foreign, and the distinction between intoxication and sobriety is always in motion.

On the one hand, *The Bacchae* might seem an odd starting point for an inquiry about modernism—setting aside Nietzsche’s claim in *The Birth of Tragedy* that Euripides was a forerunner of a theoretical orientation dominant in modernity. However, what the play so effectively illustrates is the host of oppositions that repeatedly organize themselves around intoxicating substances: eastern and western, foreign and native, feminine and masculine, madness and rationality, desire and repression—all of these contribute to the cultural construction of intoxicants and their effects. And not only in Euripides’ play.¹

It is partly due to this persistent logic of borderlines concerning drugs and their effects that Derrida took such a pronounced interest in them. Certainly, deconstruction devotes considerable attention to thinking drugs—the indeterminacy of the drug’s effect, its conceptual ambivalence, figures prominently in the deconstruction of Platonism that Derrida undertakes in “Plato’s Pharmacy”—indeed, the *pharmakon* is nearly synonymous with the indeterminate. And Derrida addressed the topic of drugs at other points in his thinking as well. In an interview conducted under the title “The Rhetoric of Drugs,”

¹ That drugs (in addition to alcohol) and drug induced experiences were a part of the life and culture of ancient Greece has been known since Carl A. P. Ruck’s discussion of the Eleusinian mysteries in a collection of essays (*The Road to Eleusis*) organized by Albert Hoffman, the Swiss chemist who first synthesized lysergic acid. Ergot, a hallucinogenic fungus that grows on wheat, barley, and rye, was used in the Eleusinian mystery rituals performed by the cult of the grain-goddess, Demeter. The visions of those rituals, Ruck was the first to note, were produced by that fungus. For more recent work on the considerable social and cultural presence of drugs in Ancient (particularly Attic) Greece cf. Rinella. Noting the prevalence of a discussion of intoxicants, including Aristotle’s lost text “On Drunkenness,” and Plato’s preoccupation with drugs of multiple sorts, Rinella offers an engaging discussion of an often overlooked facet of Attic Greece. DCA Hillman offers a similar exploration of states of intoxication in antiquity, and their various relations to literature, democracy, philosophy, and witchcraft. Though still apparently denied by more conservative scholars, it seems to be coming increasingly clear that the prevalence of drugs and a discourse surrounding them were as much a part of the ancient world as of our own. Insofar as it is the objective of these studies to function as a corrective to a repression of intoxicated states, the present work situates itself in a similar line.
Derrida discussed the simulacral logic that undergirds the various discursive appropriations of “drugs” in our culture. Noting how problematically drugs have figured in some of our most crucial conceptual determinations, Derrida identifies a number of borderlines that drugs inhabit, including those between the natural and artificial, symptom and cause, work and play, public and private—as well as remedy and poison. He explores the supplementarity of drug-induced experiences, their bad repetitions and alleged inauthenticity. Much like the poet in Plato’s ontological schema—or for that matter, writing in the western metaphysical tradition—the drug user is at a remove from truth: what we hold against the drug user, Derrida claims, is “that he cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from objective reality and the real life of the city and the community; that he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction” (25).

Noting the ethical and legal determinations brought to bear upon drugs and drug addicts, Derrida poses the hypothesis of thinking the drug’s supplementarity alongside that of literature itself, suggesting that “literature” might be understood as “contemporaneous with a certain European drug addiction” (27).

In her book, Crack Wars, Avital Ronell tracks this line of inquiry yet further. Ronell posits the question of what it means to be “on drugs,” along with the ontological and historical implications of that determination. “Drugs” themselves are always constructions of various discursive forces; they have no definite concept, but rather are irreducibly metaphorical: “tropium” as she calls it. “Drugs resist conceptual arrest” (51), she notes, and she proceeds to read the various relations between trope and narcotics, and likewise the points of intersection between literature and law. Noting the recalcitrance of the repetitions of addiction to empirical modes of inquiry and analysis, Ronell ultimately
turns her attention to a reading of *Madame Bovary*, a text not only awash in all sorts of pharmacological substances, but one whose legality, whose social incorporation, was a matter of public dispute. She pursues the various evocations of drugs, intoxications, and addictions, in all their literal and metaphorical manifestations, and reads the novel as an expression of what she refers to as “our narcotic modernity” (85).

The modernity she identifies is one in which both drugs and electronic technology reveal the complications of our most basic metaphysical assumptions. Her work thus looks to explore, “the place where the distinction between interiority and exteriority is radically suspended and where this phantasmic opposition is opened up” (“On Hallucinogenres” 64). It is precisely this staging of the phantasmic that she identifies as a “hallucinogenre,” which she defines in the plural as “genres that are related to non-mimetic conventions or phantasies that aren’t tied to referencing” (64). Drugs, like technology, and like literature as well, prompt an apparent alternate reality, and thus open a space for rethinking our ontological assumptions, and precisely what we mean by re-presentation or re-petition. For both Derrida and Ronell the determinations that surround narcotics are fruitful ground for skeptical explorations of power dynamics, and the intricate manner in which narcotics and literature have been interwoven is likewise suggestive of a rich avenue of inquiry for literary analysis.²

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² For more recent work that has pursued narcotics and cultural criticism cf. Boothroyd, who offers nuanced and engaging readings of the Freud, Sartre, Foucault, and Deleuze, among others. His discussions of Freud I return to further down, and of Walter Benjamin I will return to in chapter five.
“Intoxication” seems, on the one hand, immediately to connote mania, exuberance, and frenzy. In many ways it is nearly synonymous with excess itself. The idea of “toxicomania” entails the convergence of intoxication and madness—indeed, the desire for the former is often indistinguishable from the desire for the latter as well. And both function as necessary antithetical constituents of sober sanity, supplemental to “normal” modes and coordinates of experience. In fact the history of intoxicants in western modernity has proven inseparable from a discourse of madness. Nineteenth century psychiatrist (or *aliéniste*, as was the contemporary term) Jacques Joseph Moreau de Tours was the first western medical professional to employ psychopharmacology in an effort to comprehend madness. He took an interest in narcotics, including chloroform, ether, jimson weed, and most notably hashish; in his numerous trips to north Africa and the Middle East he developed a particular interest in the latter drug, noting the prevalence of its use among the native Arab populations.

Moreau worked at the Bicêtre Hospital for the Insane, a short time after Philippe Pinel, whose tenure as director of that institute, and whose role bringing the mad within the ken of medical practice, was recounted at length by Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*. Moreau’s contribution to the project of mastering insanity was his exploration of the relation between drug reveries and madness; he wrote numerous articles on the topic and in 1845 he produced a book: *Du Hashish et de l’aliénation*

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3 cf. Allen S Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Excess*. In a manner indebted to Bataille, Weiss reads Dionysian intoxication as a state in which the body is radically freed of any determinate signification. While theological symbolism is initiated through violence upon the body, in Dionysian intoxication, Weiss claims, the body itself perpetrates a violent disruption of the symbolic order. Weiss’ other work on the topic (*Feast and Folly: Cuisine, Intoxication, and the Poetics of the Sublime*) situates intoxication in relation to the gustatory; he identifies an “aesthetics of intoxication” with the type of synaesthesia found works by Baudelaire, and the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and associates an aesthetics of drunken excess with the sublime.

4 For more on the relation between Moreau and the *Club des Hashischins* cf. Mike Jay’s “The Green Jam of Dr. X.” in Brennan and Williams’ *Literature and Intoxication*. 
mentale, translated in English as *Hashish and Mental Illness*. He saw in the drug a tool whereby to induce a condition that resembled insanity, thus enabling the empirical observation of the onset of such a state, as well as making madness something psychiatrists themselves could subjectively experience. At his most grandiose he saw hashish as an unobstructed avenue into madness—a royal road, of sorts; he noted: “There is not a single, elementary manifestation of mental illness that cannot be found in the mental changes caused by hashish…” (18). Moreau found in the hashish effect all the euphoria, dissociation, mood changes, *idées fixes*, and hallucinations that occurred among the mad; he felt that the drug could be used to bring madness more securely within the domain of psychiatric knowledge.

Moreau found hashish to produce what he called a “*fantasia,*” and he recounted his own fantastic experience using the drug, which was marked by hilarity, hallucination, and euphoria. What interested him in his orientalist travelling was the greater range of psychic states that were culturally sanctioned among the Arab populations he observed, both states of dreaming and those of intoxication received markedly different cultural significance than in the west. Moreau frequently discussed the hashish effect in terms of “dreaming”—in fact the dream became an important coordinate point for determining hashish intoxication. Under the influence of hashish, he noted, “there occurs a state of dream, but of sleepless dream, where sleep and the waking state are mingled and confused” (19). If Descartes had posited dreaming and madness as apparent antitheses of the rational cogito, Moreau had brought intoxication into a liminal space between the two in order to further the progress of western medical practice. The drug was something whose effect would wane, something that could be transitioned through, thereby bringing
one closer to madness. Dreaming and intoxication were for Moreau crucial to the project of obliterating the alterity of insanity—they were means of placing the experience of madness under the light of rational observation.

That the addict emerges as a figure in the west alongside modern notions of subjectivity has been amply explored by scholarship. Drugs and our relations to them pose the simultaneous threat and lure of the dissolving of the will and the boundaries of the self. That the forces that coerce the subject into existence should organize themselves around intoxicants is perhaps no surprise. Indeed, the English word “intoxication” has a decidedly clinical tonality, making it more appropriate to legal and medical discourses than to common parlance—“intoxication” is at least in part a marker of bodies coming under institutional scrutiny.

And yet, one need only think how many different things can become “intoxicating”—books, lovers, political leaders, certain commodities, etc.—to see the plasticity of the concept. In some ways it is synonymous with desire itself—its essence,

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5 In addition to Ronell, cf also Eve Sedgwick, who aligns the historical emergence of a discourse of addiction with the emergence of notions of a unified national will. She identifies addiction as an abstraction formed on the basis of the problematic polarities of free-will and compulsion, and she looks for potential alternatives to our current vocabulary for discussing such relations between bodies and substances; she tentatively suggests “habit” as a term that is not reducible to the moralizing of addicted behavior, but enables some sense of will that disease models of addiction lack. Susan Zieger expands on Sedgwick’s approach, and by focusing on a literature of addiction looks to understand “how cultural forces invented the figure of the addict” (4). She focuses particularly on the roles of gender, race, and class in forming the addict, and how literary texts reflect and contribute to that formation. Alina Clej considers the opium-eating Thomas DeQuincey as a harbinger of modern subjectivity. Unlike Wordsworth, whom he had considered the natural poetic genius, DeQuincey turned to artificial means of inspiration. Creating a rupture with the sense of coherent selfhood and the centrality of will and autonomy, DeQuincey, Clej finds, inaugurates a distinctly modern paradigm of the self as addict: a de-centered subjectivity whose agency lies largely outside of itself. For a collection of essays on addictions of various sorts and their relations to literature and film cf. Brodie and Redfield.

6 On Foucault’s own interest in drugs cf. Boothroyd; Rinella as well situates his study within a Foucauldian framework, and notes that the addict wanders the halls of Foucault’s asylums.

7 Jean-Luc Nancy’s recent essay on the topic offers an expressive, lyrical paean to what he identifies as the whirling rush of inebriety. Starting with Hegel’s claim that identified dialectical truth with the Bacchanalian revel, Nancy proceeds to claim: “Intoxication is the condition of spirit. It makes its absolutity [absoluité] felt, in other word, its separation from and with [d’avec] everything that it is not—everything
one might say, is to be in motion, and to elude definite denotation. To pose the topic in terms of an unquestioned notion of the incorporation of a substance scarcely simplifies matters as it sets two problematic terms in relation: “body” and “substance.” Insofar as these have been operative terms in our discourse of intoxication, the topic has been construed in terms of an interiority and exteriority, a distinction that Derrida in his discussion of the *pharmakon* identified as the “matrix of all possible opposition” (“Plato’s Pharmacy” 103), and whose problematic status he laid bare. If the body is thought of as both an inside excluding the outer world, and an outside excluded from the interiority of the mind—then it should be noted that the question of drugs is often posed having already assumed these problematic metaphysical determinations.

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8 For a discussion on the problematic role of the body and defining its materiality, cf. Judith Butler *Bodies That Matter*. In a similar vein Vincent Crapanzano addresses the construction of the difference between the “body” as signified and as signifier. Arguing for an understanding that sees the body as always in part a rhetorical expression rather than an object of denotation, he notes, “The body is a construct of complex social, cultural, and linguistic processes that not only affect its “biological” character but its symbolism and rhetorical potential” (*Imaginative Horizons* 71). The consequences of this problematic for notions of incorporation are what I look here to emphasize.

9 Efforts to rethink intoxication in less Cartesian terms include work by David Lenson and Michael Pollan. Lenson’s largely sociological approach questions the legal and cultural framings of a number of intoxicants. He explores a phenomenology of cocaine in relation to the structures of desire of capitalism. He finds the disruptions of perception that hallucinogens produce to reflect an alternate modality of pleasure, one less conducive to the consumerist demands of always wanting more—a demand that cocaine complicitly effects. Pollan orients his argument around a theory of co-evolution, and sees in intoxication an environmental phenomenon. He explores the topic as part of the human relation with the plant world, a relation not reducible to subjects encountering objects, but rather a space for the staging of desire—both the plant’s desire to actively court its reproduction, and the human desire that derives pleasures of various sorts from plants. Pollan’s work represents an effort to think intoxication in terms that are environmental rather than dualistic, and like Lenson’s offers a way of thinking intoxicants and their effects outside of the traditional conceptual framework. On the notion of intoxication as a “natural” phenomenon cf. also, Andrew Weil’s *From Chocolate to Morphine*. Weil notes that most drug effects are obtainable through means of experience other than those induced by the consumption of any substance. In particular, he looks to reposition the discussion by identifying intoxicated states as a “natural” phenomenon, likening their appeal to children’s enjoyment of dizziness. While sympathetic to such an approach entirely, rather than champion one side of the “natural/artificial” divide, I will examine how this opposition has frequently played a role in the construction of intoxications.
In fact, the various ways that drugs are consumed reflect historical transfigurations of the body itself. Smoking was a practice made popular to the West through the colonization of the “New World.” Introduced to Europe by Columbus, tobacco was not only a previously unknown substance, but its mode of consumption—rolled into individual units, or stuffed into pipes, either of which were lit at one end and inhaled through the other—was likewise novel. Among the colonized population, smoking had medicinal, magical, and ritual significances, and these associations played an important role in the western reappropriation of tobacco, which assumed its commodity form along with such auratic qualities. Tobacco smoking already was widespread throughout Europe by the 18th century, and gave rise to the smoking of opium and cannabis as well. Likewise, the syringe, a mid-19th century invention, is a marker of modernity: it is both a testament to the body’s ability to open itself to its outside in radically new ways, while simultaneously attesting to the body’s vulnerability to such intrusions. It is in the era of modernity that the means of incorporation multiply, and the whole body becomes potential orifice, infinitizing the routes of desire. And yet, that the syringe is itself an image of such powerful dread and revulsion in the modern mind is further suggestive of its strongly ambivalent signification. Its cultural and symbolic pungency reflect in part a response to the break with the model of the classical body, as Bakhtin had described it—the self-contained body whose inside is sealed off from the outer world. Rather, the increased avenues that drugs find, the various ways in which the

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10 Cf. Gilman and Zhou’s *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking* for a collection of essays on the social and cultural history of smoking. Their useful introduction traces the global spread of smoking; though the inhalation of burning herbs by groups in confined spaces had been around since antiquity, smoking as an act of individual consumption became a global phenomenon through western colonial contact with the “New World.”

11 The more common mode of consumption of opium and cannabis had previously been the ingestion of their solid or liquid forms. Gilman and Zhou note that it was in fact westerners who brought the practice of smoking to China (14).
outside world leaks inward, reveal the body as grotesque—something gaping outward, exposing and exposed. That those gapings become sites for the enactments of conflict between values and interests—politically invested spaces—is certainly no surprise.

And one would do well to reflect on what constitutes a “substance” that is consumed. Derrida, citing Heidegger’s reading of the hypokeimenon and the implications of its translation into the Latin subjectum, noted the metaphysical assumptions built into our ideas of what constitutes a substance. Much of Derrida’s work, drawing on Heidegger’s disruption of presence and re-presentation, exposes how problematic our notions of “substance” or “material” have been. In light of such a critique, it is not fatuous to inquire whether, for example, political movements, or speeches, or works of art, are not in a very real sense incorporated. Or media productions, for that matter. Marshall McLuhan had argued that technology be understood as the extension of the human—as an augmentation of the body’s senses. And he had noted in particular technology’s narcotic effect: new media simultaneously extended the senses and numbed them, he claimed. Every enhancement of the senses had its concomitant amputation; both hyperaesthetic and anaesthetic, new media brought about reconfigurations of the corporeal sensorium—and McLuhan frequently noted the dissonant effects of those reconfigurations.

Narcissus, in his narcotized gaze at his own self-extension, became the mythic paradigm of McLuhan’s analysis of the effects of techno-modernity (Understanding Media 51). Extending the body through technology was, for McLuhan, aligned with an act of narcotic consumption. The incorporation of the drug was paired with what one might think of as an “excorporation,” an extension of the senses in the projection of the
body outward. Narcissus consumes his reflection as the most pleasurable of substances, producing the most pleasing hallucination, and it is in this way that we are users of technology. Implicit in McLuhan’s understanding of electronic media was a sensitivity to their pharmacological effect, as well as an awareness of the addictive nature of such techno-narcotics. McLuhan would not only identify a narcotic dynamic in human beings’ implementation of electronic technology, but also articulated a relation between drugs and the various alienating forces of modernity. Noting the popularity of hallucinogens in the 60’s, McLuhan identified the rapidly increasing interest in them as partly a response to an environment characterized by an oversaturation of stimulation, visual stimulation in particular. When posed the question on live television of whether he had ever taken lsd, McLuhan replied that he had not—he had only ever read *Finnegans Wake*. “Lsd,” he noted, “may just be the lazy man’s form of *Finnegans Wake*” (*Youtube*). Drug effects were clearly useful to McLuhan’s understanding of both the experience of techno-modernity, and of Joycean aesthetics—hallucinations were a feature common to both media.

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As I will imply throughout, the distinction of “intoxication” from its semantic neighbors: drunkenness, inebriation, narcosis, enthusiasm, ecstasy (a list which could go on nearly ad infinitum), is never fixed—nor its relation to sobriety ever so neatly antithetical. It neither corresponds to the effect of a single drug, nor does any drug with absolute consistency produce it. The components of the semantic field of intoxicated
states do not lend themselves to easy translation or simple denotation. Intoxication is, in fact, at least as metaphorical as our notions of “consciousness” or “the body.”

This linguistic asymmetry of our vocabularies for intoxicated states is evident between languages as well. The German word for intoxication, *Rausch*, has no fully adequate English correlate: it is a rush of inebriation and enthusiasm, and is of an entirely different register than the clinical “*Intoxikation*.” The onomatopoeia of *Rausch* likewise suggests a certain performative dimension to the word that English fails to capture. Indeed, insofar as I will look to maintain a particular focus on “intoxication” as a signifier, I will do so to illustrate how slippery, elusive, or even sloppy, its signification has historically been. It may even be the case that the multiplicity of discursive uses that have been made of “intoxication”—its irreducible rhetoricity—are not terribly different from the multiplicity of cultural uses of drugs of any and every sort. Indeed the states produced by *pharmaka* have no fixed significance, but rather only take on meaning through the contingency (legal, institutional, historical, personal, familial, etc.) of their formations. Insofar as intoxication is commonly thought of in antithesis to work and productivity (as Freud, echoing common morality, repeatedly implied), I will look to pose a disruption to that understanding by principally exploring authors who align intoxication in various and intricate ways with creativity and process: a poetics, as I identify it. I will thus throughout implicitly understand “intoxication” as a radically loose signifier, one that is constructed in various ways by various communities, individuals, authors, interests, and texts—and at various historical moments—one that is dependent upon the various delineations of consciousness and on the exertions of force that fix those
boundaries. Intoxication is a state as polymorphous as “drugs” themselves as a conceptual category, and tracking its textual manifestations is no simple task.

Numerous efforts to address the conjunction of literature and intoxication have done so from the perspective of neuroscience and cognitive poetics. Such studies commonly adopt the vocabulary of “altered states of consciousness,” and have often framed the discussion in terms of an individual’s creativity while under the influence of a substance. How a quantity of material can affect the qualitative structures of experience is a question intoxicants pose, and one that has significant bearing on notions of consciousness per se. The relation between the material status of the drug and its psychic effect suggests a problematic region for mind/body configurations. Posing the question of intoxication in such terms necessitates delineating a domain of consciousness, the psyche, and psychic effects. And yet how that domain differs from the somatic—how one ever partitions the bodily from the mental, or res extensa from res cogitans—begs precisely what has been understood as the irreducible question of western metaphysics. Thus, rather than frame the discussion in terms of a neatly delineated notion of “consciousness,” I look to explore how intoxicants and intoxicated states are articulated,

12 cf. Stanley Krippner aligns drug-induced experience and creativity within a developmental schema, noting, “altered states of consciousness, such as those produced by hypnosis or psychedelic drugs, may assist in fostering the creative act because creativity is basically preverbal and unconscious in origin” (50). Jane Simon addresses altered states of consciousness and creativity from a psychoanalytic perspective, and similarly finds that by providing access to a “preverbal” component of consciousness “asc” (as she calls them) enable creativity.

13 The philosopher of consciousness, David Chalmers’s “hard problem” of consciousness is in essence one of understanding how quantities of perceptions can translate into qualitative experience; the materiality of the drug and its effect on the qualitative structures of experience seem to occupy precisely the space of that hard problem. Continuing in this Cartesian tradition is JA Hobson, who takes a neurophysiological approach to drug hallucinations. In order to oppose the psychic dynamics in dreams that psychoanalysis posits, Hobson turns to the apparently obvious materiality of drugs and drug hallucinations—he examines them in terms of their “neurodynamics,” and suggests that dreams are best understood in an analogously physiological manner. It is precisely the assumptions built into that notion of materiality that I look throughout to complicate.
mediated, or incorporated into literary and philosophical texts. In understanding those states as variously depicted and enacted, I attempt here to show intoxication as a dimension of modernist poetics that has not received adequate scholarly attention. The focus of this study throughout will be intoxicated writing.

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Implicit in this work is an acknowledgment that any study of the topic involves a certain hermeneutic leap—a positing of the conceptual framework of the project. Whether as a result of the looming lack of seriousness around the subject matter, or for fear that the metaphorical range of “intoxication” might blur the scholarly focus, the critical tendency has been to hew closely to a materialism or literalism, maintaining the sobriety of an analytic approach through reifying the object of study. Marcus Boon’s The Road of Excess is a particularly good example. Thorough and insightful, Boon’s study offers a broad survey of the topic from a largely empirical perspective. He raises the important question of what constitutes “drug literature” (8), and addresses the difficulties of making that determination. And yet in his effort to obtain “some kind of reliable information about the subject,” he approaches it as a study of “drugs” in the most material sense, dividing the subject by substance, and devoting a chapter each to narcotics, anaesthetics, cannabis, stimulants, and psychedelics (consciously excluding alcohol). He notes, “The whole weight of my argument consists in separating drugs from each other, showing how each has quite specifically historically emergent discourses attached to it… ” (14). Boon attempts to obviate the problem of conceptualizing intoxication by positing the materiality of drugs as decidedly determining that issue. His
focus throughout is on figures of literary history and the presence and influence of various drugs on their works, and the lineage he lays out spans the 19th and 20th centuries.

And Boon is far from alone in this literalist/materialist approach. Marty Roth has offered an insightful exploration of the various resonances of drunkenness ranging very broadly throughout literary history from antiquity to modernity. In Plato’s *The Symposium*, Roth finds Socrates simultaneously a champion of and impervious to drunkenness, and he suggestively notes that “philosophy… begins in intoxication” (xxi). He finds in intoxication an abundance of polarities and ambivalences and he proceeds to read the various alignments of intoxication and creativity in the work of Anacreon, Horace, and other figures of antiquity, before turning to a survey of inebriety in (largely) English literature of various eras. Mike Jay conducts his study *Emperor of Dreams: Drugs in the 19th Century* under a title that suggests a crossroads between states of dream and of intoxication. Jay’s analysis focuses on the emergence of drugs in the 19th century, with an eye toward their cultural significance, literary representations, and relations to literary productivity. And yet in spite of the suggestiveness of his study’s conceptual conjunction of dreams and intoxications, Jay too, along with the general trend, divides his chapters by individual substance, and undertakes his largely empirical study “with the drugs themselves as the protagonists” (11).

And yet, while such approaches have been of unquestionable scholarly validity, their decidedly materialist bent has resulted in a rigid symmetry that is seemingly at odds with a topic that tends to the amorphous, the ecstatic, and the excessive. The approach I

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14 For a similar overview of a “drug literature” that offers a less rigid division of the subject into specific substances cf. Plant.
15 More recent work on intoxication and literature includes a collection of essays: cf. Brennan and Williams.
look to take here is different. Rather, I look to construe intoxication in terms of its relation to reveries—states of dreams, visions, and the oneiric—and principally as a category of the modernist imagination. I will explore points of intersection between intoxications and dreams, visions, and reveries in literary and philosophical writings with particular attention to a type of textual performativity that I draw on notions of textual phenomenology to theorize. I suggest here that approaching the topic in terms of a certain textuality is at least a way of recalibrating a line of inquiry that seems to have produced useful scholarly work, but has grown somewhat stale and limiting. I thus turn not simply to texts that were written under the influence of some substance, or for that matter, even those by writers who were necessarily drug-users—an approach which would largely reproduce precisely the type of studies already undertaken—but rather I look to explore works that both depict and enact states of intoxication, and at multiple levels of signification. Furthermore, while much scholarship on intoxication and literature has been devoted to the 19th century, and figures of the romantic and Victorian periods, the present inquiry will rather look to situate intoxication in the modernist era, and explore its unique historical contours as a modernist phenomenon.

16 In addition to the criticism on the relation between romantic poetics and intoxication, which I site further down, cf. Nicholas O Warner, who offers a sensitive analysis of intoxication in Hawthorne, Emerson, Dickinson, Poe, William James, et al. His approach focuses on the social and cultural framing in 19th-century America of drinking and drug use, particularly in light of the emergence of the temperance movement. He addresses the particular impact of that movement on the cultural landscape. He notes how various authors have addressed (and aestheticized) the notion that “intoxicant use possesses a visionary or transcendent dimension” (20). The balance he strikes between a social and historical framings of drinking and drug use, and the textual enactments of intoxicated states is something the present work looks to expand upon not only by approaching it from a broader cultural/linguistic/geographic perspective, but also by shifting the historical period of focus to the modernist era.

17 Among the scholarship to have addressed intoxication in relation to the modernist era is a strain that has approached it as an important tangent of the festive: cf. Christopher Ames, who analyzes the various parties in the work of Woolf, Fitzgerald, Joyce, and Waugh (among others), conceiving literature (and life itself) as an expression of the celebratory. His work is an attempt to sketch out a “literature of festivity” (3), a genre that he sees emerging from a sense of existential affirmation. Editing a collection of essays on parties in various works of modernist literature, Kate McLoughlin looks to expand upon Ames’ approach.
In his *Poetics of Reverie*, Gaston Bachelard sought to explore the state of poetic attunement. For Bachelard, the horizon of the creative reverie was constituted by the dream imaginary, and his study was an attempt to sketch out that horizon. He saw in the poetic word an ever-present oneirism—an activity that takes place somewhere between word, image, and consciousness. In the state of poetic reverie, the rigidly centered self that predominates in normal waking consciousness and sets itself in opposition to objects, yields to a diffuse relation with the reverie image. The state of reverie is one in which modes of thought based on antitheses and negation no longer pertain: “in reverie there is no more non-I. In reverie, the no no longer has any function: everything is welcome” (167).

Reverie is an ecstatic state—a standing outside of oneself, or a feeling of an expansion of selfhood—a state of excess and release from confining boundaries. The poetic subject comes into contact with the objects of its reverie in such a way that the division of subject and object that normally presides is blurred. This imaginary contact represents a markedly altered modality of experience. Thus, when Bachelard speaks of the “cogito” as the site of this encounter, he places it in quotations—the state of subjectivity he articulates is not one of definite boundaries of agency, will, and

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by reaching beyond the celebratory dimension of the carnival that she finds predominant in his book. She posits herself as the host to a series of essays that addresses the broad ranges of behaviors, affects, and social political identities that comprise the party. A somewhat contrary trend has addressed intoxication in literary modernism in terms of alcoholism: cf. Joseph Crowley on the literary representations and genderings of the addict figure; likewise, Jane Lilienfeld employs a biopsychosocial perspective of alcoholism largely derived from the DSM, and analyzes alcoholic narratives, including the various repressions, anxieties, and denials of alcoholism in Joyce, Woolf, and Hardy. Tom Dardis takes a more explicit biographical approach to the topic and explores the relation between alcoholism and writing among American authors including Hemingway, Faulkner and O’Neill.
coherence. Rather, the subject is immersed in an atmosphere—an attunement of mood, more akin to a Heideggerian notion of a space for apprehending a presencing than to a Cartesian ground of certainty. The poetic reverie he identifies as an “oneiric activity in which a glimmer of consciousness exists” (150). This consciousness is not only the poet’s state during the act of creativity, but also that of the text’s reception—it is both a state of lyric subjectivity and a quality that inheres within the text itself. The domain of the “poetic,” for Bachelard, sets into motion a complex dynamic between poet, text, and reader; just as reverie is a porous or intermediary state between subjects and objects, it likewise takes place indeterminately between textual production and reception.

Bachelard was aware that his work had a narcotic neighbor, and he noted the following: “A wider inquiry than ours into the aesthetics of the oneirism should envisage a study of the artificial Paradises such as they have been described by writers and poets. What a lot of phenomenological ambitions would be necessary to uncover the “I” of different states corresponding to different narcotics!” (168). The reveries that Bachelard explored were ostensibly sober ones, and yet the diffuse states that he identified in his own study were of a highly ambivalent sobriety. He articulated a state of reverie as characterized by “The maintenance of an intelligent sobriety in the utilization—intensive all the same—of imaginary drugs” (170).” Poe’s tales, Bachelard found, employed “imagined opium” (169)—not written directly under the influence of opium, they opened

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18 For an appropriation of Bachelard’s poetics of reverie cf. Bidney, who reads 19th century literary epiphanies through a framework largely derived from Bachelard. For Bidney, epiphanies are “intense, expansive moments that behave like mysterious or riddling revelations, moments whose meaningfulness seems inexplicably out of proportion to their observable features” (18). The present study situates itself to a certain extent in line with the epiphanic—I will read intoxications as states of heightened (or “altered”) moods, perceptions, and understandings: “experiences,” for lack of better word. And yet while Bidney excludes the theological, and theophanies from his inquiry, in turning specifically to states of intoxication, I will proceed in the following inquiry with an awareness of how the materiality of intoxicants has been thought of in relation to the transcendent and otherworldly, and how intoxication is used to engage the theological notion of “belief” in the modernist era.
up a space between experience and text that was both one of reflection upon and a projection of the drug’s effect. And yet, “imaginary” is no innocent term in Bachelard’s vocabulary, and that the domain of the imagination should intersect with that of a drug’s effect seems hardly an innocent coincidence. He articulated a state of reverie that was central to his study by quoting the author of numerous literary and pictorial works under the influence of various drugs, Henri Michaux: “No need for opium. Everything is a drug for the man who chooses to live on the other side” (170). As if under the influence of such substances as the “imagined opium” he had identified in Poe, Bachelard concludes, “Reveries, mad reveries lead life.” In some ways the present work looks to expand and develop that space between drugs and oneiric visions that Bachelard suggests—a space between intoxications and dreams, between poetic production and reception, and between literature and philosophy.

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Certainly a poetics of intoxicated reveries immediately calls to mind the romantic aesthetic. That the presence of opium throughout Europe in the 19th century had an impact on the romantic imagination has long since been noted by scholarship, and Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” is perhaps the most commonly cited example.19 Subtitled “A

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19 Elizabeth Schneider was the first to broach the poem’s narcotic history, though she did so largely to dismiss it. She finds Coleridge’s active role in its composition to be apparent and to undermine notions of the drug’s agency; likewise she notes the drug’s effect in relation to dreaming to be minimal: Erasmus Darwin—and not opium—she finds to be Coleridge’s chief source for the dream. Alathea Hayter found a stronger conjunction between opium and the romantic imagination, and offered the first thorough exploration of the effects of opium on romantic poetics, discussing Coleridge’s opium use, and “Kubla Khan,” in particular, at length. Her focus on the causal relation between drugs and imagination largely initiated the critical commonplace of associating the romantic imagination with opium reveries. M.H. Abrams as well addressed the opium reverie as a facet of the romantic imagination, in a short and early work of his, likewise taking a largely biographical approach. Such studies, however, have tended to approach the discussion of the relation between the drug and the poem in biographical and biological terms,
Vision in a Dream,” Coleridge had composed the poem immediately upon waking from a sleep induced by laudanum. In his preface to the poem, referring to himself in an act of rhetorical self-estrangement as “the author,” he describes the state of reverie as “a profound sleep, at least of the external senses… images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation of consciousness or effort.” Under the influence of opium the poet becomes a medium—the dream is something that courses through him: he is both using the drug and used by it. And the gossamer nature of the vision’s recollection echoes the poem’s content: the paradise that Kubla Khan constructs through his active agency is as ephemeral as the vision of the poet, who is rendered passive under the influence of the narcotic dream.

In what has been understood as a crucial image for romantic poetic practice, the figure of the mantic bard concludes the poem: “Weave a circle round him thrice, / and close your eyes with holy dread / for he on honey-dew hath fed / and drunk the milk of paradise.” The poet, enrapt in a state of sacred inebriation, can be read as an ironic presentation of “the author” himself—distanced from the identity of the historical poet by the exotic nature of his draft and his enlivened state (his “flashing eyes” and “floating hair”), the figure of the inspired bard is both a representation and a distortion of the poem’s author and his narcotic doze. Indeed, the intoxicated poet can be understood as a figure of romantic irony, a textual re-presentation of the poet in the midst of an act of creation: the various means of the poem’s production become the content of the work.

And both the historical poet and the visionary inebriate figure bear a metonymical

and thereby miss the many ways in which the poem itself is concerned with, and enacts, states of intoxication. Reuven Tsur, on the other hand, reads Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” as an ecstatic poem from the perspective of the Cartesian-oriented “cognitive poetics,” but almost entirely brackets the drug’s presence.
relation to the poem’s eponymous artificer. Kubla Khan’s attempt to realize his vision, to will into existence an artificial paradise, is clearly no sober enterprise.

The narcotic dimension of romantic poetic practice that associated states of opium intoxication with dream visions was by no means limited to Coleridge alone, and recent scholarship has further strengthened that connection. Nicholas Roe’s recent biography of John Keats emphasizes that the Odes of 1819 were composed in a period of considerable opium use in the author’s life. He notes that “Keats found in opium a recreation that was also a stimulant for his imagination” (308), and claims that those poems can be considered a part of romantic era drug literature. The “Ode to a Nightingale” begins with the hypothetical quaffing of a number of drafts, famous enough to scarcely need citation: “My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains / my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, / or emptied some dull opiate to the drains / one minute past, and Lethewards had sunk.” The narcotic evocations are apparent not only in “some dull opiate,” but “hemlock” and “Lethe,” seem similarly evocative, if only by a contamination of sorts. The abundant drink imagery in the poem is well known: the chariot of Bacchus and “the viewless wings of poesy” are juxtaposed as alternate modes of transport—neither of which are ultimately successful in the poem. If Keats’ ode is understood to articulate a frustration and failure, it is important to note that intoxication is among those means of inadequacy.

The ode concludes with the speaker’s perplexity: “Was it a vision or a waking dream? / Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?” The reverie has tremendous yet uncertain existential and epistemological weight. Indeed it is by no means clear what the

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20 Hayter had previously hypothesized that Keats’ notion of “indolence” was narcotic, but left the assertion in the hypothetical.
difference between a vision and a waking dream might entail. The speaker occupies a liminal space—ambivalently situated between two poles that themselves are undetermined; he emerges from the state of trance or enraptured, yet the new ground of reality is of a profoundly uncertain quality. Seemingly correlative to Keats’ notion of “negative capability,” the poem’s conclusion is an expression of indeterminacy: it is not known whether the vision was authentic or inauthentic, of waking or sleeping consciousness, of transcendent truth or material delusion—or, for that matter, of sobriety or inebriation. “Kubla Khan” was a poem Coleridge had composed from a state of reverie recollected in sobriety—(or perhaps more precisely, recollected upon having passed through an intoxicated state—a state of mediation decidedly different from “sobriety”). Keats’ ode, on the other hand, dramatizes the very moment of transition—the moment of waking from whatever dream-like trance possessed the speaker throughout the poem. The poem’s conclusion enacts an abrupt shift in a plane of experience—it is the event of a transition. It is likewise the emergence of a structural moment of narrative—a point at which a before and after, however still blurry, begin to come into focus. The moment’s reverie yields to the emergence of a history. The nature of the transition itself cannot be definitely calibrated, but rather it is constituted by the disruptive feeling of an opening of a space. The new hermeneutic position of the speaker is not one from which any determinate answer could be given, but rather one in which a new question can be posed.

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And yet if romantic poetic practice would implicitly conflate states of intoxications and states of dreaming, the era’s most well-known addict figure was highly
interested in maintaining that distinction. In his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, a book that first appeared under anonymous authorship in 1821, Thomas DeQuincey had explored the dynamics of addiction. For all of asymmetry and aesthetic flaws that exist in *Confessions*, the work’s structure, the transition from pleasures to pains, practically inaugurates the addiction narrative in western literature. His extensive account of the capacities and effects of the drug was the first in western literature. Form, structure, and stylistic principles were of crucial concern to DeQuincey, and the relation between opium and aesthetics received his attention as well. In a section titled “The Pleasures of Opium” he sought to correct what he found amounted to parallel mistakes: the idea that opium was a depressant, and that the appreciation of music was passive. Rather, opium’s effect was “to excite and stimulate the system” (49), and it produced a state particularly well-suited to the apprehension of aesthetic form. Recounting his affinity for attending the opera under the influence of opium, DeQuincey offered the following discourse on the aesthetics of music:

> The mistake of most people is to suppose that it is by the ear they communicate with music, and, therefore, that they are purely passive to its effects. But this is not so: it is by the re-action of the mind upon the notices of the ear, (the matter coming from the senses, the form from the mind) that the pleasure is constructed. Now opium, by greatly increasing the activity of the mind generally, increases, of necessity, that particular mode of its activity by which we are able to construct out of the raw material of organic sound an elaborate intellectual pleasure. (51)

Opium sharpened the capacity to construe formal principles, and in DeQuincey’s analysis it was explicitly aligned with the activities of mind. It was his point, largely grounded in Kantian aesthetics, that sense stimulation is not itself the source of the aesthetic pleasure—rather, the aesthetic experience was a product of the mind’s activity, its re-action to the passive reception of sense stimulation, and its perception and formation of
unity. And the unity that opium provoked was not cognitive in the strictest sense, but affective as well. Employing a musical trope he would note, “opium… can overrule the feelings into a compliance with the master key” (53). Harmony, order, and intellection are crucial components of the pleasures that opium afforded, and DeQuincey opposed them to the coarse sensuality evoked by certain other intoxicants.

DeQuincey made this starkly apparent in his discussion of “intoxication.” In a passage in the *Confessions* that he identified as “the doctrine of the true church on the subject of opium” (47), a passage in which he sought not only to make a definitive claim about the drug but also to claim it as his own, DeQuincey sought to correct those who claimed opium produces intoxication. In a moment of textual parabasis, he noted the following: “Now you, reader, assure yourself no quantity of opium ever did, or could intoxicate” (45); he emphasized, “crude opium, I affirm peremptorily, is incapable of producing any state of body at all resembling that which is produced by alcohol.”

DeQuincey was emphatic about maintaining the conceptual and semantic boundaries of intoxicants. Correcting the confusion between the effects of opium and those of alcohol, he makes note of “a logical error of using the word intoxication with too great latitude, and extending it to all modes of nervous excitement, instead of restricting it as the expression for a specific sort of excitement, connected with certain diagnostics” (48-9).

The textual anxiety around the boundaries of “intoxication” seems peculiar unless it is understood to as correlative to a host of other borderlines and boundaries that DeQuincey looks to maintain throughout the text. Scholarship has noted DeQuincey’s orientalist framings of the drug, as well as the presence of his Tory politics and chauvinist prejudices at certain points in his work. DeQuincey’s opium visions feature exotic
animals and “Asiatic scenes” (80); his encounter with the Malay, who speaks no western language and consumes an amount of opium that amazes DeQuincey, strengthens the connection in the text between the drug and the culturally and geographically exotic.

And yet, the experience arising from that foreign substance is paradoxically aligned in DeQuincey’s text with intellectual faculties and the high point of western aesthetic pleasure in the opera—the young DeQuincey’s favorite activity whenever he decided to “commit a debauch of opium” (45). Opium has a strong cultural signification, and yet a highly ambivalent one. The eastern drug supplements western modes of aesthetic perception. And he particularly addressed its relation to the predominant intoxicant of the West. Comparing alcohol to opium he noted, “the main distinction lies in this, that whereas wine disorders the mental faculties, opium, on the contrary (if taken in a proper manner), introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, legislation and harmony” (46). The contrast between “the state of body” of intoxication, and the state of mind produced by opium, is suggestive of DeQuincey’s notion of subjectivity: wine and opium map onto apparently opposing poles of the self, or perhaps even onto the Kantian poles of intuition and understanding. That DeQuincey conceptualized that self in terms of intoxicants—that his construction of himself as “opium-eater” comes about through pitting one drug against another—pharmakon against pharmakon—illustrates the contingency of that process of self production.

In stark contrast to the intoxication of alcohol, opium, DeQuincey would find, produced “dreams,” the word he repeatedly uses to describe his narcotic experiences. He began the work’s preliminary confessions by acknowledging the contingency of the drug’s effect by appealing to the various capacity of humans for dreaming:
If a man ‘whose talk of oxen,’ should become an Opium-eater, the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all)—he will dream about oxen: whereas, in the case before him, the reader will find the Opium-eater boasteth himself to be a philosopher: and accordingly, that the phantasmagoria of his dreams (waking or sleeping, day-dreams or night-dreams) is suitable to one who in that character, *humani nihil a se alienum putat*. (7).

Opium was of interest to him for providing additional access to the “dreaming faculty,” a faculty closely aligned with creativity. Elsewhere he referred to “those trances or profoundest reveries, which are the crown and consummation of what opium can do for human nature” (54); both the pleasures of opium and the pains, as indicated by his nightmare visions in the book’s concluding section, are conveyed in terms of dream-states. At one point DeQuincey likens his opium reveries to an engraving by Piranesi that he mistakenly titles “Dreams,” and in which the artist appears on each level of a series of ascending structures. DeQuincey notes the particular effect on the eye, which ascends the structure, much like the artist himself. And he explicitly identifies the visionary capacity of opium with this powerful image: “With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams” (78). In identifying the opium dream experience in relation to form, structure, and repetition, DeQuincey articulated an aesthetics of intoxication—or more perhaps accurately, an aesthetics of dream.

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DeQuincey, Keats, and Coleridge—to which it would be possible to add any number of Poe’s tales, the narcotic night of Novalis’s hymns, or that of Wagner’s lovers, or of ETA Hoffmann’s magic potions—clearly represent a narcotic dimension of the poetics of reverie that Bachelard had articulated. And yet this connection seems only to
reinforce an association already long known to scholarship, between romantic poetic practice and intoxicants. What I look to retain from Bachelard’s approach is an understanding of states of reverie within a certain textual performativity—the representations and performances of reverie that are enacted in the expanded, metaphorized, consciousness of the text. Likewise, his equation of poetic reverie with cosmic reverie I take to be suggestive of a significant constituent element of the poetic intoxications I look to explore—their repeatedly being framed in cosmic, theological (or atheological) terms, far from gesturing beyond the historical, actually becomes among their more prominent historical features; the materiality of “spirits” functions in ambivalent antithesis to the “spiritual”—a pun frequently animate in Finnegans Wake.

And yet Bachelard identifies the reverie as a moment outside of temporality, one in which no “here and now” has any relevance, time itself having been subsumed within the moment’s experience. Indeed, it is precisely here that I differ decidedly both from Bachelard’s thought, and from what is perhaps a tendency of phenomenological approaches to dehistoricize their objects of study. In fact, by shifting focus to the modernist imagination, I look to decouple a poetics of intoxication from its predominant romantic association, and understand it as something that takes on unique historical contours in the modernist era. The ontology that Bachelard suggests is—contrary to his own analysis—one not ultimately separable from the historicity of being, and an inquiry taking reverie as its starting point needs to acknowledge that the moment of phenomenological analysis is never free of the circumstances into which it is thrown, or into which it has fallen.
In fact, as I will show, some of the most powerful literary expressions of modernity and modern experience have incorporated intoxication into their works and projects. Through my exploration of works by Thomas Mann, James Joyce, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Walter Benjamin I will suggest that the disruption of normative modes of perception and consciousness that intoxicants produce resonates strongly with a modernist attempt to break with traditional modes and coordinates of representation. Indeed for all of their associations with the literature of the romantic period, the expansions and contractions of time, the significance of moods and affects, and the questions of materiality that “drugs” implicitly pose, all serve to make intoxication at least as much a modernist phenomenon, and far more so than scholarship has acknowledged.21

I thus look to juxtapose a variety of modernist inebriate dreamers: Mann’s Hans Castorp, Joyce’s HCE, Benjamin’s flâneur—if not himself—and Nietzsche’s various intoxicated visionaries, including the inebriate chorus of his first book—these figures are among the major modernist inebriates with which I will be concerned. What I offer in this study is the wending of a way through intoxication, the following of a thread through a topic that oscillates between the labyrinthine and the amorphous—not a linear course of analysis, nor one in which any single methodology could be sustained, but rather a

21 Among the only full-scale work to address modernist intoxications has been a number of dissertations: James Nicholls focuses exclusively on representations of drinking, and offers numerous insightful readings of Hemingway, Rhys, and Joyce’s Ulysses. His largely Foucauldian approach traces the social constructions of drink, and examines the narrative functions of alcohol symbolism and acts of consumption. Julie Lynn Barmazel likewise offers a study of intoxication, focusing on novels by Lawrence and Conrad, as well as Freud’s cocaine use, and offering an extensive bibliography on the subject. Phillip Glennie examines the therapeutic dimension of drugs in relation to modernism’s general sense of discomfort. He reads works by Huxley, Cocteau, and Benjamin and identifies in the drug-induced experience a healing effect largely achieved through a contact with death. The difference of my approach involves both my focus on the textual phenomenology that I identify as a “poetics,”—a performative and creative textual event—as well as the close conjunction with dreams and visions that I track throughout.
devious route through intoxicated writing. I look at the host of various social, cultural, and political inflections of intoxicants of all sorts in these texts, as well as their broader historical and ontological concerns, with an eye turned in particular to the relation between intoxicated states and dream visions. I suggest that the materiality of the substance and the inauthenticity of the experience it produces can be understood to reflect the modernists’ heightened concern with the materialistic and corporeal, and the questionable status of any definite signifiers to ensure the sobriety of representation.

As I will show, two major modernist authors that devote tremendous attention to writing the body, Mann and Joyce, employ intoxications to stage various states of corporeality, from the dynamic and vitalistic to the dormant and narcotized. I will both show the pervasiveness of intoxicated reveries in *Der Zauberberg* and *Finnegans Wake*—two novels that in particular exude excess—and read them in light of a certain lineage of literature of intoxication—a “hallucinogenre” of sorts, as Ronell has it—something whose trace might be found already in DeQuincey and Coleridge, or for that matter in *The Odyssey* or *The Bacchae*. I will implicitly address intoxication as an important dimension of the spiritual malaise so commonly articulated in modernist thought—one characterized in particular by an engagement with a waning metaphysical and onto-theological tradition. I also look to bring into focus the dynamic affective range of intoxications: from the jouissance of crapulent joy to the shame and debasement of losing one’s self-control, the intensification and volatility of moods associated with states of intoxication—as well as the historicity of those affects—will be a recurring point of inquiry in what follows.
Deeply rooted in a phenomenological tradition, Heidegger had seen intoxication as a state of tremendous importance in the history of aesthetics. In his lectures on Nietzsche he identified “six major developments in the history of aesthetics,” a historical trajectory that largely resembled the history of being he elsewhere posited. Both of those traditions began with the early Greeks, found in Plato and Aristotle an important turning point, and were brought into modernity by Descartes. Heidegger found Nietzsche to be the culmination of the metaphysical tradition of the west, and his notion of intoxication (Rausch) was the most recent (and urgent) stage in that development. Rausch was the state that Nietzsche, in his late work, *Twilight of the Idols*, had explicitly posited as a necessity for any artistic creation to take place. Rausch constituted the conflation of the polarity of dream and intoxication that he had introduced much earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*; both Dionysus and Apollo he ultimately came to identify as forms of intoxication. Grappling with that conjunction, Heidegger articulated Rausch as a state of a heightened attunement of mood and embodiment. A state of ontological intensity, it entailed “a relation to beings in which beings are experienced as being more in being, richer, more perspicuous, more essential” (100). Rausch was central in Nietzsche’s project to combat the nihilism of the metaphysical tradition—insofar as creativity formed a definitive component of his engagement with modernity, intoxication played a crucial role in that battle.

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22 Krell’s translation of Heidegger’s lectures renders Rausch as “rapture,” and he offers a lengthy footnote on the German word’s untranslatability. His choice he justifies on account of its capturing “the complex erotic and religious background” (92) of the German word.

23 translated by Kaufmann as “frenzy.”
And yet Heidegger saw Nietzsche as pitting one form of intoxication against another, employing *Rausch* as part of a direct response to a dominant romantic aesthetic. In Nietzsche’s use of intoxication Heidegger saw a reaction against, and a rejection of, Wagner’s governing aesthetic principle. Heidegger had found Wagnerian intoxication to mark a momentous event in the history of aesthetics, and yet he characterized it as an excess that absolutely rejected any regulations of restraint. Wagnerian intoxication he described thus: “the domination of the pure state of feeling—the tumult and delirium of the senses, tremendous contraction, the felicitous distress that swoons in enjoyment… the plunge into frenzy and the disintegration into sheer feeling as redemptive” (86). In his effort to counter the notion of intoxication found in Wagner, and all its romantic connotations of unbridled effusion, Nietzsche posited a reformulation of intoxication. What Nietzsche found as the highest expression of force was manifested in the highly refined restraint of “the grand style.” Unearthing what he found to be essential in Nietzsche’s thought, Heidegger identified “[*Rausch*] as a state of feeling that explodes the very subjectivity of the subject” (123). The state of ecstasy, trance, and reverie that intoxication entails in Nietzsche’s work explodes the very foundation of metaphysical assumptions: subjectivity.

Part of what Heidegger found in the essence of Nietzschean intoxication was an anticipation the ek-static nature of Dasein. Heidegger’s conception of existence saw humans as always already on the outside: exposed to and extended amidst the profound uncertainties of being. The retreat into the certainties of the accepted social codes and practices Heidegger identified as among the primary ways that this primordial *Angst* was obviated. The dangers of that exteriority were something both Heidegger and Nietzsche
had repeatedly articulated, and the ecstasy of enraptured states stood in stark contrast to the restraints of modern life. Nietzsche’s thought in particular was directed towards an explicit affirmation of those dangers, and nowhere more so than in his advocating of intoxication. Heidegger saw the state Nietzsche had posited as decidedly inseparable from its historicity—it was crucial to Nietzsche’s project to overcome the metaphysical tradition that had failed the west, and thus occupied a prominent position in the historical trajectory of onto-theology.

When Heidegger drew on Nietzsche’s notion of intoxication as a mood of distinctly modern experience he explicitly differentiated it from states of drunkenness. He noted, “Of someone who is intoxicated we can only say that he ‘has’ something like Rausch. But he is not enraptured” (100). The ontological state of intoxication, Heidegger soberly noted, is not to be confused with ontic drunkenness—the material state of intoxication was much different from what was of interest to him in Nietzsche’s aesthetics. And yet, in spite of that distinction, the narcotic dimension of Attic poetic practice was something that Nietzsche was clearly aware of as well, and insofar as his first book has had a significant cultural impact, it is here important to note that the ritual he invoked was one that involved the consumption of entheogens.24

*The Birth of Tragedy* begins with his well-known distinction, which in likening dream with the visionary and intoxication with the kineastehtic and auditory, had served to carve up the corporeal sensorium along those axes. For Nietzsche, dream and intoxication were important as states of corporeal experience; and that his notion of tragedy was itself non-transcendent and decidedly embodied suggests the tremendous

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24 Nietzsche’s other early sketches for his first book “The Dionysian Worldview” makes even more explicit Nietzsche’s awareness of the use of narcotic draft in Greek festivals.
weight to those states that he poses as analogous to creative principles. The inebriate chorus, in a state of trance, sees before it Dionysus, the god of intoxication, and its collective hallucination bears an existential weight—it redeems life. It performs the gesture that Christianity and its Redeemer are decidedly unable to. Tragedy is both illusion and theophany—the hallucination is framed by the religious context of the ceremony—god reveals himself within a ritual of “play.” Likewise, Nietzsche’s own rhetoric of “redemption” serves to emphasize his reappropriation of religious tropes for decidedly anti-Christian ends. The redemption he identifies is not merely a description of an ancient phenomenon—a disinterested philological claim—but rather is made to address a distinctly modern predicament, the failure of Christian redemption, and thus becomes activated within the matrix of understanding of a modern hermeneutic position.

In his late writings Nietzsche would return to intoxication as the phenomenological state of creativity. He saw the state of intoxication not only as one of poetic productivity, standing in stark contrast to the paltry stimulations that public entertainment offered, but as something of consummate significance: a state in which the eternal recurrence is affirmed—the visionary state par excellence. For Nietzsche intoxication holds significance (as I will argue in chapter two) as the antidote to the narcotica of his contemporary Europe, and the enervating effect of Europe’s cultural productions. In that chapter I will suggest understanding Nietzsche’s preoccupation with intoxication in relation to what he identifies as the narcotizing tendencies of modernity, including Christianity, Wagner, and alcohol. In Nietzsche’s work the state of visionary inebriation plays a crucial role: it is a phenomenological justification of life itself in the

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25 On the notion of “play” as an expression of multiplicity, and the ways in which various epistemologies have sought to bracket it, cf. Mihai Spariosu’s *Dionysus Reborn: Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse.*
face of modernity’s greatest challenge—nihilism. To liken Nietzsche’s notion of intoxication to a romantic aesthetic would not only miss what Heidegger had noted—i.e., that Nietzsche sought in particular to counter Wagnerian excess with the controlled style of Dionysian *Rausch*—but would also miss that Nietzsche’s employed intoxication in order to address the particularly modern situation of the collapse the old system of values in the aftermath of the death of god.

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Nietzsche had seen tragedy as the product of the ideal intoxicated vision—the consummate combination of the principles of dream and intoxication expressed itself in the affirmation of life in tragic form. And yet drug effects of various sorts have taken on aesthetic inflections other than that of the tragic. Drug reveries have a long-standing relation to the Gothic aesthetic as well. DeQuincey’s *Suspiria de Profundis* and the gloomy visions of that work seem to anticipate the type of aesthetic that Poe would exemplify. Opium was often a feature of Poe’s tales, and the “drear” that appears in so many of them is commonly aligned with the drug’s effect. In “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the mood is initially articulated by the narrator in terms of “an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium” (607). The horror of the story occurs amidst the counter-effect (or extended effect) of the drug—the shift in consciousness is not to that of a fully waking state, but an alternation in the modality of a drug’s effect—a crash. 26 Drug experience and dream experience double one another, thereby staging an important

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26 Nicholas O Warner offers the most thorough reading of the host of intoxicants and intoxications in Poe’s work.
dynamic in Poe’s tale. They both exist at a mimetic remove from the empirical, the rational, or from the aesthetics of realism and realist representation.

A similarly aestheticizing facet of drug experience occurs in “Ligeia.” Ligeia is the object of the narrator’s obsession, and he describes her thus:

She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium dream—an airy and spirit lifting vision, more wild and divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos (554).

Both Ligeia and opium are aesthetic models in the text—they organize the work’s aesthetic logic by setting its elements in accord with a governing principle. Indeed, Ligeia is used like a drug—she is a substance consumed, never given a definite history or articulate voice in the narrator’s tale. Very much like the drug for the addict, Ligeia is the focus of a monomaniacal desire that removes the narrator from the symbolic order of a reliable narrator. As Warner notes, Poe’s aesthetic, which posits a unity of effect as an ideal, is not entirely different from a certain phenomenological aestheticizing gesture of a drug’s effect (57)—the mood of so many of his tales is ontologically saturating and perdures throughout the piece. The drug’s effect is one of the many haunting elements in his various stories—it is an ambivalent presence or a phantasmagoric medium that bathes everything in its hue. The illumination of enlightenment epistemology is partly called into question by the caliginous images that saturate the work in the dream logic that organizes the tale.

Nor was Poe alone in incorporating drug reveries into a gothic aesthetic. The Parisian Club des Hashischins was a group of artists and poets at the vanguard of exploration of poetics and drugs that met periodically at the Hôtel Pimodan. Moreau de
Tours was a friend of Théophile Gautier, and was very likely the group’s supplier of the drug. Other members of the group included Alexandre Dumas, Gérard Nerval, Honoré de Balzac. Gautier wrote a number of pieces about drug reveries, including his stories, “The Opium Pipe” and “The Club of Assassins,” both of which either echoed or prompted Moreau’s notion of a “fantasia” in the drug’s effect. Gautier had recounted his first meeting at the “ancient mansion” (20) that was the Hôtel Pimodan thus:

One December evening, in obedience to a mysterious summons, couched in enigmatic terms intended for initiates and meaningless to outsiders, I made my way to a remote quartier, a sort of oasis of solitude in the heart of Paris, which the river, in surrounding it with its two arms, seemed to protect from the encroachment of civilization… Though it was scarcely six o’clock, it was already pitch-dark.

A fog, thickened even more by the neighbourhood of the Seine, blurred every object with its wadding, torn and holed at rare intervals by the reddish aureoles of the streetlamps and the threads of light filtering from the windows of lit rooms. (19-20)

Even prior to the effect of the drug, the chiaroscuro lighting and the vaporous atmosphere establish a mood that seems in accordance with the secrecy of the gathering. Gautier relates a violent history of hashish: the drug, he claims, was employed by an Oriental sheik to elicit unquestioning obedience from his band of assassins, who would murder without regard for their lives (hence the word “hashish”). Part of the horror that this association entails is the abdication of reason, will, and the coherent self to the irrational principle—the Oriental foreignness of the assassins’ obedience to the sheik resonates with the loss of will experienced by the drug user. The foreignness of the pharmakon stands in opposition to western notions of selfhood and individualism—much as the substance stands in foreign relation to the body. Gautier’s tale would proceed into the fantastic—nearly a parody of the weightiness of the gothic—as a giant carrot, Daucus-Carota, with bird’s beak and roots for legs, appears to the narrator in a hallucination. The
ensuing grotesque fantasia alternates between horror and hilarity, and Gautier would liken it to a bout of madness.

Charles Baudelaire was likewise a participant in a number of meetings at the Pimodan—his interest in the poetics of intoxicants was considerable, and his exploration of them even more substantial than Gautier’s. Baudelaire had praised intoxication (ivresse), as in his prose poem, Enivrez-vous, “Be always drunken!” “Drunken with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue as you will. But be drunken.” And yet drunkenness was not the only modality that Baudelaire took a strong stance on. In fact intoxicants would become an important point of intersection in his work between ethics and aesthetics. He translated Poe’s “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” among other works, and took a similar interest in DeQuincey’s work; he translated parts of DeQuincey’s Confessions and the opium visions of the Suspiria, which appeared in Les Paradis artificiels. That work would explore hashish, alcohol, and opium, as various modes of satanic escape, just three years after Le Fleurs du mal was first published and caused its well-known public outrage.

While the biblical trope of paradise was new to Les Paradis artificiels, Baudelaire had already offered a comparative exploration of intoxicated states. In Du Vin et du haschisch, Baudelaire’s first work on intoxicants, which appeared in 1851, he discussed the various effects of those two intoxicants. Although he found in both substances “the extraordinary amplification of man’s poetic nature” (24), he nevertheless thought of the two in principally antithetical terms, and took a starkly moral stance on them. Hashish was the object of his condemnation; he found it to produce an isolating effect on its user, in sharp contrast to the sociability that he noted alcohol promoted: “Wine encourages
benevolence and sociability. Hashish isolates. One is industrious, in a manner of speaking, the other essentially indolent” (24-25).

Baudelaire’s explicit condemnation of hashish was nonetheless juxtaposed with his exuberant paean to the drug’s potential. Of hashish he noted that it enhances the comprehension of allegory, and moreover, that it “covers this mind with a magic lustre, colors it in solemnity and lights all of its depths. Landscapes of lace, receding horizons, perspectives of cities bleached white by the lurid light of storms, or kindled into flame by luminous passionate sunsets […] in short, everything, the very universe rises up before you in unimagined glory” (63). He shows a similar exuberance when he claims of the hashish reverie, “Your senses become extraordinarily acute. Your eyes pierce the infinite” (19). The visionary quality of hashish, its luminous radiance (one might say its aura), Baudelaire frames within a moral condemnation—the more beautiful hashish intoxication seems, the more worthy it becomes of the imprecations that Baudelaire lavishes upon it. Allen Weiss has provocatively aligned Baudelaire’s description of intoxication with a notion of the sublime, and further notes its synaesthetic effect as in alignment with Baudelaire’s notion of correspondence, a central component of his aesthetic (Feast and Folly 20). It is worth noting in addition that much like the sublime, intoxicants provide a way of maintaining a sense of infinity in the era of modernity, the era in which the gods have fled, or in which their supplement, the satanic, has come to dominate—the era with which Baudelaire was always concerned. States of intoxication become for Baudelaire a repository for the theological notions of paradises and “the

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27 Baudelaire’s particular interest in the relation between hashish and the understanding of allegory is often cited as an influence on (if not impetus for) Walter Benjamin’s drug experiments. Baudelaire’s particular mention of the luminosity of the drug’s effect clearly resonated with Benjamin’s interest in profane illuminations.
infinite” in an era in which those notions have been divested of their transcendent aspirations.

Baudelaire was clearly interested in articulating a poetic phenomenology of intoxicated states, and dreams he found to be a powerful means of conveying the effect of hashish. At one point Baudelaire attempts to distinguish between hashish intoxication and “the phenomenon of sleep,” noting the following:

Man’s dreams are of two types. The first is filled with his ordinary life, his preoccupations, desires, and vices, which combine in a more or less bizarre manner with objects encountered during the day to randomly fix upon the vast canvas of his memory. This is the natural dream; it is the man himself. But that other type of dream! The absurd and unpredictable dream, which has no bearing on, or connection to, the character, life and passions of the dreamer! This dream, which I shall term the hieroglyphic, evidently represents the supernatural side of life, and it is precisely because of its absurdity that the ancients thought it of divine origin… Such a dream is a dictionary to be studied, a language to which only the wise hold the key.

In hashish intoxication we find nothing of the kind. Here we never leave the natural dream.

The dream of hashish becomes a staging ground for the particularly pungent dynamic that exists in Baudelaire’s work between the natural and the artificial.28 Hashish, which Baudelaire both in his title and throughout the work identifies as an “artificial” means of expanding the self, produces a dream that is always natural—or rather, merely natural. It is not an experience to which one could attribute a divine significance, but rather always remains on the side of the mundane. Its dream is merely its aspiration to cross over, or the aspirations one might place in a substance to transport one to an ultramundane plane of experience. Its artifice, paradoxically, lies in its never being separate from the domain of the natural. And yet the point of intersection between morality and irony is not one that

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28 cf Françoise Meltzer, who argues that these moral polarities are a crucial presence in Baudelaire’s work, and finds that they should be understood in terms of his “double vision,” the various chiasmatic repetitions that form a crucial component of Baudelaire’s aesthetic.
can be easily mapped onto Baudelaire’s project—it is perhaps as elusive and the natural/artificial dichotomy itself.

That Baudelaire chooses to speak of intoxicants in relation to paradises—the cite of the inauguration of good and evil—resonates as well the rhetorical modalities of encomium and invective in which his discussions of wine and hashish are respectively framed. Baudelaire’s staunch moral positions on the intoxicants he discusses may be no more determinable than the distinctions he draws between nature and artifice—intoxicants are both satanic and sacred, and do not admit of determinations outside of the rhetoric that frames them.

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Certainly any discussion of literary and philosophical articulations of intoxication would be impossible without an understanding of the social and historical contexts of drugs—an examination of how intoxicants obtained their social and cultural symbolisms, and likewise how intoxicated bodies have historically come under legal and moral coercion. Nineteenth century Europe saw a considerable influx in the presence of psychoactive substances. Alcohol, opium, and hashish proliferated throughout Europe and the United States, and were readily available in a variety of forms to the general populace. Britain waged the two Opium Wars (between 1839-42 and 1856-60) against China, largely on behalf the interests of The British East India Company, which was profiting considerably from the sale of opium to China, and wanted to preserve that lucrative open market for opium in China. In 1821 Thomas DeQuincey could already attest to the commonplace of opium in London society. Opium was in fact a common
household product in 19th century England when in 1868 the first legislation against it in Britain was passed (Berridge 16). John Logan has identified the nineteenth century as “The Age of Intoxication,” noting, “It was the nineteenth century that produced the first organized temperance movements, the rapid development of opiate technology, and widespread public concern over the social origins and consequences of intoxication” (92). It was an era that was becoming both increasingly intoxicated and increasingly sober—an important and often overlooked dimension of the trajectory of “modernity.” The recourse to altered states by artists, intellectuals, and members of various social classes Logan attributed in part to “a way of reacting to a rapidly changing world” (94). Indeed, drugs were both a definitive part of the emerging modern world and a means of coping with it as well.

This trend of the proliferation of intoxicants in the West, as well as an increase in the legislation surrounding them, continued, as one would expect, throughout the 20th century. Virginia Berridge has argued for the particular importance of World War I and its aftermath for the social, cultural, and legal status of drugs in the West (118). An article in the Treaty of Versailles brought cocaine and opium under legal control broadly throughout Europe, in accord with the 1912 International Opium Convention at the Hague. The League of Nations was commissioned with its enforcement. After that point, drugs of various sorts not only came under considerable legislation, but also increasingly came to reflect the interests of emerging internationalist corporations. The history of our current contradictory attitudes to various intoxicants, Berridge finds, dates to this period—indeed, the conjunction of corporate interests and political power have played an important role in how we think about drugs and their effects. In The United States drugs
initially came under legislation in the early twentieth century, through the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906, followed by the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914. The Eighteenth Amendment initiated in 1920 the period of “Prohibition,” which lasted thirteen years; subsequent legislation in the United States was passed on cannabis and opium in the 30’s and 40’s.  

Along with the American company, Parke-Davis, the German pharmaceutical corporations Merck, Bayer, and Boehringer-Ingelheim were leading the world in the production of drugs from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth. Bayer had been the first to synthesize heroin in 1897, and began commercial production a year later, initially marketing the drug as a cough-suppressant. Amphetamines, discovered in the previous decade, were among the drugs proliferating throughout Europe during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Recent scholarship has explored the extent of the relation between the German Third Reich and drugs of numerous sorts.  

The public policy advocated by the Nazis was one of stringent sobriety, yet the practice of the Nazi regime was very much the opposite. German soldiers were permitted use of a host of intoxicants while executing their missions, among the most popular of which was methamphetamines, issued under the name “Pervitin.” The drug was commercially available in Germany from 1938, and the Nazis supplied its troops with an abundance of

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29 Tracing the scapegoat logic of intoxicants Thomas Szasz analyzes how institutional powers have given various drugs their cultural and historical significances. Szasz separates the biological effects of drugs from their “ceremonial” significances, and identifies in our attitudes towards drugs (such as awe, fear, and praise) a residue of the religious; he casts a particularly skeptical eye on the field of psychiatry and its claims to determining the “healthy,” a determination which he finds every bit as ceremonial as any determination of the “holy.” He notes as well how closely alcohol has been aligned with the project of western modernity—as western hegemony expands to populations that use drugs other than alcohol, it imposes its alcohol consumption upon them and looks to eliminate the native drug of choice—often the demonized opium.

30 Normal Ohler offers the most recent in depth discussion of this. Likewise, psychonaut Werner Pieper offers a collection of essays that address the various laws, social attitudes, scientific and commercial interests that informed drugs in Germany leading up to and throughout the reign of the Third Reich. The use of amphetamines in warfare, it should be noted, was common among the allied forces as well.
it.\textsuperscript{31} Hitler himself received frequent doses of a variety of drugs, principally opiates and steroids, though amphetamines as well, under the supervision of his personal physician, Theodor Morell. While the extent to which drugs played a role in his decisions toward the end of the war cannot be wholly ascertained, it is clear that the Third Reich was more pharmaceutically fuelled than is commonly acknowledged.

To alcohol, cannabis, and opium, the late nineteenth century would add cocaine, which came into much greater popular consciousness at that time. Available in the West as early as 1862, it was among the most important commodities of the Dutch colonial project in the East Indies, particularly Java, and was initially thought to be a type of stimulant comparable to caffeine (Karch 71-2). Sales of it increased gradually after limited initial interest. Coca wines had a short lived commercial success in France; in the United States Coca-Cola became the beverage form of cocaine that dominated the market, advertised initially as a temperance drink. The American pharmaceutical company Parke-Davis was the chief producer and marketer of the drug in the Untied States. In an era in which advertising and medical research were not so clearly distinguished, Parke-Davis sought and ultimately obtained the endorsement of a young Viennese doctor whose fame was still impending, but whose enthusiasm for the drug was abundantly clear.

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\textsuperscript{31} Cf. Ohler for an account of this. He finds a provocative analogy between the euphoric effect of methamphetamine and the mood in Germany leading up to the war.
Freud was among the early champions of cocaine; he wrote four papers on it from 1884 to 1887—a period Ernst Jones had dubbed “the cocaine episode,” and identified as a brief, insignificant interest of Freud’s. In his several writings on the topic Freud had sought to identify a host of potential therapeutic uses for the drug. The claims he presented in his cocaine papers were the product of both his extensive research on the drug and his observations of its effect on others and on himself. Indeed, his encounter with cocaine reflected the recourse to self-observation that would become the founding hermeneutical gesture of psychoanalytic thought.

Freud himself used cocaine regularly early in his career, and championed its beneficent effects. Part of his interest in the drug lay in its apparent materiality, which was of particular concern to Freud as young neurobiologist. It seemed particularly well suited to his concern with measuring quantities. His enthusiasm over the drug arose from his having discovered its ability to produce a state of mind and body acutely conducive to work; the cocaine papers repeatedly reveal Freud’s interest in cocaine as a stimulant to productivity. He found the drug to produce what he repeatedly referred to as a “cocaine euphoria,” a state of heightened stimulation of both mind and body that enhanced one’s

32 These writing are collected in an English translation by Robert Byck under the title Cocaine Papers, to which Byck appends his very useful discussion of the drug and Freud’s relation to it. Freud’s final mention of his personal use of the drug comes in The Interpretation of Dreams; he had apparently been using the drug as late as 1898.

33 That these papers are not included in the standard edition of Freud’s writing is a fact which has lent itself to being understood in terms of the dynamics of repression (cf. Loose), and therefore a fruitful point of inquiry into the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Freud himself was entirely dismissive of the notion that cocaine had at all contributed to his thought.

34 Both Jay and Boothroyd have argued that the interest in the drug’s effect was an important turning point for Freud’s conceptualization of the psychic and somatic. Boothroyd, who offers the more extensive and nuanced engagement on this topic, understands Freud’s interest in cocaine in relation to the trajectory of his thought. He argues that “cocaine euphoria” was of particular interest to Freud both on account of its simultaneously belonging to both psyche and soma, and its amenability to both objective and subjective observation and inquiry. Noting the significance of cocaine euphoria for Freud’s developing notion of “health”, Boothroyd notes how that state “makes explicit the psychic-somatic nature of ‘well-being’” (78). Freud had made in his Project for a Scientific Psychology, compelling Freud to reevaluate the status of some of his dualisms.
ability to work, without negative consequences. “Cocaine euphoria” was a state, Freud claimed, that “does not differ in any way from the normal euphoria of a healthy person. The feeling of excitement which accompanies stimulus by alcohol is completely lacking” (Cocaine Papers 60). That state of euphoria was both one of a physiological intensification and of a focusing of concentration for productivity. Not only was cocaine an object to which Freud had pinned his early professional aspirations, but it also helped fuel those ambitions by promoting a state of intensified mental activity.

Among his interests in the drug’s therapeutic capacities was its alleged ability to combat “morphinism.” Part of his embarrassment over cocaine arose from his having prescribed it for precisely that reason to his close friend and colleague Ernst von Fleischl-Marxow. Fleischl-Marxow had received an infection in his thumb while performing an autopsy, and ultimately his thumb was amputated. He was left, however, with excruciating pain, pain that he sought alleviate through numerous additional operations, and ultimately through recourse to morphine, the best pain medicine available. His morphine habit was known to Freud, and that a recurring point of interest of Freud’s in cocaine should be its potential as a remedy for “morphinism” suggests that Fleischl-Marxow was on Freud’s mind as he was sifting through the potential therapeutic uses of the drug. Fleischl-Marxow quickly became severely addicted to cocaine as well, and died not long after his introduction to it.

Freud had noted that cocaine could occasionally produce intoxication. In “Über Coca,” his earliest writing on the topic, he related at some length the possibility of such a state. Paolo Mantegazza, whom Freud noted as an authority on the drug’s effects, had described such an experience with the drug, which Freud would recount: “eventually
[Mantegazza] had experienced the most splendid and colorful hallucinations, the tenor of which was frightening for a short time, but invariably cheerful thereafter. This coca intoxication, too, failed to produce any state of depressions, and left no sign whatsoever that the experimenter had passed through a period of intoxication” (Cocaine Papers 62). Freud cited this as an aberrant effect of cocaine—its production of intoxicated visions. This experience was one much different from the industrious state that the drug produced in himself. And yet in subsequent publications he would note that the variety of cocaine’s effects had become increasingly problematic for him. A year after his first writing on cocaine Freud came to acknowledge that the drug’s effect was not as consistent as he had initially thought, and he noted the following:

In pursuing my research on cocaine, I attempted to investigate objectively and at the same time test and measure quantitatively an impressive general effect of this alkaloid consisting of the creation of a mood of elation and an increase in physical and mental capacity and endurance. I did so because I noted that the subjective symptoms of the cocaine effect are different for different persons. While some report a euphoria even more intense than that observed by me in my own subjective experiments, others, after taking cocaine, feel confused, uncomfortable, and definitely toxic. (97-8).

The ambiguity of the drug’s effects—its potential toxicity—loomed about Freud’s determinations of quantitative measure. That the subjective experiences of cocaine should prove unreliable was for Freud indicative of the deeper problematic of cocaine as a potential source of knowledge. Intoxication was among the curious misfires of cocaine—the unpredictability of the drug’s effect made it a poor candidate for the type of empirical observation that was crucial to Freud’s early interests. Intoxication was something bracketed from (or problematic for) the ken of analytic observation, and that attitude would perdure throughout Freud’s thought.
And yet reveries and drugs converged at prominent moments in Freud’s early work. The two dreams that dealt with cocaine in the *Interpretation of Dreams* were “Irma’s injection” and the “dream of the botanical monograph,” both of which Freud analyzed in terms of deflections of guilt. Indeed these two dreams set in motion a dynamic of desire that was crucial to psychoanalytic theory, and the drug played an important role in those negotiations. Psychoanalyst Rik Loose notes that upon abandoning cocaine, Freud “had lost his object of fantasy, only to find a substitute for it, another object of interest which would open different pathways and eventually lead him to the discovery of the unconscious. This object was the desire of the hysterie” (21). In fact, Freud would find various states of reverie to be of interest to scientific inquiry. The hypnosis of hysterics would ultimately yield its primary importance as Freud’s object of analysis to the hallucinations of the dream state, and the reveries of free association. Indeed the displacements of desire that occur in reverie states reflect in some sense the transition of professional objects of interest on Freud’s part from drug to dream.

In his late work, *Civilizations and Its Discontents*, Freud addressed intoxication explicitly, situating it in his speculative anthropology. His comments on the topic were brief, yet they reflected his most substantive thought on intoxication within the libidinal economics of civilization. He noted the significance of it to human history, and attributed its prominence to the need to alleviate the physiological stress of civilization. Freud identified three means of coping with the burdens of life: “powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substitute satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it” (23-4). Science and art were among the practices that Freud had in mind as deflections and substitutions; intoxication
offered a corporeal outlet for those unable to sublimate their distress into the higher forms of cultural production.

Freud acknowledged in intoxication a negotiation of the reality principle: it was an easy means by which to obtain pleasure, and by which to obviate reality’s noncompliance with our demands. He claimed, “We owe to such media not merely the immediate yield of pleasure, but also a greatly desire degree of independence from the outside world. For one knows that with the ‘drowner of cares’ one can at anytime withdraw from the pressures of reality and find refuge in a world of one’s own with better conditions of sensibility” (Civilization 28). Freud lamented the useless expenditure of energy that intoxication entailed: it was energy not devoted to the betterment of society, and was a deplorable squandering of resources by the individual at the expense of the broader social project of civilization.

The retreat into interiority that intoxication represented Freud would liken to mania. In discussing intoxication as the chemical manner of alleviation of stress, he noted the following perplexities and analogies:

The crudest but also the most effective among these methods of influence is the chemical one—intoxication. I do not think that anyone completely understands its mechanism, but it is a fact that there are foreign substances which, when present in the blood or tissues, directly cause us pleasurable sensations. There must be substances in the chemistry of our own bodies which have similar effects, for we know at least one pathological state, mania, in which a condition similar to intoxication arises without the administration of any intoxicating drug. (27-8) The expansions of the self and the accompanying feelings of euphoria were notable in both the inebriate and the maniac. In a similar vein Freud also noted “the man who sees his pursuit of happiness come to nothing in later years can still find consolation in the yield of pleasure of chronic intoxication; or he can embark on the desperate attempt at
rebellion seen in a psychosis.” Both inebriation and psychosis were a retreat into the self—an implicitly narcissistic gesture. They were alternatives whereby one sought to compensate for dashed ambitions and worldly disappointments—the unremunerated expenditures of libidinal resources—through a cathected interiority. That narcosis and narcissism share an etymological root (Gk. νάρκη: numbness) was not a point Freud made, but is nevertheless very much in keeping with his thought on the topic.

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Along with the legal status, corporate interests, and military use of drugs, which served to constitute their historical significance, the early 20th century saw states of “intoxication” as offering a dynamic and dangerous domain of potential political subjectivities. Perhaps no author showed so acute an awareness of the right-wing political resonances of intoxication as Thomas Mann. In both “Mario und Der Zauberer” and Doktor Faustus Mann would identify the role of intoxication in the cultural dynamics of fascism—both that of Italy and of Germany. This point he would make explicit after the second world war. His repudiation of Nietzsche after the war was largely based on Nietzsche’s advocacy of intoxication, both Rausch and his “aesthetische Trunkenheit,” (aesthetic drunkenness) as Mann would refer to it.

This facet of Nietzsche’s thought Mann found to be opposed to the rationalist ethics of “Geist” that were so urgently needed in the aftermath of the Germany’s intoxication. Ernst Jünger was perhaps the prototype of what Mann repudiated—Jünger’s obsession with drugs of all sorts seemed to resonate with his exuberance for violent warfare and fascist politics. He wrote a lengthy book on drugs and their effects,
Annäherungen: Drogen und Rausch, and (as Ronell notes) is rumored to have dropped acid with Heidegger. The convergence of fascism and intoxication is among the hallmarks of Europe in the first half of the 20th century.

And yet the historical dialectics of intoxication proved to be curious, and the leftwing potentials of ecstatic states were as much a part of the politics of intoxication in the modernist era as were its fascist resonances. In his essay, “Surrealism,” Walter Benjamin noted of the surrealists the following: “in the world’s structure dream loosens individuality like a bad tooth. This loosening of the self by intoxication is, at the same time, precisely the fruitful experience that allowed these people to step outside the domain of intoxication” (Reflections 179). Intoxication, much like dreaming, was a medium for the surrealists—something to transition through, arriving on the other side of it, but never returning to the sobriety that existed before the mediations of inebriety. The liminal spaces afforded by drugs and dreams—the sense of transitions of consciousness—was paramount to Benjamin’s concern with surrealist experiences. The surrealist aesthetic never fully sober any more than one is every fully awake, but rather the staging ground for the shift, shock, or jolt of consciousness. Benjamin likewise situated himself as a translator, or mediator, of those energies: as a German critic he was able to engage the politico-aesthetic energies of the French avant-garde—deriving energy from the fountain of Rausch from the perspective of a moment of mediation. That the surrealists sought “to harness the energies of intoxication for the revolution” (189) was a crucial component of their political aesthetics, Benjamin had found. Like Mann (whose disavowal of intoxication I’ll look to problematize in chapter three), the Surrealists
distanced themselves from drugs and their effects—and yet (also like Mann) they repeatedly articulated their aesthetic in intoxicated terms.

Indeed states of intoxication have no essential political inflection, nor for that manner, any determinate relation to subjectivity. The expansions of the self that drugs of all sorts are often claimed to promote can perhaps only be understood in relation to the radically private nature of drug experience. What we consume—take into our bodies—individuates us in a seemingly fundamental way. And yet, drug experiences are never divested of a certain social character—rather, they take place (as do the many other ways in which we alter consciousness) within a cultural framework, or “etiquette,” as anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano has argued. Whether, when taking lsd, one thinks one will have a bad trip or a transcendent one may make all the difference in what ensues. Likewise the caprice of law and other social contingencies largely determine what drugs will be consumed in what settings—the various social, cultural, and institutional framings of intoxicated experiences inform those states at a very profound level. The most private experience always carry along a cultural and historical residue, and any understanding of them needs to take into account those traces.

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While drugs of all sorts were coursing throughout Europe’s system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a simultaneous discourse of dreams and their significance to human experience was also emerging. Natalya Lusty and Helen Groth have recently discussed the surge of interest in dreams in relation to the trajectory of

35 Cf. Crapanzano, “The Etiquette of Consciousness.” It is additionally worth noting that “drug-cultures” of various sorts—e.g., rave scenes, or the cocaine enclaves of strip clubs—likewise always contain their own etiquette, and are worthy of anthropological attention.
modernity. They argue that the increased importance attributed to dreaming beginning the nineteenth century was reflected in a variety of discourses that heterogeneously attempted to assimilate the dream as an object of study. They note how various altered states of consciousness, including “hysteria, double-consciousness, multiple personality, mesmerism—shadowed the development of a distinctive dream science that struggled to articulate the enigmatic and non-rational elements of experience against the epistemological certainties of philosophy and the positivist claims of science (2). The dream was an elusive object of study—one that tugged at the various boundaries of the real, the intelligible, and the empirical, by gesturing toward their other. Lusty and Groth read the various discursive engagements with dreams and their significances to show how complicated a role dreaming played in the competing epistemologies of modernity.

The interest in dreaming, they suggest, was partly a response to the alienating forces of modern life, which paradoxically oversaturated sensory perception while also impoverishing it—a similar dynamic to that which McLuhan had seen at work in our relation to technology, and had likewise identified as a principal cause of the interest in hallucinogenic drugs in the 1960’s. And yet even though Lusty and Groth begin their genealogy of modernity’s dream discourse with De Quincey they largely bracket drugs and drug effects from their inquiry; the narcotic dimension of modernity’s dream discourse is something that is largely neglected in their study. And yet, narcotics constitute at least an significant component of modernity’s discourse on dreaming. If dreaming is a medial state between deep sleep and wakefulness, narcotic sleep occupies a similar position of ambivalence. In De Quincey’s *Suspiria de profundis* opium is often a means through which those dream visions are presented; it is no longer the object of
discussion, as it had been in the *Confessions*, but rather becomes a medium—it is that *through which* the work’s reveries seem to emerge, *de profundis*—haunting it perhaps, like De Quincey’s own Dark Interpreter, in a medial state of wakefulness. Much like the turn towards states of dreaming, states of intoxication much were an important outlet for coping with the various anxieties, uncertainties, shocks, disruptions and discomforts of modern life—an alternative (however fleeting and ephemeral) to the damaged experience of modernity. If dreams functioned as a ground on which both modern scientific thought and more speculative interpretive practices converged, then it is scarcely surprising that very much the same holds true of drug experiences.

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An obvious point of departure for a modernist poetics of intoxication might be Aldous Huxley’s writings on lsd and mescaline, Henri Michaux’s mescaline visions in *Miserable Miracle*, or Antonin Artaud’s or Jean Cocteau’s opium writings. Indeed all theses figures were concerned in their various ways and through their various artistic media and thought with the visionary nature of drug experience. And yet a certain poetics of intoxication appears in modernist texts of even more ostensibly sober authors, such as Virginia Woolf. In *To the Lighthouse* Augustus Carmichael is initially introduced in the narrative as an opium addict. Upon his introduction we are told he had added “a few drops of something” into his drink at lunch, and “the vivid streak of canary-yellow in moustache and beard” testifies to his drug consumption (10). When Mrs. Ramsay asks him if he wants anything from town, he is described as “basking with his yellow cat’s eyes ajar, so that like a cat’s they seemed to reflect the branches moving or
the clouds passing, but gave no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotion whatsoever, if he wanted anything.” Contrary to the host of other characters in the novel that seem dominated by some deficiency or other, Carmichael exhibits an odd satiety: “he wanted nothing.” Or at least, his desires remain outside of the care of Mrs Ramsay, who is bothered by that circumstance. Indeed Carmichael himself seems at times symbolic of opium’s effect: “sunk as he was in gray green somnolence which embraced them all, without need of words, in a vast and benevolent lethargy of well-wishing…” (10). Functioning in a different dimension of temporality, he is aloof from the world of demands and needs—oddly autonomous. In a novel whose narrative perspective is repeatedly focalized through its various characters, Carmichael’s voice is almost never heard, and his perspective never seen: “He said nothing. He took opium” (40). His vision remains outside of the ambit of the narrative voice.

It comes as perhaps something of a surprise when in the novel’s middle section we are told in a pair of brackets characteristic of the chapter’s style, that Carmichael has produced a book of poetry, and thereby become well renowned: “[Mr Carmichael brought out a volume of poetry that spring, which had an unexpected success. The war, people said, had revived their interest in poetry.]” (134). This information re-contextualizes his cloud-gazing of the previous section—what passed before his narcotic gaze now seems transfigured in some sense, as does his general idleness. In a novel that, among much else, dramatizes the creation of the work of art, Carmichael’s own poetic productivity is at least brought into alignment with an important dynamic of the work.

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36 Cf. John Ferguson on DeQuincey as an important influence on Woolf’s novel, the figure of Augustus Carmichael in particular.
And that his poetry should resonate with the public particularly in the wake of the Great War suggests an aesthetic that is decidedly modern.

The novel itself evokes Homer’s *The Odyssey* through its sea imagery and sea-faring, its thematics of the journey, its penchant for simile, and even in Mrs Ramsay’s pervasive knitting. To the extent that Homer’s epic is an important intertext in Woolf’s novel, Carmichael himself can be read to represent the work’s variation of a Lotus-Eater—awash in a narcotic paradise, and aloof from the demands of others, Carmichael exhibits a satiety that seems clearly related to his habit of opium consumption. The novel concludes with Lily Briscoe on the shore, completing her painting—something she was unable to do in the novel’s first section—and recollecting her relationship with Mrs Ramsay. Beside her is Carmichael, wordless, and “the same as he had always been” (194). Lily’s completion of her painting is largely the culmination of the narrative, and that her accomplishment is Woolf’s representation of her relation to her own art is a common line of interpretation. That Lily is accompanied by the novel’s other successful artist at the moment of her achievement seems significant as well. Lily, we are told “had never read a line of his poetry” (195), and neither does the reader of Woolf’s text ever see his verse. Indeed we never see things through his “smoky vague green eyes” (178); Carmichael himself remains hermetic—a certain inscrutability seems his hallmark. Nonetheless Lily feels herself to understand what his verse might be like, and it is that imaginative projection that seems to prepare her for completing her painting.

The novel concludes with Lily beside Carmichael, who is imagined as a benevolent god of the sea in another instance of his mythical resonance. Reconciling herself to the inescapability of transience and oblivion, Lily adds a final stroke and states
triumphantly, “I have had my vision” (209). The alignment of poetic visions—Lily’s, and Woolf’s alongside Carmichael’s—raises the question of the text’s own relation to intoxication. Certainly the expansions and contractions of time that the literature of opium often notes are a prominent feature of Woolf’s formal experimentation in the novel. The work’s remove from conventional modes of representation and narration resonates with the departure from the structuring principles of experience that narcotic literature often features, and the thematization of the threat of oblivion is likewise redolent of narcotic lures.

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That *The Odyssey* was a major touchstone for the modernist imagination has been recognized nearly since the inception of “modernism”; and that Homer’s text should be particularly significant to modernist intoxications is perhaps no surprise. *The Odyssey* contains numerous references to drugs and drug-induced states—some more and some less familiar. In book four, Helen prepares a mixture—commonly understood to be opium—for the mournful Spartans in order to help them forget their sorrowful memories of the war. Indeed, drugs and forgetfulness are often intertwined in the text. Circe is the poem’s brewer of potions, and Odysseus combats her likewise pharmacologically armed, having been given the drug “moly” by the messenger god, Hermes. And yet, he stays with the goddess for a year; nearly yielding to her lure and forgetting home—not unlike his crew’s susceptibility for lotus—until his he is effectively sobered up with the recollection of Ithaca and the ultimate purpose of his journey.
The Lotus-eaters episode is perhaps the poem’s most well-known narcotic passage. Situated at the beginning of his tale to the Phaeacians, Odysseus recounts sending his men on a reconnaissance mission upon arriving on a new island. The threat posed by these island inhabitants, the Lotus-eaters, he articulates as follows: “[they] had no notion of killing my men, not at all, / they simply gave them the Lotus to taste instead… / any crewmen who ate the lotus, the honey-sweet fruit / lost all desire to send a message back, much less return / their only wish to linger there with the Lotus-eaters, / grazing on lotus, all memory of the journey home / dissolved forever” (214). The Lotus-eaters pose not the threat of death, but rather what throughout the poem seems so closely aligned with mortality: forgetfulness. The lapse into memory’s abyss is less violent than the other means of destruction that the poem features, but it is by no means a less formidable obstacle. As I will discuss in respective chapters, both Joyce, in Ulysses, and Mann, in Der Zauberberg, drew upon the narcotic resonances of this episode of Homeric epic, as did (as I am suggesting here) Woolf, in her portrayal of Augustus Carmichael, and in her dramatization of the struggle between memory and oblivion. Homer’s epic is already an articulation of a narcotic poetics that returns again, taking on its own historical contours in the modernist imagination.

And it was not only the literary imagination that drew on Homer’s narcotic vignettes. Horkheimer and Adorno in The Dialectic of Enlightenment evoked the narcotic dimension of Homeric epic, and showed particular interest in its utopian resonances. In that text they read The Odyssey as an allegory of the emergence of bourgeois consciousness—the subject of agency whose consciousness and will are coterminous, the figure of Enlightenment emerging from the abysmal murk of prehistory.
This dynamic between the narcotic lure to forgetfulness and the willful assertion of memory, which Woolf had portrayed, Horkheimer and Adorno forcefully articulated as well. Reading the Sirens passage of Homer’s text, they note the tremendous effort it takes to hold the “I” together, the center of self control and agency that in Homer’s text is represented by Odysseus strapped to the mast. They claim the following:

The strain of holding the I together adheres to it in all stages; and the temptation to lose it has always been there with the blind determination to maintain it. The narcotic intoxication which permits the atonement of deathlike sleep for the euphoria in which the self is suspended, is one of the oldest social arrangements which mediate between self-preservation and self-destruction—an attempt of the self to survive itself. The dread of losing the self and of abrogating together with the self the barrier between oneself and other life, the fear of death and destruction, is intimately associated with a promise of happiness which threatened civilization in every moment. (33)

Horkheimer and Adorno turn to *The Odyssey* to capture the tremendous exertions of force that are necessary to compel into existence the coherent, willful self—the emergence of internal constraint, the domination over natural forces, is given its clearest articulation in the imposition of the most powerful external constraints. Odysseus strapped to the mast is the Ur-image of the modern bourgeois self who has internalized those constraints and thereby overcome the lure to oblivion. Perhaps less often noted is that the dissolution of the self is articulated in Horkheimer and Adorno’s text in terms of intoxication—the lures that threatened Odysseus were the narcotic forces of forgetfulness. The task that falls to Odysseus is to resist all those various narcotics that threaten his fledgling coherent consciousness: Lotus-Eaters, Sirens, and Circe’s wand—all representatives of the benthic forces of nature. All enemies of the trajectory of Enlightenment, they offer narcotics that belong to the chthonic domain. The promise of happiness with which narcosis entices testified for Horkheimer and Adorno to the inseparability of misery from the project of
Enlightenment. It becomes the task of critical theory, they claimed, to give voice to in the idea of utopia realized through historical labor, or one might say to employ the narcotic ideal on the horizon of the critical vision without becoming submerged in its pull undertow. The willingness to yield to intoxicating forces, and to cease to care about life at all, is the willingness to find liberation in death, the ultimate space of freedom that always belongs to the dominated.

In fact the narcotic dimension of Homer’s text was a recurring dimension of their reading, and they devoted attention to the Lotus-eaters episode as well. They noted the following:

This kind of idyll, which recalls the happiness of narcotic drug addicts reduced to the lowest level in obdurate social orders, who use their drugs to help them endure the unendurable, is impermissible for the adherents of the rationale of self-preservation. It is actually the illusion of happiness, a dull vegetation, as meager as an animal’s bare existence, and at best only the absence of the awareness of misfortune. But happiness holds truth, and is of its nature a result, revealing itself with the abrogation of misery. (62–3)

The lotus eaters are antithetical to all those elements that constitute the bourgeois self: memory, will, and work. Under the influence of the lotus, Odysseus’ men are reduced to a plant-like state, to the same level as the flowers which they consume. What truth this intoxication contains registers at the level of affect—its happiness. Their happiness is illusory, an artificial paradise, and yet that happiness sounds a protest against domination, subordination, and control. The “illusion of redemption” (70) that the lotus-eaters offer might best be conceptualized in terms of the notion of “semblance” that Adorno articulates in Aesthetic Theory—like the artwork, the illusion of happiness in intoxication is utopian: its truth is constituted precisely by its unrealizable nature. It presents the semblance of happiness, but only in its emptiness. Intoxication is another broken
promise of happiness, and in this way differs not greatly from the other shattered utopias that resonate in critical theory. The addict who withdraws from society negates, however ineffectively or delusively, society’s values and demands, and thereby undermines its claim to totality.  

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Intentionally or otherwise, Horkheimer and Adorno were evoking Marx’s famous claim in “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” that, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people” (marxists.org). Popularized misunderstandings of the passage aside, the metaphorical relation of opium and religion is not one that lends itself to a simplistic understanding, and certainly some confusion has arisen in regard to the matter of Marx’s relation to the pharmakon. Andrew M. McKinnon, reading the metaphor in relation to Marx’s broader stance on religion, as well as the social significance of opium in the 19th century, suggests that Marx saw religion participating in a dialectical gesture between expression of and protest against oppression, between domination and liberation. By noting religion as the opiate of the people, Marx, himself an occasional user of opium, understood both elements of the metaphor in terms of a refuge of consolation, a momentary relief from the spiritual stifling of oppressive circumstances, and a testament to the necessity of a liberation through whatever means possible. The narcotic solution being the great balm of 19th century medicine, Marx’s

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37 Adorno elsewhere noted that utopias realized and thereby divested of their illusoriness are no longer intoxicating: “As they have been realized the dreams themselves have assumed a peculiar character of sobriety, of the spirit of positivism, and beyond that, of boredom” (“Something’s Missing” 1). The habitual administration of realized utopian elements is transformative—no longer intoxicating, the drugs of utopian narcosis produce a state antithetical to the ecstatic: boredom, and the mundane familiarity of addiction.
statement was hardly dismissive of either religion or opium, and was in some sense mediated through *The Odyssey* by critical theory.

And yet perhaps no one addressed modernity in terms of narcotic reveries as clearly, persistently, and thoroughly as Walter Benjamin. Inspired in part by Baudelaire, Benjamin himself had experimented with a variety of intoxicants, including hashish, opium, and mescaline, and had recorded notes during his various drug experiences.\(^3\) In his introduction to the collection *On Hashish*, Howard Eiland notes the oneiric quality of Benjamin’s drug experiments—indeed the various writings which make up the “protocols” reflect different attempts to articulate experience through a phenomenology of drug reverie. In fact, the relation of ambiguous analogy between intoxicated states and dream states occurs over the course of Benjamin’s career, from his earliest writings through his latest. In an earlier work of his on artistic creativity, a dialogue titled “The Rainbow,” Benjamin had conjoined drunkenness with dreaming—both, he found, offered access to alternate modalities of experience, and were thus aligned with creativity, the principal concern of the piece.\(^3\)\(^9\) Already in his early writing, drug experiences, like dream experiences, bore for Benjamin a relation to the consciousness of normal, waking life, that was largely allegorical. In states of intoxication one gained a distance from the coordinates of normal waking experience that otherwise obtained—and it was the space of that gap, the liminal region between waking sobriety and its other, that Benjamin would look to employ to his hermeneutic advantage.

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\(^3\) Hermann Schweppenhäuser had collected them in an edition titled *Über Haschisch*, available in English in Howard Eiland’s translation.

\(^3\)\(^9\) Howard Caygill notes the significance of this dialogue in relation to Benjamin’s effort to overcome the necessity of Kantian categories. I will offer a substantive engagement with this piece of Benjamin’s in chapter five.
In Benjamin’s late work on nineteenth century Paris, the main subject of his analysis in *The Arcades Project*, he described the modern urban spaces in similarly inebriate terms. The flâneur’s intoxicated stroll was but one example. The flâneur’s passage thorough the marketplace Benjamin portrays in considerable phenomenological detail: “Within the man who abandons himself to it, the crowd inspires a sort of drunkenness, one accompanied by very specific illusions: the man flatters himself that, on seeing a passerby swept along by the crowd, he has accurately classified him, seen straight through to the innermost recesses of his soul—all on the basis of his external appearance” (*Arcades* 21). The flâneur’s vision flattens out and aestheticizes; seeing the essence in appearance, the gaze produces the modern cityscape as a sort of hallucination, one that Benjamin particularly identifies as phantasmagoric. In a manner that seems to refashion Nietzsche’s aesthetic theory for an urban phenomenology, Benjamin sees intoxication and dream as modes of experience that articulate both with a distinctly modernist figure like the flâneur, and with a similarly modernist form of perception that relies on typification and abstraction.

Likewise, Benjamin describes the private space of Parisian interior in the identical terms of oneiric inebriation as the excursus through public space. He referred to “The intoxicated interpenetration of street and residence…” (*Arcades* 423), thus making it clear that Parisian intoxication was to be understood in terms of the dialectics of its spatial framings. The bourgeois private dwelling of the 19th century becomes for Benjamin the architectural site of the staging of modern experience—the space for a subjectivity that paradoxically looks to assert its individuality through its accumulation of mass-produced objects.
Benjamin showed particular interest in the experience of “bourgeois coziness” of the nineteenth century interior—a state he likened to hashish reverie:

The mood of hashish—the nineteenth century interior is itself a stimulus to intoxication and dream. This mood involves, furthermore, an aversion to the open air, the (so to speak) Uranian atmosphere, which throws a new light on the extravagant interior design of the period. To live in these interiors was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself within a spider’s web, in whose toils world events hang loosely suspended like so many insect bodies sucked dry. (Arcades 216)

Hashish and the upholstered interior are among the textures of modern experience. Benjamin finds in hashish reverie a mood that is tactile, ensconcing, and mortally desiccated. In chapter four I look to explore Benjamin’s engagement with the various mediations of intoxication—I will examine, in particular, the multiplicity of rhetorical forms (dialogue, narrative, montage) that Benjamin assembles in order to think through intoxication. That the oneiric inebriate functions as something of a recurring character in his work is an insight that extends from Benjamin’s own emphasis on notions of style.

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And yet critical theory was not alone in seeing intoxications in relation to dialectical gestures, nor was Benjamin the only one to see a mystic resonance at work in them. William James had experimented with and written about intoxicants at numerous points. In his lecture series The Varieties of Religious Experience intoxication appears in his discussion of mystic states. In these “Gifford Lectures,” delivered in 1901-2, James had sought to understand the religious experiences of individuals, and in so doing effectively claimed a space for their validity on the broad spectrum of human experiences. The feeling of a relation to the divine James found to be one dimension of
“human nature,” as his subtitle specified, and of central importance to his discussion was mysticism. Mystic states James identified as temporary and revelatory ones. He found them highly concentrated experiences that he identified as both “noetic” and “ineffable”. They contain revelations of truth for those who undergo them, but a truth that cannot be discursively articulated—rather, those revelations remain private and incommunicable.

Intoxicants, James claimed, had the ability to excite such states. Of alcohol he noted “its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour” (334). He claimed that “the drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness” (335), and stated that even if alcohol is on the whole “so degrading a poison” (334), nevertheless its mystical capacities need to be considered in any full evaluation of it. Still more of his attention was devoted to nitrous oxide (laughing gas), ether, and anaesthetics, particularly his own experiments with the former. James attributed “some metaphysical significance” to the experience of nitrous oxide inhalation, noting, “depth upon depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler. This truth fades out, however, or escapes at the moment of coming to. If any words remain over in which it seemed to clothe itself, they seem the veriest nonsense. Nevertheless the sense of profound meaning having been there persists” (335). Like the mystic state, the intoxicated trance yields an experiential knowledge that is impossible to transmit discursively or cognitively. The noetic quality of the experience was not one that could be corroborated by empirical appeals, or communicated by discursive articulations.

In both Varieties and The Will to Believe James thought of intoxication as useful in illuminating his understanding of Hegel’s thought. In characterizing the experience of
ether inhalation more specifically he notes, “It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity.” This type of monism he identifies with Hegel’s insofar as it subsumes contradictions within a model of the absolute.\(^4\) James himself explicitly rejects Hegel, but repeatedly notes a conjunction between the state under the influence of ether and the dialectics of Hegelian spirit. James (however disparagingly) found that “Hegel’s monism” was itself an experience entirely similar to that of intoxication. As appealing to a state in which epistemology and affect intermingle in a blurring act of reconciliation.

In *Varieties*, James’ conclusion on the subject of intoxication was that “…our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it there lie special forms of consciousness entirely different. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness disregarded” (335). The passage is nearly a synopsis of the entire lecture series: the capacity for religious experience by certain people is for James part of the evidence for the claim that “We live in partial systems” (420), systems with incommensurate vocabularies and experiential coordinates. Mystic states—whether brought on by drugs or not—were at least a part of that spectrum.

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What follows is really a series of essays—in the sense of “attempts”—efforts intended to track literary and philosophical engagements with drugs and intoxications of

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\(^4\) In the section of *The Will to Believe* he again asserts a similarity between nitrous oxide intoxication and Hegelian philosophy. In that earlier work James had suggested that in the intoxicated state everything sunk into a monism, and concluded that Hegel must have had a proclivity for such a state. On the evolution of his thought on the topic, and the relevance of Benjamin Paul Blood’s “The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy.”
various sorts, and the devious courses they take through texts, through bodies, through characters, and through history. This work reflects an effort to view modernism as perhaps only a contemporary moment is becoming able, one that may only now beginning to be accustomed to deeming the subject matter of drugs and their effects worthy of serious scholarly interest. That the notion of intoxicated reverie that I have here sought to sketch out as my governing conceit is not meant to reduce or assimilate these diverse works, artists, and thinkers—rather, it is meant merely as an entry point, one that will throughout attempt to reflect on its own limitations, while seeing how far such a line of flight might proceed, and what new insights—or nodal clusters—it might yield, if granted its speculative positing. I look to place what I take to be major modernist works in a configuration uncommon to scholarship: in bringing together Joyce and Mann (a gesture perhaps more common to humanist readings of decades past than to current approaches), I look to show a relation between the two that seems to belong to a much more contemporary critical perspective than other works that have offered such a comparison. Likewise by reading Benjamin’s dream and intoxication alongside Nietzsche’s with a particular focus on the common centrality of redemption in their works, I offer a point of comparison between the two that scholarship heretofore has failed to devote attention to. That the dynamics of the body were of tremendous concern to all the writers I assemble will prove to be a crucial point of mine throughout, and the various ways in which intoxicated bodies map onto (or take place in) the texts I address will be a pervasive point of inquiry. The porous borders intoxications have shared with states of dreaming, which divide the mental and bodily, or the visual and kinaesthetic, I will take to constitute the domain of the waking dream—a liminal space that cannot
ultimately be definitely delineated, but rather a horizon or clearing onto which certain insights of a modern poetics might reveal themselves. The historicity of that space is among the chief concerns in what follows—and it is partly for this reason that I begin with Nietzsche.
Chapter 2

Between Intoxication and Narcosis: Nietzsche and the Pharmacology of Modernity

The idea of an “aesthetics of intoxication” seems to be nearly synonymous with Nietzsche’s work. Introduced most famously in his earliest writings, the idea that a frenzied, intoxicated state was a crucial component of Hellenic art was part of what made Nietzsche’s first book so provocative upon its initial reception; and the nature of Dionysian intoxication has been a concern of tremendous importance to a host of subsequent readers of Nietzsche’s work as well. Yet when intoxication reappears in what scholarship often identifies as the more positivist-empirical works of the “middle” period (e.g., *Human all too Human*, *The Gay Science* and *Daybreak*), it does so in a different guise. In these work intoxication functions particularly as an object of a cultural diagnosis and the object of a polemic, in marked contrast to Nietzsche’s early work which had posited intoxication as fundamental to the creation of tragedy. When in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche questions, “what is wine to the inspired!” (87), he speaks from a spirit very different than that of Dionysus. Yet the concept of intoxication—along with the figure of Dionysus—recurs in his late thought, (particularly *Twilight of the Idols* and his notes for *The Will to Power*); in those writings it is once again conjoined with poetic practices and visionary states, evoking a host of concerns similar to his earliest work. Indeed intoxication runs like a curious thread through the labyrinth of Nietzsche’s evolving thought.

That the semantic range of intoxication is an elusive component of his vocabulary is evidenced by its array of antipodes throughout his work: dream, vision, sobriety, and
narcosis are the various alternate correlates of intoxications at certain points in his writing. Each opposition speaks to different and intersecting planes of experience as well: from the aesthetic and affective to the epistemological and cultural-historical—intoxication seems to have a bearing on them all. Certainly, the vicissitudes that the concept undergoes are a testament to how slippery and elusive this semantic field is, particularly in the hands of as subtle and ironic a thinker as Nietzsche.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche noted the role of intoxication in theatrical performances and cultural productions on the whole. In criticizing contemporary theater for titillating the rabble’s feelings and offering a merely intoxicating experience, Nietzsche exclaims the following:

> The strongest thoughts and passions are [in the theater] presented before those who are capable not of thought and passion—but of intoxication! And the former as a means to the latter! And theatre and music as the hashish-smoking and betel-chewing of the European! Oh, who will tell us the entire history of narcotics? —It is nearly the entire history of ‘culture’, our so-called higher culture. (*The Gay Science* 87)

The passage clearly conveys the importance Nietzsche attributes to intoxication and narcosis—cultural productions, he suggests, can be understood in terms of them.

Intoxication was in fact far from an aberrant state: rather it was among the main aesthetic effects of the west’s most common cultural productions. In her work on addiction and modernity, Avital Ronell quotes this passage and notes that her own work looks to come to terms with “the place where narcotics articulates a quiver between history and ontology” (*Crack Wars* 3). In tracing the multiple significances of narcosis, addiction, and drugs of all sorts, Ronell suggests that history and ontology are inseparable from certain narco-discourses, and she explores modernity in light of a semantic field of drugs and drug-effects. Yet while Ronell takes inspiration from Nietzsche’s work, her principle
interest lies elsewhere. She proceeds to offer a reading of *Madame Bovary*—and by implication, modernity itself—in light of a “narcoanalysis.” Although subsequent scholarship on addiction and intoxication has often noted and quoted Nietzsche in relation to the matter, a thorough scholarly exploration of Nietzsche’s own nar-co-lexicon remains missing.

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In fact, while the scholarship on the Nietzschean Dionysian is nothing short of gargantuan, the amount of attention paid to intoxication itself is surprisingly limited, and somewhat narrowly construed.41 As I will attempt to show throughout this chapter, intoxications, narcotic effects, drugs, alcohol, as well as stimulants and depressants of various sorts constitute a crucial—albeit slippery—semantic field in Nietzsche’s work.

This chapter reflects an effort to cut a path—however uncertain—through the labyrinth of

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41 Among the most important work on the topic are the following: Martha Nussbaum, “The Transfigurations of Intoxication: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus.” *Arion* 1.2 (1991): 75-111. Nussbaum emphasizes the erotic dimension of Nietzsche’s intoxication, and focusing principally on *The Birth of Tragedy* she argues for the importance of intoxication in Nietzsche’s rejection of Schopenhauer. By transfiguring the negative value Schopenhauer had attributed to willing into an affirmation of willing in Dionysian intoxication, Nietzsche revalues the “energies of eros” (107), and alters the importance of art from a depressant to a stimulant. Dieter Mersch, “Ästhetik des Rausches und der Differenz. Produktionsästhetik nach Nietzsche.” *Trunkenheit: Kulturen des Rausches*, ed. Thomas Strässle and Simon Zumsteg. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 35-50. Mersch understands the change in Nietzsche’s thought on intoxication to reflect his transition from a romantic to a modern thinker; its initial association with a full-immersion in amorphous excess ultimately yields to an emphasis on fragmentation, reflecting an evolution on Nietzsche’s part to a modern epistemology. David Allison, “Nietzsche’s Dionysian High: Morphin’ with Endorphins” *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* (Ed. Alexander, Anna, and Mark S. Roberts. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 45-57). Allison more explicitly evokes the affective dimension of Nietzschean ecstasy, and emphasizes the dissociation of affect that occurs in art and other ecstatic states. Sonia Sikka, “Nietzsche’s Contribution to a Phenomenology of Intoxication.” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*. 31.1 (2000): 19-43. Sikka construes intoxication more literally and sees in Zarathustra a host of characteristics of the inebriate. Carsten Bäuerl, *Zwischen Rausch und Kritik, Bd.1: Auf den Spuren von Nietzsche, Bataille, Adorno und Benjamin* (Aisthesis: Bielefeld, 2003). Bäuerl identifies intoxication and critique as the boundaries of a field that underlie cultural productions en masse; he thus situates Nietzsche in relation to critical theory and addresses Nietzschean intoxication in relation to aesthetic production. While my approach resembles Bäuerl’s in identifying an implicit relation between intoxication and critical gestures, my emphasis on the pharmacological and on questions of health differ considerably from Bäuerl’s largely aesthetic concerns. John Richardson’s argument I deal with at length further on.
Nietzsche’s writing. And if an exploration of the topic fails to yield any absolute
determinations of intoxication—or if it even shows intoxication itself to be nearly
synonymous with the indeterminable—I suggest that an engagement with Nietzschean
intoxications at least has much to teach us about Nietzsche’s conception of becoming,
flux, and difference.

Indeed, Nietzsche’s personal reputation for sobriety, largely based on his
advocacy of teetotalism in several passages from his work, is at least somewhat
misleading. His own concern with medications and pharmacological effects was
considerable—drugs of various sorts were of use and interest to him. Overbeck, visiting
Nietzsche, had noted the host of medications he found atop Nietzsche’s stove (Jaspers
109). In an effort to countereffect stomach pains, migraines, hemorrhoids, and
principally insomnia, problems (and solutions) that Daniel Brazeale claims began as
early as 1868, Nietzsche employed “massive and regular doses of drugs” (19). With
considerable frequency Nietzsche used a variety of substances: in addition to opium and
hashish, he consumed potassium bromide—an anticonvulsant and depressant, often
prescribed for epilepsy—and chloral hydrate—a sedative, also capable of producing
hallucinations in sufficient dosage. Nietzsche’s mother claimed that he bought chloral
hydrate “by the pound,” and Nietzsche noted being dependent on it for sleep. His sister,
who had attributed his madness to his drug use, claimed he used drugs that “had not, as
yet, been tried out by science” (Gilman 56). Resa von Schirnhofer, recollecting her
acquaintance with him, recalled that “he had written for himself all kinds of prescriptions
signed Dr. Nietzsche…” which to his own surprise were filled without any question of
his medical credentials (Gilman 163).
Nor was the effect of those drugs always predictable. In an 1882 letter to Lou-Salomé and Paul Rée, in order to escape feelings of pity, disappointment, and lost honor over their falling out, Nietzsche recounted having taken “an enormous dose of opium” to “lose reason… However, instead of losing reason, I found it,” he claimed, noting that he gained insight regarding their concerns over his solitude and megalomania (Briefwechsel 307). “In opio veritas,” he would note, only to retract that claim in a subsequent letter, asking Rée not to “confuse [his] reason with the nonsense of the opium letter” (309). The relation between opium and reason and insight was clearly a matter of ambivalence to Nietzsche.

Even alcohol, which Nietzsche on numerous occasions made the object of his polemics, is not something he entirely foreswore. In Ecce Homo he notes the curious nature of his inability to process small amounts of alcohol, but his affinity for occasional strong doses, dating from his time as a schoolboy. He relates how over the course of a peculiar night of heavy drinking and Latin composition, the young Nietzsche at Schulpforta attempted to emulate his model, Sallust. He notes: “to pour some grog of the heaviest caliber over my Latin… did not disagree with my physiology” (695). Similarly, in The Birth of Tragedy, he admires the Greeks for combining “Dionysiac and political instincts,” and likens the balance of the two to “the glorious mixture that one finds in a fine wine, which both fires the blood and turns the mind to contemplation” (100). Here Nietzsche finds the effect of wine to concentrate the apparently antithetical domains of the erotic and intellectual—precisely the type of psycho-somatic intensification that figures so prominently throughout his thought. For Nietzsche the principal reason for
rejecting intoxication is perhaps not so much anything essential in its effect, but rather the stupefying regularity of its consumption throughout Europe.

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And yet what is far more interesting than Nietzsche’s personal use of drugs and alcohol are the numerous ways in which intoxicants and intoxicated states of various sorts occupy his thought, and the frequency with which he employs a narco-lexicon is his analysis of modernity. In fact, modernity itself in Nietzsche’s diagnosis is deeply narcotized, and among the most powerful of modern intoxicants is Wagnerian music. It is perhaps not a coincidence that his early enthusiasm for Wagner—which Nietzsche clearly expresses in the Birth of Tragedy and in its early sketches—coincides with his initiation of intoxication and the effects of narcotic draft in relation to aesthetic principles. In The Birth of Tragedy Wagner figures as a potential source of the revival of Dionysian tragedy in the form of the modern music drama, and if it is among Nietzsche’s contributions to have introduced the principle of intoxication, frenzy, and exuberance into an understanding of Greek culture, it is important to note that he does so while under the influence of Wagner.

And yet if Nietzsche’s later relation to Wagner is largely one of rejection of his mentor, nonetheless he continues to discuss Wagner in a lexicon of narcotic effects. In his later—and more antagonist—mode, he notes “Stupefaction and intoxication constitute all Wagnerian art” (“Nietzsche contra Wagner”). He claims Wagner’s music contains “the three great stimulantia of the exhausted: the brutal, the artificial, and the innocent (idiotic)” (“The Case” 622). Wagnerian art both produces and caters to its philistine
audience and in so doing obeys a curious pharmacologic: it stimulates the exhausted, and stimulates them to exhaustion. Wagnerian music has an ambivalence of effect, it is both stimulating and depressing—and what remains implicit in Nietzsche’s discussion as well is that it is subject to abuse. Nietzsche’s subsequent and repeated reflections on his relationship to his early mentor suggest his effort to work through what it means to be under the influence of Wagner, or similar drugs. When Nietzsche suggests understanding all higher culture in relation to drug effects his intention is to address a general existential malaise of modernity, one that Wagner’s audience typifies.

In his attempt at self-criticism, appended to *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886, Nietzsche contends that “German music” (always a shorthand of his for “Wagner”) is, “a narcotic of the worst kind, which hails lack of clarity as a virtue, with its dual properties of being both an intoxicating and befogging narcotic” (10). He proceeds to place his own early work under the same suspicion, questioning whether it is not “as intoxicating as it is befogging, *berauschendes und zugleich benebelndes* a narcotic at any rate.” (11). Nietzsche’s own work falls under the same criticism as Wagner’s: characterized by a lack of clarity, both are alternately intoxicating and befogging, intensifying and stupefying. Elsewhere he notes the infectious nature of Wagner: “[he] has the same effect as the continual consumption of alcohol: blunting, and obstructing the stomach with phlegm” (640). As with alcohol intoxication, Wagner’s effect is decidedly physiological—it obstructs the stomach, the organ to which Nietzsche repeatedly attributes matters of the spirit. When Adorno identified Wagner’s music as “an intoxicating brew” (*In Search of Wagner* 89) he was not only concurring with Nietzsche’s negative valuation, but employing an important trope of his as well.
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42 Among the numerous causes of Nietzsche’s break with Wagner, Walter Kaufmann, in *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1974), notes Nietzsche’s disgust with the spectacle at Bayreuth, his dislike of the Christianity in Parsifal, his need to break with an increasingly overbearing father figure, and his conflicted admiration for Wagner’s wife, Cosima. Noting this amalgam of causes and the significance of the relationship for Nietzsche Kaufmann claims that “their break illuminates Nietzsche’s thought and his historical position” (41). I suggest that Nietzsche’s rhetoric of narcotics and intoxication in relation to the matter constitutes part of that illumination.
has an ambivalence of effect, it is both stimulating and depressing—and what remains implicit in Nietzsche’s discussion as well is that it is subject to abuse. When Adorno noted Wagner’s music as “an intoxicating brew,” he not only concurred with Nietzsche’s negative valuation, but employed an important trope of his as well (In Search of Wagner 89).

Yet the pharmacological valence of Wagnerian intoxication is not something that Nietzsche gives absolute determination. Noting the importance of Wagner to him in his youth Nietzsche claims, “If one wants to rid oneself of an unbearable pressure, one needs hashish. Well then, I needed Wagner. Wagner is the antitoxin against everything German par excellence—a toxin, a poison, that I don’t deny” (“Ecce Homo” 705). For all his toxicity, Wagner has an ambivalent pharmacological effect—he is like hashish or alcohol, a remedy and a poison, depending on how he is used. He is considerably addictive, both to Nietzsche and to the German public, if not European modernity as a whole. And like a pharmakos, he is both distinctly German and the antidote to all German effects. Nietzsche’s relation to him is perhaps as difficult to determine as his precise relation to any of the other drugs he employed.

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Germany itself is in fact often heavily implicated in modern narcosis, and Wagnerian art is not the only drug that it employs. In Twilight of the Idols Nietzsche explicitly identifies “our constipated, constipating German music” (72) as only the third and most recent addition to European narcotics, having been preceded by alcohol and Christianity. At numerous points in his writing Nietzsche conjoins these latter two, and
the conjunction is no mere rhetorical flourish. The particularly insidious effects of each are most prominent in beer-drinking, protestant Germany—a point that Nietzsche repeatedly makes: “nowhere else are the two great European narcotics, Christianity and alcohol, so greatly abused” (*Twilight* 72). When Nietzsche identifies the destructive effect on Europe of the ascetic ideal as the “true calamity in the history of European health,” he finds it only comparable to “the alcohol poisoning of Europe,”—a poisoning that he finds largely to have taken place under the Germans (“The Genealogy” 579). Like Europe as a whole, Germany is hooked on narcotics that it in turn peddles to others, and the fact that at the time of Nietzsche’s writing, the German pharmaceutical companies Boehringer Ingelheim, Merck, and Bayer were leading Europe in the producing and marketing of morphine, cocaine, and heroin seems to resonate with this narcotic dimension of his cultural diagnosis.

In a passage from *The Antichrist* in which Nietzsche extols the nobility of Islam over Christianity, he notes the following: “The German aristocracy is virtually missing in the history of higher culture: one can guess the reason … Christianity, alcohol—the two great means of corruption… For in itself there should be no choice in the matter when faced with Islam and Christianity […]” (*Twilight* 196). An apparently similar comment appears in a passage from *The Gay Science*, in which he posits an identity of effect between Christianity and alcohol: “What do savage tribes today take over first of all from the Europeans? Liquor and Christianity, the narcotics of Europe. And from what do they most often perish? From European narcotics” (129). In both passages intoxicants serve to distinguish Europe from its other—the abstinence of Islam and the innocence of other “savage tribes” contrast with European alcoholism. Nietzsche thus shows a critical
awareness of intoxicants not only as cultural markers, but as important players in colonial power dynamics as well. Europe not only has a proclivity for its narcotics, but effectively pushes them on its colonial subjects; both user and dealer, Europe is itself sick, and is poisoning others.

And yet Nietzsche does not simply look to correlate Christianity and alcohol, but rather looks to understand the former in terms of the latter. Divested of its transcendent aspirations, the effect of Christianity begins to look entirely similar to that of alcoholism, and Nietzsche often evaluates them in identical terms—they produce a common physiological effect: a dulling of pain and deadening of the affects. In reducing suffering by positing a metaphysical beyond and higher moral meaning in it, Christianity limits the heights of joy as well—and when Nietzsche aligns alcohol with exhaustion it is this same affective muting that he has in mind.\(^{43}\) Christianity anaesthetizes, and its physiological depression is the same as that of alcohol. Both are palliatives, ones that contribute to the overall enervation that Nietzsche sees as endemic to modernity—both tend towards quiescence and resignation, or in other words: nihilism.

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Nietzsche’s lifelong antagonism toward Christianity was part of his attempt to overcome the anaesthesia of metaphysics, and the ascetic priest in particular, whom Nietzsche sketches in detail in the third essay of *The Genealogy*, is heavily implicated in Christian narcosis. The ascetic priest comes to prominence only in the presence of a waning of life, a physiological disturbance in need of medication. The sufferer, unable to

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act out against an external cause of suffering, experiences a discomfort in need of
narcotic relief, and the ascetic priest is a dealer of those narcotics: guilt, sin, and

*ressentiment*:

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an
agent; still more specifically a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering… The
venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to
win relief—anesthesia—the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of
any kind. This alone, I surmise, constitutes the actual cause of *ressentiment*,
vengefulness, and the like: to *deaden pain by means of affects.*” (“The
Genealogy” 563)

The ascetic priest has at his disposal a host of drugs for numbing pain and anaesthetizing
the sufferer. By locating the cause of suffering inwardly, as guilt and sin, the ascetic
priest enables the sufferer to release tension, to identify and thus act out against the
putative cause of suffering: one’s self. By these means the ascetic looks to alleviate the
discomfort of those who are not otherwise capable of coping with suffering, and he
effects what Nietzsche refers to as “a repose of deepest sleep” (570). Christianity thereby
offers a narcotic effect. It contributes to the overall affective and physiological
deadening that Nietzsche sees as endemic to modernity. And modernity itself is hooked
on the ascetic’s drugs. Wagner’s audience—among the sickliest in modern Europe—
Nietzsche implicitly aligns with the ascetic’s narcotics, when he notes, “Revenge upon
life itself—this is the most voluptuous form of intoxication for such indigent souls!”
(“Nietzsche contra Wagner”). The decadence of modern art is chiefly characterized by
the intoxication it produces and nowhere is that more apparent than in the effect of the
Wagnerian work of art.

The work of scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) as well, Nietzsche sees as complicit in
modern narcosis, a point he makes explicit in the *Genealogy of Morals. Wissenschaft* can
be either the most spiritual expression of the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche claims, or its opposite. He notes the following:

That one works rigorously in the sciences and that there are contented workers certainly does not prove that science as a whole possesses a goal, a will, an ideal, or the passion of a great faith. The opposite is the case: to repeat: where it is not the latest expression of the ascetic ideal...science [Wissenschaft] today is a hiding place for every kind of discontent, disbelief, gnawing worm, despectio sui, bad conscience—it is the unrest of the lack of ideals, the suffering from the lack of any great love... how often the real meaning of this lies in the desire to keep something hidden from oneself. Science as a means of self-narcosis [Selbstbetäubung]: do you have experience of that? (“The Genealogy” 583).

The scholar is not a creator of values, and largely conducts his or her work in the absence of any great passion or commitment—the lack of any orienting goal or ideal renders empty the aspiration of the scholar’s discipline. Scholarship thus does not look to discover what is new—contrary to its explicitly stated intentions—but rather it looks to conceal from itself the rickety foundations of what is already established, avoiding the truly new in favor of reiterating old patterns of thought. Wissenschaft thus functions much like the ascetic ideal insofar as it numbs an area of aggravation. It is a means of the abatement of an irritation—its effect is principally narcotic. Alcohol is thus by no means necessarily an impediment to good scholarship. In fact, in Nietzsche’s most vociferous denouncements of alcohol, it plays a complementary role to the dis-spiritedness of Wissenschaft. Nietzsche states:

How much dreary heaviness, lameness, dampness, sloppiness, how much beer there is in the German intellect! How can it possibly happen that young men who dedicate their existence to the most spiritual goals lack all sense of the first instinct of spirituality: the spirit’s instinct for self-preservation—and drink beer?... The alcoholism of scholarly youth does not constitute a question mark in regard to their erudition—one can even be a great scholar without possessing any spirit at all—but from any other point of view it remains a problem.” (Twilight 72)
Spirit is not a prerequisite for the rigor and clarity of scholarship because good scholarship is not necessarily value-creating; rather it often adheres to an already accepted set of values and truths, and thus foregoes the Nietzschean imperative to affirm the flux of becoming through creatively positing values. In this way the scholar is in fact more well suited than most others to an enervated modernity. The scholar—like most drinkers—is missing spirit in favor of spirits. In the same passage Nietzsche cites David Strauss, a figure whom he identified as a scholarly philistine in his essay of 1873, as a particular example of “that bland degeneration that beer produces in the spirit!” In offering a portrait of Jesus from an essentially positivist and historicist position, Strauss typified the dis-spiritedness of the boozy Teutons.

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Through alcohol, Christianity, Wagner, and *Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche identifies a strongly narcotic basis to modernity. Together they combine to produce a distinctly modern physiological depression, a comfort with the uncomfortable, an easing of profound discontentment, and an exhilarating rush from ignoble substances. A strong taste for intoxication is nearly a hallmark of modern humanity, the rabble. Noting the “mob taste” that prefers the titillation of intoxication to the substance of food, Nietzsche asks “is it to them that politics are to be entrusted? So that they can make of them their daily intoxication?” (*Daybreak* 188).

It is, in fact, largely this combination of narcotic influences that has produced in modernity what Nietzsche—as well as Zarathustra—repeatedly refers to as a “sleep”. Upon his descent from the mountains Zarathustra is described as “an awakened one” who
returns “among the sleepers” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 11). Zarathustra rejects the wise man who promotes sleepiness, and his “opiate virtues” (30), and elsewhere he notes himself as a disturber of sleepiness (196). *Zarathustra* concludes with daybreak and an awakening, while his disciples remain asleep, emphasizing again the importance of the dichotomy. For Nietzsche this sleep of modernity is always partly narcotic, and the rousing from narcotic slumber is largely the task both of Zarathustra and Nietzsche himself.

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And yet for all his condemnation of modern narcotics, Nietzsche’s diagnoses of—and prescriptions for—modernity are themselves often couched in a narcotic lexicon as well. Nietzsche not only identifies a narcosis in modernity, but is always writing prescriptions with an aim towards a convalescence. And what he, particularly in his late work, prescribes to counter-effect the narcotizing tendencies and general exhaustion of modern life, as well as the sobriety of the ascetic ideal, is the rush of intoxication (*Rausch*). In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that a tremendous amount of Nietzsche’s philosophy is concerned with drawing a line between that which promotes narcosis: the banalizing and dulling effects of contemporary life—and that which promotes intoxication: a state of the creation of values, style, and self that Nietzsche in his late work implicitly suggests as the counter-response to modernity’s dormancy. It is in fact a state that in his late work Nietzsche claims to be necessary for any sort of creative practices:

> For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensible: *intoxication*. Intoxication must first
have heightened the excitability of the entire machine: no art results before that happens. All kinds of intoxication, no matter how different their origin have the power to do this… (Twilight 82-3)

This state can be brought upon by a host of different intoxicants, among which he notes sexual excitement, bravery in battle, the onset of spring, and even the use of narcotics—and Rausch is not only a precondition for art, but for “any sort of aesthetic activity or perception,” any active positing of values. The concept reemerges at this stage in Nietzsche’s work partly as an antipode to Wagnerian intoxication. It is not romantic excess—the excesses of harmony, of rhythm, and of Bayreuth—but rather a the state in which energy expresses itself in form and style: “The essence of intoxication is the feeling of plenitude and increased energy… what one sees, what one desires, one sees swollen, pressing, strong, overladen with energy” (Twilight 83). Nietzsche’s idea of intoxication is one of a self-drugging, one in which the spirit intoxicates itself, animating and energizing itself, and therefore decidedly different from the titillation that an audience receives from Wagnerian art.

That Nietzsche aligns this state of intoxication with sexuality, suggests that the idea of generativity is prominent in his mind as well. Intoxication is a sensualized state of creativity that Nietzsche thinks of as obtained in and through the creation of philosophy and art, and most importantly, it counteracts the old, metaphysical source of values, religion, with an embodied, corporeal state. Thus Nietzsche claims that “artist” and “Christian” are antithetical terms, and accordingly notes, “Raphael was not a Christian” (BT 84). For Nietzsche the state of intoxication is one of excess, intensity, and above all, force—and it is as antithetical to the tendencies of modernity as Dionysus is to Christ. When in his early works Nietzsche first introduces the idea of intoxication into his

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44 Its erotic dimension is commonly noted in scholarship: cf. Nussbaum, Allison, Mersch, Richardson, et al.
thought on aesthetics and sees in the rituals of Dionysus a crucial cultural and phenomenological significance, he knowingly evokes a religious tradition with a strongly narcotic genealogy. The rituals of the Dionysian mysteries, as Nietzsche was aware, featured narcotic drafts, and their alleged visionary capacities may have been on his mind as well. Indeed in his late work, *The Twilight of the Idols*, where the concept of *Rausch* reemerges, Nietzsche notes the incompatibility of the sober, scholarly approach, with the Dionysian mysteries as an object of its study. In a moment of wicked invective that is a hallmark of his style he noted,

> the laughable poverty of instinct displayed by German philologists whenever they approach the Dionyan. The celebrated Lobeck especially, who crept into this world of mysterious states with the honest self-confidence of a dried-up old bookworm, and by being nauseously frivolous and childish he persuaded himself he was being scientific—Lobeck intimated, with a great display of erudition, that these curiosities were of no consequence. (*Twilight* 119)

The Dionysian mysteries, Nietzsche goes on to say, deal with the ecstatic and orgiastic, narcotic draft, music, and dance—all decidedly problematic objects of study for the sober eye of *Wissenschaft*. What distinguishes Nietzsche’s thought on the topic is his ability to identify states of intensity and possession, states that are not easily reducible to the conceptual clarity of philology. Indeed those states even hide themselves as potential objects of study. The “mysterious” nature of Dionysus—his association with a hermetic knowledge, and irreducible foreignness—is something that Nietzsche emphasizes both early and late. His mysteriousness, in fact, coincides with Nietzsche’s own hermetic knowledge: he notes that it is only in the mysteries that one finds an expression of “the fundamental fact of Hellenic instinct… Eternal life, the eternal recurrence of life; the

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45 Ruck notes the prominence of narcotics in Dionysian rituals and mythology; in identifying the variety of hallucinatory effects and the apparent strength of the drafts consumed he suggests “ancient wine, like the wine of most early peoples, did not contain alcohol as its sole inebriate” (14).
future promised and consecrated in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change…” (Twilight 120). In what reflects a return on Nietzsche’s part to the mystery rituals of Dionysus and the Greeks, and to the state of intoxication, he identifies as fundamental an affirmation of eternal recurrence—a non-transcendent vision of the eternal. Dionysus is both indigenous and foreign, Greek and Asian—the god who returns to his native soil in Greece; he is a question mark, and ultimately the excess that remains beyond the conceptual determinations of the sober philologist.

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Perhaps the most extensive recent work to address at length the importance of Rausch in Nietzsche’s writing is John Richardson’s Nietzsche’s New Darwinism. Richardson claims that the “real strength” in Nietzsche’s position can best be understood “by setting it down on its crucial Darwinian ground” (200), and he understands Nietzsche’s philosophy to derive from a naturalism that is essentially Darwinian. On Richardson’s reading, Nietzsche sees an essential conflict between “aesthetics” and “epistemology,” and feels an imperative to balance, if not reconcile, them. In an effort to comprehend Nietzsche’s notion of intoxication, and situate it within an empirically explanatory system, Richardson proceeds with his inquiry of Nietzsche’s thought as follows:

For we haven’t seen why we have these drives, by his account. Why, in particular, this Rausch? It’s only this explanation that makes Nietzsche’s claims about Rausch, and his schema of aesthetic attitudes, very interesting. Without it, they seem free-floating and personal expressions about what aesthetic experience “should” be—or what it happens to be in his case. Nietzsche’s quasi-Darwinian account of how we all have come to have this experience greatly enhances his analysis, by tying it down to facts. (236)
Rausch plays an important role in Richardson’s reading: its roots, he finds, lie in sexuality, and its connection to physical beauty is significant in the process of sexual selection. It is thus a central component of the will-to-life, and for this reason was crucial to Nietzsche’s thought. Richardson thus rescues Nietzsche’s thought for an empirical perspective—and in so doing makes Nietzsche’s thought “very interesting” as opposed to merely subjective. And yet this interpretation seems to warrant suspicion—indeed, it is precisely the idea of “facts” that Nietzsche warns against, and the empirical stance of a naturalist philosopher such as Darwin (or for that matter, Richardson himself) is in fact quite different from the hermeneutic position that Nietzsche throughout his writing both adopts and so forcefully advocates. Nor is it to be taken for granted that the audience Nietzsche had in mind for his works and thought was the same one Richardson has in mind when he sets the conditions for what makes a claim “very interesting.” Certainly Rausch is by no means ideally suited to discourses that see facts as fundamental, and to reduce it to an empirically explanatory matrix misses much of what is at stake in Nietzschean Rausch—in fact, I would suggest, considerably misconstrues it altogether. Rather, Nietzsche claims the highest state a philosopher can attain is “to stand in a Dionysian relation to existence” (Will to Power 536), a state that seems remote from an empiricist epistemology like Darwin’s, and constative claims about truth. Rausch for Nietzsche, I claim, is a state as much beyond epistemological claims to truth and falsity as it is beyond good and evil.

Thus while Richardson undoubtedly draws attention to an important facet of Nietzsche’s thought—his grappling with Darwinian physiology\(^{46}\)—in his over-eagerness to assimilate Nietzsche to his English counterpart (an assimilation from which Nietzsche

\(^{46}\) Currently a highly contested topic in Nietzsche scholarship: cf. Johnson’s Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism.
himself would have recoiled), he misses a great deal that is important in Nietzsche’s idea of *Rausch*, and for that matter, in his thought as a whole. In particular, Richardson mistakes Darwinian naturalism’s silent rejection of religion and theology with Nietzsche’s richly antagonistic engagement with that tradition—an engagement that not only perdures throughout the development of Nietzsche’s thought, but even intensifies. The agon with Christianity animates Nietzsche’s thought in a way that is foreign to the empirical stance of historicism, positivism, or Darwinian naturalism. In offering such a reading Richardson all but entirely reduces Nietzsche’s idea of intoxication to the genetic demand for the propagation of the species, and fails to note its particular significance for Nietzsche as an antidote to nihilism. The state of *Rausch* for Nietzsche is not best understood as principally part of a philosophically explanatory project, as Richardson suggests, but rather itself functions phenomenologically and experientially as a remedy to the narcotizing effects (and affects) of western metaphysics—it is a state of body that cannot be wholly reduced to its function within a linear model of progression, but rather one in which the body opens onto a multiplicity of potential reconfigurations and restylizations. In particular, as I will hope to show, Nietzsche employs *Rausch*—both in his early and late writing—in his active antagonism to religion: in an effort to overcome Christian redemption through Dionysian redemption, and religious vision through inebriate vision, Nietzsche transforms the intoxicating wine of Christ into that of Dionysus. Through intoxication Nietzsche transfigures not only Schopenhauer’s Will, as

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47 Gianni Vattimo sees in Nietzsche an essential accord between the superfluity of art and aesthetic determinations on the one hand, and the superfluity of existence itself on the other. Vattimo thus opposes Heidegger’s ultimate rejection of Nietzsche as a metaphysician, and understands Nietzsche’s idea of force to run counter to the quantifying and homogenizing tendency of modern en-framing (*Ge-stell*) that Heidegger sees as endemic to modernity. In his work on Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze as well reads Nietzschean multiplicity in opposition to rationalist dialectics. Dionysus, on Deleuze’s reading, is a potentiality that cannot be homogenized and reduced to a dialectical schema of negation.
Nussbaum has argued, but he also transfigures central tropes of Christianity, including, the eternal, the spirit, and redemption—effectively inebriating them. Nietzsche’s turn to intoxication as a state of creativity in his later work can be understood, I suggest, as part of his effort to counteract the narcosis of modernity and the nihilism of metaphysics. Through countering the affective depression of modernity with the highs of tragic joy—an affective modality brought about though creation in the absence of God, Truth, and Morality—Nietzsche sees in intoxication a visionary state that redeems existence. It is thus not simply that poetics takes the place of epistemology, but that the state of creativity, the positing of values and the imposing of form, actively confronts and takes to the end the nihilistic space left in the wake of the death of God; Nietzsche uses as crucial tropes in his revaluation of values concepts of Christian doctrine, which, emptied of their transcendent content, become weapons to employ against their erstwhile content.

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Insofar as one can identify a theory of poetics in Nietzsche, the idea of intoxication clearly plays a particularly important role in it. Creativity and intoxication are frequently conjoined in Nietzsche’s thought on poetic processes, both in his earliest and latest writings. He first articulates a connection between intoxicated states and poetic ones in his earliest work—in *The Birth of Tragedy* and in his earlier drafts for that book (“The Birth of Tragic Thought” and *The Dionysian Vision of the World*) and in both of them he clearly evokes narcotic draft. Quite often this conjunction is made in terms of an “analogy” (*The Birth of Tragedy* 4): intoxication is not entirely synonymous with the creative state, but exists among the chain of deferred terms that he employs in describing the actual state of creativity, including “ecstasy” (“Ekstase”), “enchantment”
(”Entzauberung”) and “enthusiasm” (“Enthusiasmus”). None of these are fully adequate to identify the state itself, but exist among the handful of terms that Nietzsche puts in play to articulate a phenomenology of creation; “intoxication” (“Rausch”), is the one he most frequently employs. What is common to them all is their decidedly anti-transcendent character: from his earliest work through his latest Nietzsche articulates a decidedly embodied poetics in contradistinction to otherworldliness of Christianity. In those early works, as is well known, Nietzsche posits a division of the kinaesthetic, tactile, and auditory of the Dionysian from the visionary state of the Apollonian, aligning them with the physiological states intoxication and dream, respectively. Both states are decidedly ones of embodiment, and insofar as they are conceptualized as antithetical, the distinction between them serves to divide the corporeal sensorium, carving out a particular space for vision, distinct from the other senses.

And yet, while establishing on the one hand a stark partition between the state of intoxication and the dream vision, Nietzsche on the other hand subsumes that division within a theory of poetic practice that posits the confluence of those principles as a necessity to the poetics of tragedy. The state that produces tragedy, his principle focus, is one in which the principles of intoxication and dream meld together. Intoxication he conceives of principally as a medial state: the vision obtained is obtained through intoxication. In the “Dionysian Vision” he notes, “it is not in alternation between clarity and intoxication, but in their entanglement, that Dionysian artistry shows itself” (30). In his late work Nietzsche identifies the Dionysian and the Apollonian as having been “both conceived as forms of intoxication”—not so much a reformulation of his initial theory, but rather a return to it. He notes,
Apollonian intoxication alerts above all the eye, so that it acquires power of vision. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are all visionaries par excellence. In the Dionysian state on the other hand, the entire emotional system is alerted and intensified: so that it discharges all its powers of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transmutation, every kind of mimicry and play-acting, conjointly. (Twilight 84)

This suggests that the apparent stark division between the two is not of as much significance to Nietzsche as their confluence, and that the Apollonian is perhaps not best conceived as the “sober” antithesis of the drunken Dionysian, but rather just a different modality of intoxication. Yet one thing that remains clear in both Nietzsche’s early and late work is the visionary nature of intoxication. In The Twilight of the Idols he states,

The condition of pleasure called intoxication is precisely an exalted feeling of power— The sensations of space and time are altered: tremendous distances are surveyed and, as it were, for the first time apprehended; the extension of vision over greater masses and expanses; the refinement of the organs for much that is extremely small or and fleeting; divination, the power of understanding with only the least assistance… (Twilight 83)

The command of the inebriate over time and space and the intensification of vision in the intoxicated state echo the opium visions of De Quincey and Baudelaire, among others. Much like De Quincey’s opium reveries, Nietzsche’s state of creativity is an admixture of intoxication and vision. The vision of Greek drama comes in and through a state of intoxication: in the overflow of excess, the intoxicated tragic chorus sees before its inebriate god, Dionysus.

In The Birth of Tragedy the state of intoxication is identified with a loosening of the boundaries of the self. The chorus members lose their individuality, becoming a collective mass, and the energy of their state explodes into images. What is produced is a

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48 Bataille sees the distinction as largely superficial as well. He notes, “The very first sentences of Nietzsche’s message come from the ‘realms of dream and intoxication.’ The entire message is expressed by one name: Dionysus” (quoted in Weiss, The Aesthetics of Excess 6)
communal vision. It is a collective hallucination, yet one that remains under control. The vision is essentially translucent; like the Dionysian it is medial: not only does the vision arise in the state of intoxication, but one also sees through that vision the absurdity of the Dionysian, the chaotic nature of existence. Losing the boundaries of selfhood, the chorus sees the god Dionysus before it—the god whose presence is both the cause and effect of their intoxication, and Nietzsche attributes tremendous existential importance to this vision.

If it is correct to see the Apollonian as complicit with, rather than opposed to, intoxication itself, then the historical moment that marks the death of tragedy is the yielding of intoxicated states to the waking world of sobriety. Euripides, who is a chief culprit in tragedy’s death, Nietzsche suggests was likely to have seen himself as a sober man among inebriates: “as the first ‘sober’ poet he was obliged to condemn his ‘drunken’ peers” (63). Here Nietzsche shows sufficient concern here with the narco-lexicon to render it in quotations—it is not drunkenness and sobriety he is concerned with, but “drunkenness” and “sobriety.” This sobriety, however, is largely that of philosophy. Anaxagoras “seemed to be the first sober philosopher in the company of drunkards” (63), and that sobriety continues through the Cyclops-eye of Socrates. The antithesis of Dionysus and Apollo yields to that of “a new opposition: the Dionysiac and the Socratic” (60), as inebriate vision gives way to a rational world-view.

Weiss notes the communal and sacrificial aspect of the vision. He sees the Dionysian body as thereby being dissevered from any determinative signifying capacity, and opening onto a semantic field as a floating signifier.

Gary Shapiro has explored the importance of the “visionary” in Nietzsche’s work. Cf. Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). He there argues that Nietzsche’s concern with twilights and daybreaks, the Augenblick, and other moments of visual in-betweeness, be understood in contradistinction to the clear light of Enlightenment epistemologies. I would add that states of intoxication frequently overlap and intersect with those visionary states, and likewise largely inform the epistemological and existential engagements of the visionary.
In fact, visionary inebriation appears even in Nietzsche’s “middle period”—the period which is often identified as “positivist” and “empirical,” and in which he most frequently rejects intoxicants of various sorts, and aligns “high culture” with narcosis (The Gay Science 181). Zarathustra himself is a water drinker, the sober counterpart to Nietzsche’s drunken alter-ego, Dionysus. He soberly notes how the world once appeared to him as “drunken joy,” seeming to establish a reflection on Nietzsche’s own early work. Zarathustra continues, “Thus I too cast my delusion beyond man, like all the afterworldly” (Zarathustra 31). Zarathustra rejects the drunkenness of the Dionysian spirit in favor of sobriety, and thus aligns intoxication with the type of otherworldliness that Nietzsche adamantly rejects; Dionysian drunkenness now appears as a noumenal realm that does not interest the earthly Zarathustra. In a particularly ironic moment in the text, the commencement of his mock last-supper, Zarathustra is unable to provide wine for his guests. The soothsayer complains to sober Zarathustra, “we deserve wine. That alone gives convalescence and immediate health” (284). The health that Zarathustra articulates, however, unlike that of Christ, is largely one antithetical to the health of inebriates.

Nonetheless the book’s penultimate section, “The drunken song,” not only serves as a narrative punctuation to Zarathustra’s last-supper, but it also serves to present once more Zarathustra’s vision of redemption in the eternal recurrence—this time in inebriate form. The soothsayer is reputed by “some chroniclers” to have been “full of sweet wine”; the same suspicion is applied to the ass a well, which now begins to dance (318). Zarathustra himself is subsequently brought into metonymical relation with an state of inebriation: “Zarathustra stood there like a drunkard: his eyes grew dim, his tongue
failed, his feet stumbled. And who could guess what thoughts were then running over Zarathustra’s soul” (318). Here, Zarathustra, likened to a drunkard, sings: “All joy wants the eternity of all things, wants honey, wants lees, wants drunken midnight, wants tombs, wants tomb-tears’ comfort, wants gilded evening glow” (323). The vision that redeems life from the nihilism of Christianity is presented as an ironic inversion of Christian ritual, and the text’s drunkenness is an important component of that irony. Much as the Apollonian vision redeems life from Dionysian chaos in his early work, the vision of eternal recurrence redeems life from the nihilism left in the wake of a metaphysical tradition of the West. Thus Zarathustra awakens on the subsequent morning and notes of his companions, “They still sleep in my cave, their dream still drinks of my drunken songs” (325), evoking once more the polarity of dream and intoxication.

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In Nietzsche’s lexicon inebriation and redemptive vision are commonly conjoined, and if the state of Rausch can be understood as part of his antithetical engagement with religion and metaphysics, then perhaps it is not surprising that the state was of interest to Heidegger as well, who has similar antipodes. Heidegger in his lectures on Nietzsche identified as a one of the “six basic developments in the history of aesthetics” (77) Nietzsche’s break with Wagner. In Heidegger’s view that rejection was largely based on Nietzsche’s different conception of intoxication. Wagnerian aesthetics entailed “the plunge into frenzy and the disintegration into sheer feeling as redemptive” (86), an idea which Nietzsche would ultimately reject. And yet it is this question of redemption in the face of nihilism that Heidegger addresses when he identifies the state
of *Rausch* as central to Nietzsche’s aesthetics. On Heidegger’s account, *Rausch* emerges for Nietzsche as “the basic aesthetic state” (97), a state Nietzsche thinks of as one of active creation, in opposition to the passive and receptive aesthetics of Kant. What Heidegger identifies as the great problem of Nietzsche’s aesthetics is the nihilistic consequences of bare physiology. The central problem in Nietzsche’s philosophy of art is how he can conceive embodiment as the ultimate horizon of experience yet not commit himself to the nihilism of western metaphysics—how there can be a “physiology of art” without thereby conceding the very nihilistic foundations of the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger articulates this problem in terms of a “discordance,” stating, “Art as a counter-movement to nihilism and art as an object of physiology—that’s like trying to mix fire and water” (93). Heidegger thus proceeds to turn his attention to elucidating the compatibility between the two—effectively quaffing this draft of firewater—and the result is an important moment in his own work.

For Heidegger the idea of a “body” is problematic insofar as its various formulations in relation to spirit, mind, or soul, all situate it in the language of dualisms and thus metaphysics. His insistence on the gender neutrality of *Dasein* and his marginalization of perception have given rise to the criticism that his relation to the body is largely one of “neglect.” And yet in his discussion of the physiological state of Nietzschean intoxication Heidegger gives a lucid articulation of a type of embodiment not reducible to dualisms and their nihilistic consequences:

> Bodily being does not mean that the soul is burdened by a hulk we call the body. In feeling oneself to be, the body is already contained in advance in that self, in such a way that the body in its bodily states permeates the self…. We do not

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51 cf. Aho’s *Heidegger’s Neglect of the Body*. Aho traces this branch of criticism of Heidegger’s work, arguing against it, and suggesting that embodiment is an important area of inquiry for Heidegger, and a significant component of Heidegger’s notion of existence.
‘have’ a body; rather we ‘are’ bodily. Feeling, as feeling oneself to be, belongs to the essence of such Being. (99)

The body is not a possession, not an inert res extensa; it is not even a noun—rather, it is adverbial, an inflection, a shading of actions and characteristics that is always already there. Embodiment cannot be reduced to quantitative terms, and is not experienced in a dualistic relation to “feeling” (much less, “mind”); rather it is qualitative structure, and thus irreducibly different from what (in Heidegger’s vocabulary) is the merely present-at-hand.

In fact body and mood intermingle, producing an atmospheric intensity, and Heidegger finds this interpenetration particularly apparent in Nietzschean Rausch. It is a feeling not localized in a subjectivity, but diffused throughout a horizon upon which beings reveal themselves more robustly. Thus Heidegger reads Rausch as “a state of feeling which explodes the subjectivity of the subject” (123). His ultimate assessment of Nietzsche is to understand the Will to Power as the culmination of Western Metaphysics, and Heidegger likewise faults Nietzsche’s masculinization of Rausch as indicative of Nietzsche’s inability to think beneath the ontic determinations of gender. Nonetheless in the ecstatic state of Rausch Heidegger sees an anticipation of his own articulation of the ecstatic nature of Dasein, which is always-already outside, ek-static, extended beyond itself in its relation to Being. And also like the ecstasy of Nietzsche’s creative state, Heidegger finds Dasein principally disposed to the world through the attuning of mood: “Mood is precisely the basic way in which we are outside of ourselves” (99), he states. Like Nietzsche’s creator in a state of Rausch, Dasein is disposed to the world through embodiment and the attunement of mood; in an ecstatic state the world lights up before it, as in a clearing, or a luminous vision.
While Heidegger draws attention to the phenomenology of affective embodiment in Nietzsche’s state of creativity, his principle interest is in the general intensifying of mooded life; however, what he does not explore is the specificity that Nietzsche gives to the mood (Stimmung) of Rausch. For Nietzsche the mood that is repeatedly identified with the state of intoxication is the oxymoronic affective state of tragic joy—this discordant harmony, or dissonance, is the interval to which the attunement of the creative state is tempered. Ulfers refers to this “tragic joy” as a state of “chiasmatic unity,” an intermixing of antipodes engaged in an “irreducible entanglement” (The Dionysian Vision 8). In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche notes of tragedy that the “metaphysical consolation” it offers is the revelation that “life is at bottom indestructibly powerful and joyful” (39). Nussbaum notes that Nietzsche thereby inverts the effect that Schopenhauer had ascribed to art, replacing its depressive effect with one of stimulus. The tragic vision and its joyous reception reflect an alternation of immersion and distance that Nietzsche identifies as “play with intoxication” (30). And it is through this affective state that life is redeemed.

An oxymoronic state of affective attunement, the tragic joy that Nietzsche articulates is one that differs markedly from a simple, or naïve, joy. The crucial feature of Nietzsche’s tragic joy is the awareness and recognition of the cruelty and chaos of life, the contingency of all truths—what he elsewhere refers to as the abyss. And yet the joy he speaks of is one of a simultaneous immersion and a detachment from the tragic dimension of a world deprived of such sturdy pegs. The joy Nietzsche identifies is thus
largely antithetical to the idea of joy as a “basic emotion,” as certain theories of affect advance; for Nietzsche true “joy” is an affective attunement that is only possible under certain existential and cultural-historical circumstances. The simplicity of “Epicurean delight” is not adequate: “only Dionysian joy is sufficient” (*The Will to Power* 531). Dionysian joy does not look to minimize pain, but to confront it. It is qualitatively different from joy obtained under different (i.e., hospitable) conditions. It is an affective state that can only be brought about through the knowledge of the tragic character of life, and through creation in light of that knowledge. It is the state in which Zarathustra, in his inebriate song, affirms the eternal recurrence: “Joy wants itself, wants recurrence, wants everything eternally the same” (322).

It is largely for this reason—for the state of affect that intoxication produces—that Nietzsche, both in his early work and in his late, associates the state of intoxication with a principle concern of his: health. He employs intoxication in his project to eradicate the historical idea of the holy in favor of the healthy, replacing the transcendent soul with a spiritualized body; he rejects the medicines of a priest for those of a physiologist, and the wine of Christ for that of Dionysus. Tragedy, he insists in his early work—and all art, as he repeatedly claims in his late—is a tonic. It is essential to the type of convalescence Nietzsche advocates, what he identified as a “new health.” He notes, “All art works tonically, increases strength, inflames desire (i.e., the feeling of strength), excites all the more subtle recollections of intoxication... (*Will to Power* 427). In another passage from the Will to Power, headed “what is tragic?,” Nietzsche rejects Aristotle’s notion of tragedy as promoting “depressive affects” (449). He argues, “Art, in other cases the great stimulant of life, an intoxication with life, a will to life, would here [i.e., in Aristotle’s
thought], in the service of a declining movement and as it were the handmaid of pessimism, become harmful to health” (449). Tragedy is a stimulant rather than a depressant, and this insight leads to something that “only the absolute mendaciousness of a systematizer could misunderstand—tragedy is a tonic” (449). This tonic dimension of the intoxicated vision is already present in The Birth of Tragedy, where the Apollonian vision redeems life from its contingency and stupidity, producing a healing effect: “there approaches a redeeming, healing enchantress—art. She alone can turn these thoughts of repulsion at the horror and absurdity of existence into ideas compatible with life…” (Birth 40). In Nietzsche’s discussion, art and its various effects are throughout his thought situated on the continuum of the toxic and the tonic, or rather, remedy and poison.

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When Nietzsche posits the intoxication of creativity as an antidote to the banality and affective depression of modernity he makes a pharmacological determination—the decision is the positing of a value, a determining of remedy from poison, and thus implicitly a positing of a specific type of health. In contrast to the interiority of slave morality—and likewise of receptivity of Kantian aesthetics—Nietzsche offers an ecstatic, poetic state that stands outside of the boundaries of conventional subjectivity. The prescription that Nietzsche writes for his readership is one that is potentially harmful, one not suited for all physiological constitutions, and one not likely to produce “health” in any narrow, bourgeois sense. Rather, Nietzsche’s prescription is always a dangerous substance: dynamite, as he once referred to it. Aware of the ambivalent effects of all
medications, including those which he prescribes, he notes that “The poison from which
the weaker nature perishes strengthens the strong man—and he does not call is poison”
(The Gay Science 43), and Nietzsche’s writings are themselves to be held in similar
pharmacological regard.
Chapter 3

Waking Dreams and Drunken Falls: Intoxication in *Finnegans Wake*

That intoxication played a role in Joyce’s life and writing is hardly a contentious claim. His major works feature an abundance of alcohol consumption under a wide variety of circumstances: from its depressing and at times, violent depths, to its festive and celebratory heights, drunkenness receives a host of inflections throughout Joyce’s work. Indeed, judging by the frequency with which they occur, the representations of the social and cultural dynamics of alcohol consumption can be said to constitute an important dimension of Joyce’s aesthetic.\(^{52}\) Ellmann noted Joyce’s personal proclivity for altered states: “he had a limited capacity for alcohol and was prone to drunken collapses. All releases from excessive consciousness attracted him” (137). “Swooning,” Ellmann continued to note, was both a word and an act that was of particular interest to Joyce.

Readers of *Ulysses* are already familiar with Joyce’s interest in the phenomenology of states of intoxication. An abundance of alcohol is consumed by Stephen and his coterie in “The Oxen of the Sun,” and the intoxication there produced lingers well into the next chapter—the separation from the mimetic domain of realism

\(^{52}\) Scholarship has not ignored Joyce’s interest in drinking. Among the scholars to have explicitly devoted attention to the topic is Briggs, who offers a broad account of Joyce’s own drinking culled from multiple sources. Briggs frames that account largely in terms of Joyce’s “alcoholism” and its deleterious effects on himself and his family. A similar approach, though with a more sustained textual focus, is taken by Lilienfeld, who adopts a “biopsychosocial” conceptual framework, a framework largely derived from mainstream psychiatry and the DSM. She identifies a “denial narrative” in *Portrait*, according to which, Simon Dedalus’s alcoholism is both a significant and suppressed element of the text that emerges at certain points; this denial she traces to Joyce’s own relation to his father’s alcoholism. Aside from the questionable “disease” model of alcoholism upon which both rely, the biographical focus of Briggs and Lilienfeld reduces intoxication to a symptom in Joyce’s work and perhaps partly for that reason fails to acknowledge the broad aesthetic use Joyce made of it. Among the scholarship more sensitive on this account are Ames, Lloyd, Nicholls, Earle, and Plock, whose arguments I will address further on.
that those chapters feature seems closely related to their inebriety. A section that evokes Homer’s brewer of potions, “Circe” features the “technic” of “hallucination,” according to the Gilbert schema of Joyce’s aesthetic architecture. Stephen’s hallucinatory perception of his mother—the apogee of “Circe’s” narrative arc—is only one among a host of perceptions that occur at some remove from the domain of empirical perception, and his state of intoxication seems to play a partly causal role.

Less commonly noticed is that drunkenness is not the only mode of intoxication at play in Joyce’s work. John Gordon, among the few exceptions on this front, identifies a host of states of “trance” in Ulysses—Bloom is repeatedly in a state of dazed meditation. Partly on account of his “empirical” approach to Joyce’s work, Gordon understands the “sweetsick fumes” from the whores’ “birdseye cigarettes” to allude to narcotics, and also notes the presence of opium and cannabis in Dublin’s red light district. Stephen and Bloom, on Gordon’s reading, experience a “contact high,” one that combined with alcohol and exhaustion produces the chapter’s hallucinations (Gordon 93). It is worth adding how this contact high extends to the reader as well, as the fluidity and uncertainty of perception and representation become problematic issues for the reader as well. Intoxication is not only a mode of representation in Joyce’s work, but also a dimension of its textual performativity.

In fact, drug effects surround Ulysses in a host of curious ways: Avital Ronell has noted how the rhetoric of drugs informed the legality of Ulysses in America, the novel having become legal upon being declared an emetic rather than an aphrodisiac (Ronell 55). In his decision James M. Woolsey had claimed Ulysses to be “a strong draught to ask some sensitive, though normal, persons to take” (14). Insofar as his judgment
legalized the book, it functioned as the incorporation of this draught into the body of the United States—a decision that came exactly one day after the ratification of the twenty-first amendment to the constitution, repealing prohibition.

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Aside from Gordon, however, very little attention has been paid to the presence in Joyce’s work of intoxicants other than drink. And yet Joyce had incorporated a variety of drugs and intoxicated states into the Lotus-Eaters chapter of *Ulysses*, in what is clearly the novel’s most overtly narcotic chapter—in fact, those states and substances accumulate considerable aesthetic energy in the text, and warrant more scholarly attention than perhaps they have received. With clear allusion to the Homeric episode of drug-induced idleness, the chapter features a host of depictions, meditations, and elaborations on drugs. The narrative traces Bloom’s course from Sir Rogerson’s Quay to the baths, and likewise his course from sobriety to narcosis. The chapter’s initial sentence tells us, “By lorries along sir John Rogerson’s quay Mr. Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill Lane” (71). With sobriety as a starting point, Bloom’s thoughts soon begin to wander as he reflects on the products of “The Belfast and Oriental Tea Company” 53: “Those Cinghalese lobbing about in the sun in *dolce far niente*, not doing a hand’s turn all day. Sleep six months out of twelve. Too hot to quarrel. Influence of the climate. Lethargy. Flowers of idleness.” (71). The chapter’s rich flower symbolism, here suggestive of both the lotus and the poppy, takes on a narcotic quality. And that those flowers and those states of narcosis are in Bloom’s imagination associated with the “orient” is of significance as well. The

53 Moreno argues for the possibility that “tea” here refers to marijuana, but fails to adequately situate that claim within the chapter’s broader representations of intoxicants, and thus to account for the aesthetic significance of that possibility.
alterity of consciousness the drug produces is accompanied by its geographical correlative, and one sees a certain paradoxical dynamic: Bloom’s imagination of life under British colonial rule as a narcotic utopia, or artificial paradise, free from compulsion, is distanced enough from actual circumstances as itself to seem narcotized.

The relation between intoxicants and western colonial projects emerges more clearly when Bloom reflects on Catholic missionaries: “Save China’s millions. Wonder how they explain it to the heathen Chinee. Prefer an ounce of opium. Celestials. Rank heresy for them. Buddha their god lying on his side in the museum” (80). Bloom here thinks of intoxication in relation to religious “salvation,” a notion that evokes both the otherworldliness of religious experience and the materiality of colonial exertions of force. This conjunction of the spiritual and material in relation to intoxicants, as I will show, occurs often in Joyce’s work, and perhaps nowhere is a politics of intoxication more evident than in the “Lotus-Eaters” episode. Opium seems a preferable alternative to the missionaries’ message, offering a material form of celestial experience—and accordingly, Buddha himself, lying on his side, is in typical opium den posture.

In stark contrast to the foreignness and otherworldliness of opium is Guinness porter, a crucial marker of Irish identity and masculinity throughout Ulysses. As if testifying to its cultural interiority, Bloom contemplates the commercial status of alcohol: “Lord Iveagh once cashed a sevenfigure cheque for a million in the bank of Ireland. Shows you the money to be made out of porter” (79). The flow of Bloom’s thoughts passes from the calculation of pence and pints to the following quasi hallucination regarding the commercial transportation of beer:

54 Lloyd notes that in Joyce’s work, “drinking practices remain a critical site for the performance of Irish masculinity and ethnicity” (234); Nicholls takes this as a starting point from which to read the symbolism of drink throughout Ulysses, and focuses heavily on its relation to the construction of identities.
An incoming train clanked heavily above his head, coach after coach. Barrels bumped in his head: dull porter slipped and churned inside. The bungholes sprang open and a huge dull flood leaked out, flowing together, winding throughout mudflats all over the level land, a lazy pooling swirl of liquor bearing along wideleaved flowers of its froth. (79)

The imagery of flowering froth and the lazy pool seem to identify porter as yet another narcotic, by no means entirely different from opium. And this explosion of the barrels in Bloom’s head seems itself inebriating, for it is immediately after this that Bloom—as if somewhat dazed—wanders into a church during service.

Observing the sacrament, he notes how the church sobers up its own rituals by offering only the wafer and refusing the wine. “shew wine,” he thinks, noting the wisdom: “otherwise they’d have one old booser worse than another coming along, cadging for a drink” (82). The sobriety of church service here in part reflects a broader social reality, as the temperance movement in Ireland was largely spearheaded by the Catholic church. In a chapter so strongly marked by narcotics of various sorts, the church seems to be positioned in ostensible antithesis to intoxication.55 It brings the sober message of Christianity abroad, and promotes and enforces that sobriety at home. In Joyce’s work a host of social and political interests tend to cluster around intoxicants, and they become a rich repository of social symbolism.

Bloom proceeds to the chemist’s, an appropriate place to meditate on pharmacological effects. He had previously contemplated the intoxicating effect of tobacco, noting, “Cigar has a cooling effect. Narcotic” (78); now amidst the “keen reek of drugs,” he reflects on other narcotic states: “Drugs age you after mental excitement.

55 Blamires notes how the “Lotus-Eaters” chapter depicts religion and drink as “the two drugs of Dubliners”—while his point is by no means wrong, the alignment of intoxications is no easy interpretive matter, and it is important to note that Joyce’s chapter more explicitly aligns the church and its rituals with sobriety.
Lethargy then. Why? Reaction. A lifetime in a night. Gradually changes your character” (84). Bloom here considers the various effects of opium: both its immediate phenomenological effect, and the consequences of addiction. Both produce accelerations of time, albeit of decidedly different types. The curious pharmacologic of drugs is something he considers as well: “Overdose of laudanum. Sleeping draughts. Lovephiltres. Paragoric poppy syrup bad for cough. Clogs the pores or the phlegm. Poisons the only cures. Remedy where you least expect it. Clever of nature” (84). The chapter ends with a final gesture toward the orient, as Bloom makes his way to “the mosque of the baths” (86). In a state of buoyant reverie, as if narcotized, Bloom envisions himself gazing at his penis:

He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower. (86)

The image juxtaposes sexual pleasure and narcotic pleasure, as Bloom imagines a respite from the demands of reality that otherwise plague him throughout the day: an artificial paradise, or narcotic utopia. This identification of Bloom with narcotic flowers and the states they produce likewise aligns him with the orient. His narcotized state is markedly different from the drunkenness of other sections (and characters) in *Ulysses*, and the type of intoxication with which he is identified is among the many ways in which Bloom is marked as an other.
In the “Lotus-Eaters” chapter opium and opiated states constitute an important dimension in Joyce’s evocation of the east, and this geographical association of the drug is one that he had made clear elsewhere. The poet James Clarence Mangan was the subject of an essay that Joyce had written in 1902 and revised again five years later. A figure whom Joyce considered “the most distinguished poet of the modern Celtic world” (*Occasional, Political and Critical Writings* 130), Mangan lived from 1803 until 1849, and was all but entirely ignored by posterity, according to Joyce. That he was an opium addict is a matter to which Joyce partly attributes his neglect by subsequent scholars and readers, and Joyce positions himself as a corrective to that tradition. In particular, he draws a correlation between the intense sensitivity of the poet and his recourse to opium. Both contributed to Mangan’s withdrawing from society, which became almost complete: “for the greater part of his life he lived as though in a virtual dream” (131), Joyce tells us, clearly aware of the narcotic register of dreaming. Joyce reads Mangan as a romantic, and emphasizes how the poet came to see imagination as “the mother of things, whose dream we are” (133). Retreating to the virtual and the oneiric, Mangan lapsed both into addiction and poetry, and the poeticizing of life in this state of opium reverie was largely Mangan’s major accomplishment. The drug’s effect he notes in the thematic content and imagery of the poetry: “The mental activity brought about by the opium has strewn this world with marvelous and horrible images: the whole orient, recreated by the poet in his fervent dreams (which are the paradise of the opium eater) pulsates through these pages in phrases and similes against apocalyptic landscapes” (133-4). The apocalyptic vision in the paradise of opium reverie suggests the strongly ambivalent nature of this state of
poetic attunement: it frames biblical narrative within an oriental context, and religious vision within an intoxicated one.

Though Joyce makes no mention of it, the appearance of eastern imagery in the aesthetics of the opium reverie is something Mangan has in common with his near contemporaries, De Quincey and Coleridge: as in their work, the opium reveries of Mangan’s poetry present spaces in which to imagine a phenomenological alterity, and the imagery of the eastern and the orient are constituents of that projected space. And yet this alterity is never that of the absolute other, but rather accumulates its force from being set in relation to the familiar in a number of ways. The finest passages in his work, Joyce finds, are those in which “under a veil of mysticism, he sings of the fallen glory of his country” (134). Mangan articulates his distinctly Irish voice through a veil, from the other side of it, from the hermetic domain of opium’s influence. It is, in fact, largely through opium that the interplay between foreign and familiar takes place, the transmitting of one by the other Joyce identifies as central to Magnan’s aesthetic.

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_Finnegans Wake_ is considered by most readers to be Joyce’s most radical experiment with language, narrative, and representation. Indeed, the hallucinatory nature of the Circe episode of _Ulysses_ seems amplified in the _Wake_ immensely: figures or scenes seem to coalesce at certain moments, only to evanesce; narratives begin only abruptly to disintegrate; and the subject of any speech act is almost never fully clear—in fact the ephemeral quality of hallucinatory perception is nearly a hallmark of the work. Deane, echoing a commonplace in Wakean criticism, notes that the _Wake_ depicts its main
character, HCE, “dreaming in a drunken stupor.” As if evoking Nietzsche’s phenomenology of the poetics of tragedy, the *Wake* seems to present and enact a state of dream and intoxication. Indeed it is fair to say that the work is at no moment ever fully sober, anymore than it is ever fully awake. And yet Joyce modulates the affective register of Nietzsche’s terms: rather than producing tragedy, the drunken dream of the *Wake* is a comedy; the work thus effectively recalibrates Nietzsche’s vocabulary—or what Joyce refers to as the “Nichtian glossery” (83.10). The *Wake* is Joyce’s most elaborate exploration of a poetics of altered states. In what follows I look to pursue that trope of the drunken dream in the *Wake*—focusing on it particularly in terms of states of intoxication: narcotic, inebriate, or otherwise. I thus, on the one hand, look to illuminate a narcotic dimension of the text, one that—to the best of my knowledge—has been unexplored by scholarship. In highlighting the various intoxicants and intoxicating effects that the *Wake* both represents and enacts, I hope to show the presence of intoxication in the text to exceed what scholarship has hitherto identified, and, as I will argue, to constitute a crucial facet of the work’s engagement with modernity.

While the *Wake*—like all of Joyce’s work—is concerned principally with Ireland and Dublin, it is important to note that the seventeen years Joyce spent composing it were spent almost exclusively in Paris. Infused with the spirit of surrealism—which on occasion would articulate its aesthetic project in terms of intoxicated states—and the recent memory of the *Club des Hashischins*—which explicitly explored the creativity potentials of drug experience—Paris was from the 1840’s until well into the 20th century the central location in Europe for the conjunction of literary and pharmacological experimentation. Both hashish and opium were considerably popular among figures of

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56 Citations denote page and line number, in accordance with scholarship on the *Wake*. 
the artistic avant-garde, including Picasso, Cocteau, and Apollinaire (among Joyce’s contemporaries); both drugs had a strong aesthetic lineage in French literature as well, from Baudelaire and Gautier to Nerval, Rimbaud, and many others. Poet and essayist Arthur Symons had used hashish extensively, largely influenced by its literary associations; Symons had introduced the drug to Yeats, who took a liking to it as well. Symons’ study of Baudelaire included translations of sections of *Les Paradis artificiels*. In that study he would ebulliently claim, “Les Paradis Artificiels: Opium et Haschisch… is the most wonderful book that Baudelaire ever wrote” (67). Among Symons’ own poetic experiments, “The Opium-Smoker,” “The Absinthe Drinker,” and a pair of poems on hallucination, reflect his interest in the aesthetics of intoxicated states (*The Collected Works of Arthur Symons*). Joyce, on his first visit to Paris, made the acquaintance of Symons, a meeting that had been arranged by Yeats, who thought that Joyce might find work writing about French literature and would find Symons a useful connection. As well-versed as he was in French literature, Joyce was certainly aware of the aesthetic associations of drugs.

Ellmann notes no such drug experimentation by Joyce, yet Joyce had proven himself not averse to other such forays into intoxicants of an aesthetic aura. Absinthe in particular was infamous for its alleged hallucinatory capacities, as well as its associations with artists and *poète maudit*. Joyce had discovered absinthe upon his first trip to Paris, and not only developed a considerable taste for it, but made aesthetic use of it as well. *Ulysses* makes numerous references to absinthe, particularly Stephen’s consumption of
Likewise, Shem, the artist/Joyce figure in *Finnegans Wake*, is introduced as Dave the Dancekerl by his brother: “Ah he’s very thoughtful and sympatrico that way is Brother Intelligentius, when he’s not absintheninded with his Paris address!” (464.17). Shem is elsewhere described through Shaun’s invective as “a drug and drunkery addict, growing megalomane of a loose past” (179.20), and Shem himself echoes Mangnan in noting “my father was a boa constrictor” (Barry 234).

Both opium and absinthe are associated with something foreign—they are, in part, markers of political and aesthetic exile: that of Joyce and Stephen as Irishmen in Paris, as well as that of artists from bourgeois culture and its normatized modes of consciousness. That drugs serve as symbols around which those alienated communities organize and identify themselves was something of which Joyce was clearly aware. The social and cultural symbolism of intoxicants and intoxicated states is something that recurs throughout his work, and that they are at times associated with creative figures is not insignificant. If Ellmann is correct in claiming that for the young Joyce Paris was the antithesis of Dublin, it is worth noting that intoxicants were at least a part of that antithetical relation.

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In fact, a variety of drug-induced experiences insinuate themselves into the “dreamoneire” (280.1) of the *Wake*. Tobacco is alluded to through the frequent references to pipes and cigars, and its dream-inducing potential is noted: “O dulcid dreamings languidous! Taboccoo!” (427.13). Seeming to evoke the sentiment expressed

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57 For a sustained reading of its presence in *Ulysses*, particularly as a marker of modernity cf. Earle, who offers a discussion of absinthe’s social and cultural significance, and notes absinthe as a sign of Stephen’s aspirations and pretentions to becoming a modern artist.
by Bloom on tobacco’s narcotic effect, the passage articulates the effect of “tabocoo”: pleasant, lethargic, and oneiric—terms that conflate dream experience and drug experience in a manner more commonly associated with opium. Hashish is alluded to at numerous points as well: “blood, musk or haschish (359.9) echoes Hector France’s collection of stories *Musk, Hashish and Blood*; and “hashoush” (59.20) appears elsewhere. Numerous references to the poppy (*papaver somniferum*) occur throughout the text, as in “papaver’s blush” (227.16), “Patatapapperi” (172.1) and “Poppypap’s” (25.5), among others to which I will return.

Nor is the pipe that reappears throughout the work entirely innocent—it accumulates a host of associations, among which is its dream inducing effect: “Pipe in dream Cluse. […] Affected Mob Follows in Religious Sullivence. Reinvention of vestiges by which they drugged the buddhy” (602.24). The *OED* notes that the term “pipe dream,” to which the passage alludes, has its origin in opium visions, and the drugging in Joyce’s passage likewise strengthens that resonance. Significant as well is that the pipe’s drugging effect is associated with the Buddha (“the buddhy”), a figure culturally foreign to the Irish Catholicism that pervades the *Wake*, and whom Bloom, in *Ulysses*, envisions lying on his side. Echoing a conjunction already seen in *Ulysses*, this passage affiliates intoxicated states with religious ones—it thus both aligns a state of drugged alterity with a figure and practice of the east, while also conflating religious experience with its material, pharmacological counterpart.

The pipe figures perhaps most prominently in HCE’s encounter with the cad with a pipe, one of the various and conflicting stories that tells of HCE’s guilt in the book’s first division, and one that recurs throughout the *Wake*. In one of the numerous
subsequent allusions to that story we are told: “So this was the dope that woolied the cad that kinked the ruck that noised the rape that tried the sap that hugged the mort” (511.32). The cad on this telling is woolied by dope, and the sap is likewise suggestive of opium. That he is thereby brought into contact with death (“mort”), embracing it, seems to echo the trajectory of Bloom’s thoughts, which wandered from opium experience to mortality. Death and narcosis are aligned in the scene of Tim Finnegan’s wake as well. Upon his descent to the underworld we are told of “offerings of the field. Meliodories, that Doctor Faherty, the madison man, taught to gooden you. Popypap’s a passport out. And honey is the holiest thing ever was…” (25.5). The sweet gifts (“meliodories”) of the field, the poppies, are products both of nature and culture: plants prescribed by a doctor. And they produce a trip, as suggested by the “passport out,” and “Faherty,” which echoes the German Fahrt: trip. The “honey,” or poppy sap, gestures to a beyond that is brought about by decidedly earthly means. The encounter with the narcotic—this drug trip—is also an encounter with the finitude of death.

Perhaps the most overtly intoxicated section in the *Wake* is the pub chapter (II.iii). The chapter features an abundance of drinks being served and consumed, as the barflies Butt and Taff tell their various stories, amidst drinking, laughing, and crying. Both the pub space and its owner, HCE, are identified with the hallucinatory at the chapter’s beginning: “House on call is all their evenbreads though its cartomance hallucinate like an erection in the night…” (310.22). The hallucinatory quality of the pub scene is compounded by the numerous occurrences of “dope,” a slang term for opium that was already popular in Joyce’s day. One of the speakers in the pub is “doped,” and associated with an altered state of consciousness: “—and hopy dope! Sagd he… now dyply
hypnotized or hopeseys doper himself!” (320.1). “Dope” occurs at other points in the chapter as well (336.8, 339.26), and is alluded to in the numerous evocations of the minstrel song “Willie the Weeper,” a song of opium addiction. The song was popular in the 1920’s, and the first verse runs as follows: “Have you ever heard of Willie the Weeper? / Got a job as a chimney sweeper. / He had a dope habit and he had it bad. / Let me tell you about a dream he had.” The rest of the song tells of Willie’s drug induced dream, and in fact Willie the Weeper appears repeatedly in Joyce’s chapter: he is “Woodbine Willie, so popiular with the poppyrossies” (351.12), and also “Whooley the Whooper” (368.29). “Weepon, weeponder, song of sorrowmon!” (344.5). The opium dream of Willie becomes one more modality of Wakean reverie, and its sacred resonance is likewise evoked through the echo of The Song of Solomon.

The *Wake* incorporates a drug-induced experience and its relation to the sacred in other ways as well, such as its drawing upon a certain narcotic lineage of literature. The “riverrun” that is the novel’s apparent first word evokes Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” the definitively romantic lyric that Coleridge composed in an attempt to capture his vision in an opium dream. Coleridge’s poem was subtitled “a Vision in a Dream” and begins thus: “In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / a stately pleasure dome decree: / Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / through caverns measureless to man / down to a sunless sea.” Common to Coleridge and Joyce is the association of opium with imagery and evocations of the east, and likewise with a sacred domain.58 The *Wake*’s ALP and Coleridge’s sacred Alph not only echo one another’s names, but as running rivers they each constitute an important

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58 Bannon argues that “the eastern motif in *Ulysses* exhibits Joyce’s indebtedness to an aesthetic model derived from Coleridge”(500). Although he notes “Kubla Khan” as specifically significant, Bannon never identifies the considerable importance of opium in that model, or the significance of opium to Joyce’s evocation of the east.
facet of the reverie of their respective texts. Dope is at one point explicitly mentioned in relation to ALP: “her face has been lifted or Alp has doped!” (209.9). Opium in Joyce’s text in part reflects an engagement with Romanticism, and the romantic aesthetic—indeed, the intoxicated lyric of romanticism finds its counterpart in the intoxicated prose of the *Wake*.

Drug-induced visions are apparent at other points as well. Hosty, the poet-singer whose rann incriminates HCE, is first described thus: “he was setting on a twoodstooll on the verge of a selfabyss, most starved, with melancholia over everything in general (night birman you served him with natigal’s nano!)” (40.23). The “natigal’s nano,” a drink served to Hosty by the “beerman,” echoes the “dull opiate” that Keats imagines quaffing in the Nightingale ode; here it produces a melancholy in Hosty comparable to that of his romantic counterpart. That it is served to him by the “birman”, the publican HCE, is worth noting as well, as it renders ironic the transcendent aspirations of romantic lyric by presenting it in terms of a commercial exchange and a culturally familiar draft. Joyce further associates dope with romanticism when Shem is accused of being a “lochkneeghed forsunkener, dope in stockknob, all ameltingmoult after rhomatism” (241.24). Likewise, “Her hungmaid mohns are bluming” alludes to the German “Mohn” (poppy) and “Blum” (flower); the German association with the “moon” seems to evoke Novalis, whose *Hymen an die Nacht* had associated opium with the night. Repeatedly the *Wake* incorporates the intoxicated romantic lyric in the chaos of its prose.

Lewis Carroll, an author that James Atherton identified as the *Wake*’s “Great Precursor,” is alluded to abundantly in the *Wake*. The consumption of substances and awaiting effects is one of the recurring motifs in the Alice books, and the hallucinatory
nature of perception in Carroll’s work is part of his influence on Joyce.\textsuperscript{59} The most direct evocations of drug experience occur in the third watch of Shaun, chapter III.iii. At the beginning of the chapter we find Shaun, appearing as Yawn, lying in a meadow:

“spancelled down upon a blossomy bed, at one foule stretch, amongst the daffydowndillies, the flowers of narcosis fourfettering his footlights, a halohedge of wild spuds hovering over him…” (475.8). As in \textit{Ulysses}, flowers constitute an important symbolic domain throughout the \textit{Wake}, and their intoxicating potential is a part of that. Shaun’s state of narcosis is emphasized again a couple of pages later: “All of asprawl he was laying too amongst the poppies, and I can tell you something more than that, drear reader, profoundly as you may bedeave to it, he was oscasleep asleep” (476.19). As with Willie the Weeper and the evocations of Coleridge, Shaun’s narcotic trance forms one of the strands of the Wakean dream state. Shaun’s sleep, like sleep in general throughout the text, is not a deep sleep, but a highly active state between consciousness and unconsciousness, an oneiric space that is neither one of waking sobriety, nor of the utter unconsciousness of deep sleep.\textsuperscript{60} It is rather a dimension of consciousness somewhere indeterminably between, the space of a hermetic poetics.

It is perhaps passages such as these that have led the reception of the \textit{Wake} to be understood by some in terms of hallucinatory drugs. Media theorist and Joyce scholar Marshall McLuhan had on numerous occasions made mention of a comparison between the \textit{Wake} and lysergic acid: “Lsd may just be the lazy man’s form of \textit{Finnegans Wake},”

\textsuperscript{59} Cf Boon for an elaboration on Carrol’s own considerable interest in drugs and his relation to a “drug literature.”

\textsuperscript{60} Farbman, following Blanchot, identifies the night of the dream as “the other night”—not the night of sleep, but rather “a sleep-resistant center—an intimate alien—around which the night of sleep curls” (2). He reads Wakean sleep as articulating that ambivalent, medial position. In this respect it also resembles the romantic opium reverie as well.
he noted in an interview format (Youtube). Elsewhere he related the story of a young acquaintance who noted his generation’s rejection of “goals,” and found that with both LSD and the *Wake*, “the whole world takes on a multidimensional and multisensuous character of discovery” (*Essential McLuhan* 232). McLuhan elucidated the point of connection: “The young today reject goals, they want roles, R-O-L-E-S, that is, involvement. They want total involvement. They don’t want fragmented, specialized goals, or jobs” (*Essential McLuhan* 232). McLuhan thus implies that both the *Wake* and drug hallucinations are a response to modern fragmentation and alienation. He attributed the popularity of hallucinogens to an attempt to use them as “a means of achieving empathy with our penetrating electric environment” (254)—a means of overcoming the amputations of the senses that electronic technology effects; and it is clear that he thinks of the *Wake* in similar terms. In a similar manner, psychonaut and ethnobotanist, Terence McKenna, partly under the influence of McLuhan, gave a lecture on the *Wake*, entitled “Surfing Finnegans Wake.” He described the *Wake* as “psychedelic” and “apocalyptic,” citing its confusion of speakers and epochs as akin to drug hallucinations. What is clear is that drug experiences have been at times used to approximate the peculiarity and chaotic logic of the experience of reading and attempting to make sense of the *Wake*. Indeed the text’s trance inducing capacity, its repetitive rhythms, its multilayered temporalities, its numerous incantations, and hallucinations, all serve to raise the question of whether the text itself is not an intoxicant of some sort—the type of “strong draught” that Woolsey had claimed *Ulysses* to be—perhaps of even stronger proof.

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And yet for all the evocations of opium, hashish, and the narcotic effects of tobacco, the *Wake*’s principle modality of intoxication is its drunkenness. John Bishop has noted that “one would be hard pressed to find a page that did not contain a variety of kinds and brands of alcohol” (137). Indeed, the text’s sheer crapulence is readily apparent to its readers, even those who can make sense of little else. In exasperation at the incomprehensibility of his brother’s work, Stanislaus implored, “What is the meaning of that rout of drunken words?” (Deane 47). Ellmann, likewise, notes that Stanislaus found that his brother “drank and played with words too much” (591).

And even much more appreciative readers have nonetheless similarly noted the inebriety of the text’s language. Samuel Beckett, in his essay “Dante . Bruno. Vico.. Joyce” that was produced for a collection of essays on the *Wake* that Joyce himself closely oversaw, discussed the novel’s collapsing of the metaphysical determinations of form and content. He notes of Joyce, “His writing is not about something; *it is that something itself*” (14). Beckett proceeds to illustrate this by citing a passage of Shaun’s farewell to his sister, as he drinks her a toast:

> To stirr up love’s young fizz I tilt with this bridle’s cup champagne, dimming douce from her peepair of hideseeks tight squeezed on my snowybreasted and while my pearlies in their sparkling wisdom are nippling her bubblets I swear (and let you swear) by the bumper of this poor old snaggletooth’s solidbowl I ne’er will prove I’m untrue to (theare!) you liking so long as my hole looks. Down. (14)

Commenting on this passage, Beckett notes, “Here form is content, content is form. […] The language is drunk. The very words are titled and effervescent. How can we qualify this aesthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is forever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself?” (14). Beckett here identifies drunkenness as a mode of textual performativity in the *Wake*, as one of the
means by which Wakean language opposes conceptual and metaphysical determinations, and the language of transparent representation. Meaning, Beckett finds, is itself deprived of its place of prominence, and language is no longer the vehicle by which it is conveyed. In Joyce’s work language itself is made animate, an event rather than a structure. Its incomprehensibility is a testament to our reliance (even insistence) on an unproblematic notion of sensible content—Joyce’s language is anachronistic in that it confounds our modern expectations of language. And Beckett’s own comment on the passage is no innocent rhetorical question—as if under this influence of Shaun’s drink, he employs the trope of bubbles effervescing to depict that metaphysical dissolution.

In numerous ways intoxication seems to be implicated in the Wake’s aesthetic, and perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than its title. Finnegans Wake itself derives its name from the Ballad of Tim Finnegan—a song in which the hod-carrying Tim Finnegan, drunk before noon, falls from a ladder while building, and breaks his skull:

Tim Finnegan lived in Walkin’ Street
A gentleman, Irish, mighty odd;
He had a brogue both rich and sweet
And to rise in the world he carried a hod.

Now Tim had a sort of the tipplin’ way
With a love of the whiskey he was born
And to help him on with his work each day
He’d a drop of the cray-thur every morn.

You see he’d a sort of a tippler’s way
but for the love for the liquor poor Tim was born
To help him on his way each day,
he’d a drop of the craythur every morn…

One morning Tim got rather full,
his head felt heavy which made him shake
Fell from a ladder and he broke his skull, and
they carried him home his corpse to wake.
At his wake Finnegan’s body is laid out with “A bottle of whiskey at his feet and a barrel of porter at his head.” Alcohol is both that for which Finnegan was born and that on account of which he dies, and his body is laid out between porter and whiskey as if to emphasize the framing of his life by drink. He is revived from death when a drunken brawl breaks out during his wake and whiskey is splashed on his face. Springing to life Finnegan exclaims “t’underin’ Jaysus, do ye think I’m dead?” Joyce had selected “Finnegans Wake” as a title of his “Work in Progress” at a late date in its composition, and yet the conjunctions of drinking and falling (or tippling and toppling) is among the commonly recurring tropes throughout the text.

The claim I look to make here is that representations and enactments of drunkenness constitute a particularly important component in Joyce’s depiction of the status of religious belief and experience in modernity; far from being a mere recurring joke, inebriety informs the Wake at its most ontological level. Intoxication, in fact, plays a crucial role in the text’s engagement with the sacred, an engagement that is prominent throughout the Wake, and one from which it derives a great deal of its aesthetic energy. An aspect of the work’s jocoseriousness, the inebriety of the text is set in antipodal relation to its evocations of divinity, purity, and holiness with such a persistence that it clearly seems to warrant more scholarly attention than it has received. Certainly, criticism has noted the sacred character of the text. Atheist theologian, Thomas J J Altizer, has perhaps most forcefully made the case that the Wake be understood in relation to epic tradition and particularly the theological thematics of that genre. Altizer argues that

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61 Ames reads drunkenness in the Wake in relation to the festival, and festive atmospheres. While this is no doubt an important facet of Wakean drinking, Ames’ focus on the festival leads him to examine only the communal and celebratory, and overlooks drinking’s relation to the shameful and alienated dimension of drinking, as apparent in Roderic O’Conor and the drunken, exposed Noah.
Joyce’s work articulates a crucial moment in the historical trajectory of the death of God, and that the chaotic language of the *Wake* is that of the word rendered immanent.\(^{62}\) Joyce thus employs Catholic tropes and rituals, radically emptied of their transcendent content, and it is precisely through this kenotic gesture that the *Wake* can be understood as a modern epic.

Though of a different theological orientation, Northrop Frye had likewise been sensitive to the text’s sacred quality, and considered (at least implicitly) that sacredness in relation to its drunkenness. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, he had identified the *Wake* as “the dingy story of the sodden HCE”; he immediately continues to note that the work’s form is one that is “traditionally associated with scriptures and sacred books, and treats life in terms of the fall and awakening of the human soul and the creation and apocalypse of nature” (314). Frye reads the *Wake* as an “anti-epiphany,” and certainly the sodden quality of the work seems to be an important component of that antithesis—the miserable drunkenness of pub denizens seems as far removed from divine insight as possible. And yet is precisely through such antipodal relations that the Wake derives its energy, and the polarity between the transcendent and the mundane, the ecstatic and the quotidian, the sacred and the secular, is something that is set in motion by the text’s inebriety. Building upon the approach taken by Altizer and Frye, I look here to sketch out the significance of the drunken fall as a trope of Joyce’s—suggestive of a host of tensions between the spiritual and the bodily, the transcendent and the immanent, and the mythic and modern, drunken falls figure prominently in Joyce’s work (and life)—and take on a particular

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\(^{62}\) Following Altizer, Mitchell has read the Wake in light of Nietzsche’s death of god, reading the overthrow of the patriarch, HCE, in Nietzschean terms. I suggest in addition that intoxication plays a particularly important role in the text’s anti-theological stance, and thus resonates with Nietzsche’s own use of intoxication, which I discussed at length in chapter two of this work.
importance in the *Wake*. Indeed, in a text that animates the juxtaposition of historical epochs, the site of modern fallen experience is the pub, and intoxication, correspondingly, the modern fallen state.

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Drunken falls were a somewhat common occurrence in Joyce’s life—Ellmann noted a few, and Biggs has found yet others. Likewise, as is commonly known, John Joyce’s drinking played an important role in the family’s financial decline, another drunken fall of sorts. In *A Portrait*, on the trip to Cork, Stephen sees his father in a state of decline. He notes his father’s shaking hand as “the shameful sign of his father’s drinking bout,” (88) and looks on with disdain at his father drinks and reminisces with “his two cronies” (90). Even in the more mimetic mode of his early work Joyce finds the drunken fall a powerful trope—Stephen’s superiority to his father is made apparent through the conjunction of drink and the fall of socio-economic decline.

And elsewhere Joyce employed that trope in relation to theological categories and concerns. “Grace” begins with its protagonist in a postlapsarian state, as the drunken Tom Kernan has already plunged down the steps onto the tessellated floor below: at the story’s outset the narrator tells us, “He lay curled up at the foot of the stairs down which he had fallen” (149). A young man in a cycling suit steps forward to tend to him, and in a moment that anticipates the revival from death of Tim Finnegan by whiskey, he calls for brandy, which he proceeds to administer to the fallen Kernan: “The brandy was forced down the man’s throat. In a few seconds he opened his eyes and looked about him” (150). The irony of the passage pivots, in part, on the curious pharmacologic of the
drink, which is both the cause of Kernan’s fall, and the means of his revival—both poison and remedy, it points to the ambivalent narrative function that alcohol has throughout the story. Kernan’s fall evokes both a the mythical fall—the fall from the paradisiacal state of God’s grace—and also the concrete, physiological fall of his drunken body, the corporeality of which is emphasized by his bloody bitten tongue. Joyce’s story thus turns on a crucial trope of theology: the fall—and by inebriating it, Joyce effectively aestheticizes it as well, emptying its transcendent content onto a corporeal-aesthetic domain.

In fact, states of fallenness bookend “Grace.” The story concludes with Father Purdon reading a particularly fraught biblical passage, Luke 16:8, in which Jesus commands his listeners to “make unto yourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity.” Purdon’s exegesis resolves all interpretative difficulties by noting that “Jesus Christ… understood the weakness of our poor fallen nature” (174). The narrative positioning of fallen states suggests their correlation, and likewise suggests that they be read in light of one another. Through these narrative markers the fall itself juxtaposes the inebriate with the theological, a conjunction that Joyce makes considerable use of in the *Wake*, where the tensions between the divine and the embodied are at their most pronounced. Emptied of its transcendent content, the fall of the inebriate presents itself as the modern moment in a dialectic that negotiates between the ecstatic and quotidian, or the ethereal and the mundane. Kernan’s drunkenness evokes grace by presenting its antithesis: the clumsy and sloppy.

And yet Joyce’s story not only harbors certain theological resonances through the entwinement of grace and fall, but also evokes the concomitant notions of guilt through
debt and indebtedness—a crucial aspect of Kernan’s social decline. The theological guilt and debt incurred from the biblical fall are in Joyce’s work made material, and brought within the fold of a modern market economy—and alcohol itself plays a crucial commodity role. Part of Kernan’s fall was induced by the debts he incurred drinking, and his socio-economic “decline” (153) is another dimension of his fall. Alcohol functions in relation to debt again in the story when Mr. Fogarty sends him “a half-pint of special whisky” (166). “Mr. Kernan appreciated the gift all the more since he was aware that there was a small account for groceries unsettled between him and Mr. Fogarty.” Fogarty himself had fallen into debt by tying his business to inferior distilleries, and here offers the whiskey bottle as a gift expressing an absolution of debts, a concept that is crucial in the story.

The relation between religion and drunkenness is further made manifest in the views of Mrs. Kernan on the question of her husband’s situation, views that implicitly conjoin alcohol and religion. Mrs. Kernan, we are told, “had very few illusions left. Religion was for her a habit, and she suspected that a man of her husband’s age would not change greatly before death” (157). Nonetheless she consents to allow Cunningham and the others to attempt to talk to her husband. The exchanging of religion for drink, in the less than pious orientation of Mrs. Kernan, is effectively the exchanging of one habit for another, and that she relates to her own religion in terms of “habit” further strengthens that association. The repetitions of religious belief are in her view very different, yet somehow vaguely familiar to those of addiction. The narrative trajectory of “Grace” is one of spirits as well, as Kernan is brought from the spirits of the tavern to the spiritual aspirations of the Catholic retreat that concludes the story.
The *Wake* reworks this trope of the drunken fall that Joyce first employed in “Grace,” and in particular it preserves a host of the same tensions between the divine and the mundane, and the transcendent and the material that Joyce had already experimented with in his short story. The Irish wake, characterized by celebratory mourning, in which its participants aided by alcohol “sorowbrate” (518.22), evokes a host of oppositions that Joyce makes extensive use of throughout. And the role that intoxication plays in all of those is not incidental. The opening pages of *Finnegans Wake* draw heavily on the ballad, echoing many of its phrases, while also setting the story of Tim Finnegan into more direct relation with biblical narrative. The fall of “Bygmester Finnegan” (4.18) and his wake are positioned at the book’s first chapter I.i, and constitute one of the first scenes that confront the reader who approaches the text as a traditional novel. At his wake, he is laid out as follows: “They laid him brawdawn alanglast bed. With a bockalips of finisky foer his feet. And a barrowload of guenesis hoer his head” (6.26). Whiskey and apocalypse are conjoined in the “bockalips of finisky,” as are Guinness and genesis in the “guenesis hoer his head.”—Joyce sets the Irish wake in relation to the Christian narrative of fall and redemption, in part by employing porter and whiskey to evoke biblical beginnings and endings. The fall of Tim Finnegan, the modern hod-carrier, recalls that of Adam and Eve, and through this interweaving of the modern and the mythic—so common throughout the *Wake*—Joyce’s text presents biblical narrative structure in inebriate form. The resurrection of Finnegan by whiskey ironically

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63 Norris is among the few scholars to note the similarity between “Grace” and the *Wake*. I look here to emphasize in particular the significance of drunkenness in each.
complements the story of Christ. The funeral is his “chrissormiss wake” (6.15), and revived from death he exclaims: “Anam much an dhoul! Did you drink me doornail?” (24.15). Indeed it is the “Usqueadbaugham” (24.14), Gaelic for “the water of life” as well as for “whisky,” that resuscitates the dead Finnegans, and that returns again as “usquebauched” (319.4), “Uskybeak!” (157.6) and “usque ad Ebbrais” (497.23).

Wakean resurrection comes not in the form of Jesus’s message of the eternal life of spirit, but rather in the reanimation of the body through booze.

The wordplay on spirit, which denotes both the holy spirit of Christian trinity and the product of the process of distilling, is a particularly important one in the Wake. The trinity itself is rendered in decidedly tipsy terms: “Porterfillyers and spirituous suncksters, oooom oooom!” (371.01). Here, father and son are replaced by the porter filler, HCE—the publican. The semantic range of “spirit” combines the otherworldliness of the divine and the material spirits of the distiller, and it is the tension in this irony that stakes out the parameters of the Wake’s presentation of religious belief in the era of modernity—the metaphysical is accompanied by its material antithesis. Joyce thus ironizes the Christian notion of spirit, while elevating the dignity of intoxication from its crudest literalness to the closest to a communion with the divine the modern world can offer. Spirits are never holy or pure in Joyce’s work, and the enthusiasm they produce never one of sobriety.

The interweaving of drunken falls and biblical falls is among the Wake’s many coincidenta oppositorum, its juxtapositions of antitheses that much criticism, beginning with Beckett, has noted and attributed to the influence of Giordano Bruno. Correcting a well-known statement of Novalis, Joyce in his 1903 essay, “The Bruno Philosophy,” notes,
It is not Spinoza, it is Bruno, that is the god-intoxicated man. Inwards from the material universe, which however, did not seem to him, as to the Neoplatonists, the kingdom of the soul’s malady, or as to the Christians a place of probation, but rather his opportunity for spiritual activity, he passes, and from heroic enthusiasm to enthusiasm to unite himself with God. (Occasional, Political and Critical Writings 94)

When Novalis had identified Spinoza as “God-intoxicated” the metaphor of intoxication was not simply incidental; rather, the divine experience in Spinoza was one which posited the experience of God in implicit antithesis to states of sobriety. Novalis had made use of the conjunction of the divine and the intoxicated in Hymen an die Nacht, his major lyric accomplishment. There, states of opium and alcohol intoxication are associated with the work’s eponymous night, a space of a poeticized void, or spiritualized negativity.

Novalis’ night brings into accord states of intoxication and those of noumenal experience—both are aligned in the poem’s gesture of negative transcendence, and a fecund encounter with death. Indeed, any effort to make sense of what it means for Novalis to call Spinoza “God-intoxicated” would require a certain calibration of the divine and the material, or the transcendent and the immanent. Joyce himself, who had read Novalis and compared his romantic aesthetic to that of Mangan’s, would likely have been sensitive to the rich metaphorical range of “god-intoxication” when he applied it to Bruno. In his essay, Joyce identifies the spiritual dimension of Bruno’s thought in terms of intoxication and “enthusiasm”—a word whose etymology likewise suggests the incorporating of a deity. In the Wake Joyce teases out the implicitly oxymoronic strands of the state of “god-intoxication” that he had associated with Bruno — the drunken falls throughout the work are merely a particularly conspicuous instance of that. Both bodily and spiritual, those falls resonate throughout the text as the “felix culpa”—the flaw that is made fortunate through a gesture of redemption. Juxtaposing the sacred and profane, the
divine and worldly, falling is among the more common bodily acts in the text, and the
drunken fallen bodies that pervade the Wake (Tim Finnegan’s, HCE’s and Shaun’s) stand
in implicit contrast to the purity of the Christian soul.

The *Wake* begins with a set of antitheses and inversions that warrant careful
parsing as they recur throughout. The sentence that “begins” the work runs as follows:
“riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a
commodious vicus back to Howth Castle and Environs” (3.1). On the one hand, “Eve
and Adam’s” reverses the privileged position of the patriarch—inverting the biblical
sequence of creation in the second chapter of Genesis; this inversion is evidenced as well
in the apparently primary position of the river, which is gendered feminine throughout the
Wake, and is the first image a reader is confronted with if one approaches the text from
its apparent beginning. The river itself runs past one of Dublin’s most famous churches,
Adam and Eve’s, The Church of the Immaculate Conception. And yet the church, which
itself evokes primordial naming, was named not after the biblical account of creation, but
rather after an adjacent tavern (Casey 344). An irony that must have interested Joyce, the
naming of the Church of the Immaculate Conception has its origin in the hardly innocent
social space of the tavern, locating the purity of its immaculate origin in a decidedly
maculate domain.

In fact, the *Wake* repeatedly invokes a distinction between the pure and impure—
a distinction itself of religious origin—and drunkenness figures consistently as a marker
of the latter: thus Shaun, the representative of purity and the angelic, admonishing his
sister against sexual activity and likewise against alcohol, notes that “fetid spirits is the
thief of prurities” (436.21); elsewhere Shaun is “praying Holy Prohibition” (453.14).
Shaun as angel stands in contrast to Shem, the devil, and in the nightlessons episode, the innocence of Shaun is corrupted by Shem. In a moment in the text that immediately proceeds the drawing of the mother’s genitals and the spoiling of the innocence of Shaun (Epstein 132), Shem, as Dolph, entices his brother thus: “first mull a mugfull of mud, son… Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam will doob, I guess. A.1. Amnium Instar” (287.7). A1 was a Irish whiskey from Findlater & Co., whose name appears elsewhere in Joyce’s text (558.10). The muddy drink that Shem offers Shaun recalls Joyce’s comment on his preference for John Jameson’s whiskey: “All Irish whiskeys use the water of the Liffey; all but one filter it, but John Jameson’s uses it mud and all. That gives it its special quality” (Ellmann 604). An important irony lies in the notion that it is the river that renders the drink impure—indeed it is precisely the notion of purity that so much of Joyce’s work deconstructs, and the *Wake* is perhaps the most pronounced instance of that. The chapter concludes with a scene that has been read as the children’s collusion to overthrow the parents. The children leave the nightletter, promising the overthrow of the father, and signed “jake, jack and little sousoucie” (308.28). McHugh notes the allusion to JJ&S, a combination of initials derives from John Jameson and Sons, Ireland’s most well-known whiskey, and a group of names that could hardly more clearly evoke for Joyce paternal-filial relations. The corruption of Shaun sets the sons against father, and the brand name of whiskey emphasizes the filial-paternal dynamic.

Church and pub, juxtaposed in the *Wake*’s “Eve and Adam’s,” are brought together at other moments in the text as well. “The Old Sots’ Hole in the parish of Saint Cecily” (41.32) locates the tavern in the parish, and the tavern’s name is here particularly impure as well, as it also suggests the sexual penetration of St Cecilia. Likewise, “The
Goat and Compasses” (275.16), a tavern whose name is derived from “God encompasseth us,” substitutes a pagan figure of lechery and debauchery for the Christian father figure. HCE himself is both a publican and a divine figure, and appears as a goat often in the *Wake*. The conjunction of goat and *Gott* (God) occurs explicitly when it is noted that “he’d shape of hegoat where he just was sheep of herrgott” (240.35). He is also simultaneously identified as the sacrificed lamb of God and as Dionysus, when we are told, “they have torn him limb from lamb” (58.7). The pub’s juxtaposition to the church is not a simple substitution of one social space for another, but rather a particularly significant example of the coincidence of opposites that the *Wake* revels in—the secular public space of the pub maps onto the sacred public space of the church—Irish, patriarchal, national identities are produced in the confines of each institution, and scapegoats are made and sacrificed. Joyce uses the pub as a space in which the tropes of divinity are rendered material. And it is the inebriety of pub discourse that renders apparent the contingency of those formations.

Finnegan’s fall—as well as the fall from Babel—is a fall into human language, a language that is never fully comprehensible. The *Wake* is written in “fermented words” (184.26), or “plein language” (333.27)—language that is semantically overfull to the point of inebriety—always a strong proof. It compromises the integrity of plain language, the language of transparent representation, and thus it compromises the integrity of biblical narrative and its claim to any sort of sober, literal truth. The description of Finnegans as “Oftwhile balbulous” (4.30) resonates with this as well: building, imbibing, Babel-ing, and the biblical constitute an important chain of metonymical relations in the *Wake*, and Bygmester Finnegans’s fall, death, and
resurrection evoke them all. Dublin itself is noted as “the most phillohippuc theobibbous paùpulation” (140.13), combining the again biblical and the bibulous. When Joyce evokes hermetic tradition he renders ironic its claims to any beyond with reference to alcohol: “the tasks above are as the flasks below” (263.21). The flasks below belong to the realm on the mundane, the quotidian and the inebriate: the realm of fallenness.

Indeed, storytelling, a tremendous preoccupation of the *Wake*, is often presented in inebriate terms. Biblical history and bibulous history are conjoined again in Shem’s noting “Bibelous hicstory and Barbarassa harestory” (280.5), as well as in “the farced epistol to the hibruws” (228.33). Indeed throughout the text HCE is labeled a scapegoat—and the accusations against him circulate through the taverns among the “gossiple” of the pub stories of “Treacle Tom” and “Frisky Shorty” (39.16). Both gossip and gospel, pub talk serves to incriminate HCE, and drunken stories are juxtaposed with biblical ones in Joyce’s portmanteau. Treacle Tom returns home one night, “blotto after divers tots of hell fire, red biddy, bulldog, blue ruin and creeping jenny” (39.34), and “moltapuke on voltapuke, resnored alcoh alcoho alcoherently.” The snoring of his drunken dream further incriminates HCE, and those stories culminate in the rann that Hosty sings, in which HCE is accused of teetotaling, “seven dry Sundays a week” (45.15). Allegations of sobriety thus contribute to the vilification of HCE; they are part of the way in which he is marked as an outsider. In the “alcoherency” of Wakean storytelling HCE is both host and parasite—as publican he is both the proprietor of the space in which Irish identity is constructed, and the object of slander in the process of that construction: such is the paradoxical logic of the “pubchat” (586.01) that constitutes an important component of the *Wake*. 
And Tim Finnegan’s is not the only drunken fall. Indeed falls, which occur throughout the work, are quite often inebriate. In addition to Finnegan’s initial fall, Shaun falls from a barrel of Guinness into the Liffey, HCE falls in his pub, and repeats that fall at the chapter’s end in the guise of Roderick O’Connor, drinking the dregs of his departed customers. The latter was a scene which was the first Joyce sketched for the *Wake* in 1923. Roderick O’Connor was historically the last king of Ireland prior to the Norman conquest, and therefore an ideal figure with which to depict a fall. This scene Joyce ultimately placed at the conclusion of the pub chapter, section II.iii, and at the precise middle of the book; it comprises a single sentence that runs nearly three pages, as if exuding all the excesses that it depicts. There, “Roderick O’Conor” is described as “the paramount chief polemarch and last preelectric king of Ireland” (380.12). An HCE figure of patriarchal power, he is also the publican, closing his bar after his customers return home. And yet far from any nobility, we are told “the wonderful midnight thirst was on him,” and he proceeds to drink the dregs of the departed customers’ leftovers. If intoxication is related to the celebratory and festive in the wake of Tim Finnegan, it seems in this passage to be more closely related with a markedly different affective range: the shameful and disgraceful. Roderick O’Conor’s drunkenness is similar to that of “Sire Noah Guinass, exposant of his bargness” (549.34): a humiliation. If Tim Finnegan’s wake was the cause of a communal intoxication, the Roderick O’Connor figure seems emblematic of a distinctly modern alienation, doing something no other character ever seems to do in Joyce’s work: drink alone.

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What I hope to have shown is an intricate and elaborate engagement on Joyce’s part with various intoxicants and intoxicated states that scholarship has only peripherally acknowledged. Joyce’s work employs intoxication in a decidedly modernist manner—in terms of his engagement with the aesthetics of Romantic reverie, the modern social and cultural markings of intoxicants, and the contemporary commodity status of alcohol. In particular I hope to have shown intoxication to have strongly theological resonances in the *Wake*, and reflect a certain engagement with the status of religious belief and experience in modernity. The *Wake’s* “Aletheometry” both reveals a theological truth, and measures god by the inebriate metric of ale.
Chapter 4

Time Wasted – A Narcotic Analysis of Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*

In a speech in Frankfurt am Main in 1949 that marked the first of Thomas Mann’s several brief returns to Germany after fleeing the Nazis, a speech that was given in front of the symbolically laden Paulskirche on occasion of his receiving the Goethe prize, Mann explicitly addressed the causes of the tremendous trauma of the war, and he identified as of particular significance the social-historical force of intoxication (*Rausch*).

He stated the following:

A *Rausch*, uncanny to the depths of my own soul, overrode the people and called itself ‘national revolution.’ *‘Rausch’*—what an ambiguous German word. How it mixes enthusiasm with discomposure, the highest with the lowest, the joy of losing inhibitions, the misery of losing reason. Other languages do not have this magic-word at all; in its place they use a very objective and sober one: “intoxication,” “poisoning”. One cannot, it seems to me, accuse Germany of being poisoned.

As this passage clearly shows, intoxication, figured as *Rausch*, occupies a crucial position in Mann’s understanding of history and of ethics—he finds that it figured prominently in enabling the era of National Socialism, and thus prominently in the questions of national responsibility and guilt. Clearly this late speech of his belongs to his well-known condemnation of *Rausch*, and it resonates with his other apparently clear

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64 Built in 1789, the church became an important site in the effort to establish German unity, democracy and civic rights, and in 1849 the Paulskirche Parliament drafted a national constitution to that end. Destroyed during the war, the church was the first edifice to be rebuilt. Cf. Dieter Bartetzko


66 No clear English equivalent exists for the German “*Rausch*.” It is perhaps more akin to the English “rush,” which conveys an intensity of experience partly through onomatopoeia (see my discussion above). That Mann here shows concern over the disjunction between “intoxication” and “*Rausch*” I take as an indicator of a fruitful space for inquiry.
post-war condemnation of it in his essay of 1947, “Nietzsche’s Philosophy in the Light of Recent History.” There Mann criticizes what he calls the “glorification of barbarism” in Nietzsche’s work, identifying it as “simply an excess of his aesthetic drunkenness” (172), which from a post war perspective seems naïve. Mann accordingly rejects the Nietzschean imperative to live life as an aesthetic phenomenon, and instead champions Enlightenment ideas such as reason, truth, freedom, and justice (176). He considers it one of Nietzsche’s major errors to have conceived the intellect and morality as opposed to life. Nietzsche, according to Mann, failed to acknowledge that “in man nature and life go beyond themselves… They acquire mind (Geist) – and mind is life’s self-criticism” (161). Intoxication represents the extreme aesthetic state that is opposed to the intellect, rational ethics, and Geist—it is the state that belongs to that level of “mere biology” (161) to which Mann finds Nietzsche had reduced everything, the dangerous domain of the Nietzschean body.

In the aforementioned address of 1949 Mann makes explicit mention of his own well-known sobriety, and certainly the allegorical link in his 1947 novel, Doktor Faustus, between the intoxication of Leverkühn and that of Germany under the fascist figure carries a strong ethical force that resonates with Mann’s foreswearing of inebriation. And subsequent criticism has to a considerable degree followed suit. In his major study on Thomas Mann, T.J. Reed describes Mann’s view of intoxication as “a difficult condition to maintain, at least as a basis of creativity. Mann had always considered himself an ‘Apolline’ creator, mistrusting inspiration and trusting discipline” (155). Mann, Reed claims, thinks of an art of the future as “cooler and not relying on Rausch” (156). In a similar manner, Scott Thompson, citing Mann’s expression of dislike for Aldous
Huxley’s drug experiments in his letters of 1954, aligns Mann with an “abhorrence of Rausch,” and goes so far as to suggest an ironic, unwitting complicity on Mann’s part with Hitler’s advocacy of sobriety. Most criticism that has addressed intoxication in Mann’s work, following Mann’s lead, has all but entirely framed it in terms of his engagement with Nietzsche’s Dionysian, including Erich Heller, John Burt Foster, and Erkme Josef, among others. Even Andrew Webber, who is well attuned to the importance of Rausch as an aesthetic concept in Mann’s works, and effectively brings out its liminality and homoerotic resonances, makes the curious generalization that the “keyword” Rausch operates “throughout Mann’s writing, as a figure of Dionysian intoxication in the Nietzschean style…” (“Mann’s Man’s World” 75). Such a line of interpretation, however, is problematic not only in that it looks to reduce the range of a concept that is all but synonymous with excess, but that it does so by tethering it to Nietzschean intoxication—hardly a known quantity. I suggest in part that this relatively homogenous approach in scholarship has provided a limited framework from which to view the complexities of intoxication in Mann’s work, and that partially as a result, intoxication has remained on the periphery of scholarship on Mann.

Indeed even in the speech before the Paulskirche, the univocal moral tenor of Mann’s discussion of Rausch should neither obscure the significance of intoxication as a part of his critical vocabulary, nor its particularly nuanced inflections. Even while couching it in terms of excess and polemically opposing it, Mann still figures Rausch as a liminal—even dialectical—concept. Paradoxically, the word differs from its translations in a way that Mann describes in terms of the very opposition of intoxication and sobriety: “Intoxikation,” Mann states, is “a very objective and sober” word. He employs Rausch to
articulate a type of alterity, of something indigenous yet foreign (*unheimlich*). It is ambiguous, “*zweideutig*,” and comes upon the German *Volk* in the form of an *Aufhebung* (through the verb form “*aufheben*”), the notoriously un-translatable Hegelian word for the historical process of negation that is both a lifting up and a cancelling out, and that occupies a fundamental position in the logic of dialectics and dialectical articulations of history. “*Rausch,*” according to Mann, is on the one hand a uniquely German word that other languages do not possess. It is a marker of excess within the German language itself; yet on the other hand it exerts agency over the German people—it is the active agent of the dialectic, the subject of the verb (*aufheben*). Part of what resists translation is the word’s onomatopoeia, which suggests a performative force—in excess of bare semantic determination—that resonates with the idea of the historical agency of *Rausch.*

Far from being subjected to a univocal moral condemnation, *Rausch* becomes for Mann an important concept through which to reflect upon the massive trauma of history.

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Indeed Mann’s interest in intoxication spanned his career as a writer and thinker, and appeared throughout his works—the cultural and historical significance of intoxication was always on his mind. In his 1930 novella, “*Mario und der Zauberer*” (“Mario and the Magician”) Mann explicitly explored the conjunction of magic and intoxication. In that work, which is often identified as a political allegory of fascism, Cipolla, the story’s eponymous magician whose magic act constitutes the principal focus of the narrative, puts his audience into a state of trance. Their wills surrendered to him by virtue of his performance, the dynamic between audience and performer had clear
political resonances. His cognac, placed on the stage beside him becomes a marker of the atmosphere of intoxication in a more general sense—on the one hand, the drink functions as a “stimulant” (162), and “add[s]fuel to his demonic fires” (169). “But obviously,” the narrator tells us “he needed his liquor and the cigarettes for the replenishment of his energy” (160-1).

Yet on the other hand, the more Cipolla drinks, the more intoxicated the audience becomes. The dynamics of intoxication, just like the dynamics of fascism, are by no means simple or univocal. The individual body that incorporates the intoxicant is Cipolla’s, but the body that feels its effects is the social body. Miriam Hansen notes, in passing, that in “Mario and the Magician,” Mann, like Benjamin, distances himself from Nietzsche’s aesthetics of Dionysian ecstasy, and claims that Mann’s story shows “fanatical enthusiasm and difference-obliterating ecstasy as the elimination of the individual’s critical faculty” (79). Indeed Mann’s narrator clearly mentions in observing the audience “a drunken abdication of the critical spirit” (169). Certainly the audience itself loses this faculty and yields to Cipolla’s acts of magic and his will.

Yet at the same time, the presence of intoxication in the work equally evidences its critical value: as a trope and narrative device it plays a crucial role in the story’s portrayal of social dynamics, ethical judgments, and historical events. A crucial element of the social-psychological dynamic of fascism that Mann’s story portrays revolves around the question of the incorporation of that which is toxic. Cipolla both drinks liquor and is himself something toxic consumed by the audience—he is both intoxicated and intoxicating. His performance culminates in acts of hypnosis that prompt audience members to increasingly demeaning deeds as their wills yield to his influence.
Cipolla’s “two main features” (166), we are told, are his drink and his riding whip, referred to as “Circe’s wand, that whistling leather whip” (170). Circe, witch and brewer of potions, evokes both magic and enchantment, and a certain type of narcotic lure. To the extent that the drunken magician Cipolla reflects the disenchantment of modern experience—his magic is coarse entertainment for the masses—he also represents a potential outlet that modern forms of enchantment can take. Intoxication becomes itself a way of understanding the limiting forces of historical conditions on the one hand, and the unique potentialities that are thereby made available on the other. If, as Walter Benjamin claimed, “the dialectics of intoxication are indeed curious,” (Reflections 181), perhaps they are nowhere more so than in the Mann’s work.

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The relation between magic and intoxication was not new to Mann when he composed “Mario”—in fact, as I will show, his most elaborate engagement with magic coincided with his most elaborated engagement with intoxication. Composed between 1912 and 1924, The Magic Mountain is often understood in relation to Mann’s own political evolution from staunch nationalist and supporter of German efforts in WWI, to an emerging liberal humanist of internationalist sensibilities, and the novel is often read in relation to his evolving political stance.67 It is, in fact, rarely ever noted in criticism that the novel features an abundance of intoxicants and intoxications: stimulants and depressants, various types of opiates, and a host of narcotic drafts, mingle with discussions and depictions of substances and their effects. States of intoxication and

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67 On the conversation over the relation between Mann’s political evolution and the novel, as well as its reception, cf. Hugh Ridley.
sobriety figure heavily in the novel’s historical discourse, as does drug-induced experience in its narrative asides; even a number of the characters can without much distortion be considered addicts and pushers, many self-medicating in various ways, not the least of which being their withdrawal from the demands of “the flatlands.” If Mann’s notion of the historical significance of intoxication is most commonly thought of in relation to his engagement with fascism, it is important to note that the most elaborate exploration of it in his work, and of its cultural and historical complexities, in fact antedates that concern. Insofar as the novel offers a vision of modernity on the brink of the Great War, it should be noted that that vision is largely obtained through various representations and enactments of intoxicated states. Taking Mann’s implicit cue to understand intoxication as a historical force—one with an agency to some degree of its own—and as a category for critical reflection, I look to analyze intoxicants and intoxications in *The Magic Mountain*, and to show how significant a role they play in the novel’s reflection on European modernity. I do so in line with a lineage of criticism that has identified a “critical” component in the text, one that often exceeds its author’s explicit intentions. 68 I thus hope to show that an analysis of intoxication in *The Magic Mountain*, and its critical寓意 begins with Mann himself, who in a 1925 letter to the editor of the “Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift” noted that the novel “had a social-critical foreground” (“Vom Geist” 85). In a 1926 letter to Ernst Fischer he claimed “this era of pre-war capitalism, I might say, is symbolically reflected in the images of the magic mountain’s world, and there is no lack of socio-critical sidelights, of moral repudiations of that world which was to meet its end in the tempests of the war” (Letters 136-7). It is commonly noted that Mann’s idea for the novel came from his wife’s stay at the sanatorium, and his own brief visit. Hans Vaget notes Katia Mann’s criticism of “the brazen alliance between medicine and commerce” at the sanatorium (“The Making” 17); Mann, upon being diagnosed tubercular at Davos-Platz, noted a “profiteer’s smile” on the doctor’s face, and resisted the institution’s narcotic lures. Lukács more forcefully articulated the notion of a critical vision in the text, in excess of Mann’s intention, noting “Castorp’s unease at the cruelty and inhumanity of life under capitalism” (43), and this critical lineage extends to more recent work as well (cf. Kenneth Weisinger, Thomas Sprecher, Stephen Dowden, and Katrin Max).

68 Nevertheless this critical lineage begins with Mann himself, who in a 1925 letter to the editor of the “Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift” noted that the novel “had a social-critical foreground” (“Vom Geist” 85). In a 1926 letter to Ernst Fischer he claimed “this era of pre-war capitalism, I might say, is symbolically reflected in the images of the magic mountain’s world, and there is no lack of socio-critical sidelights, of moral repudiations of that world which was to meet its end in the tempests of the war” (Letters 136-7). It is commonly noted that Mann’s idea for the novel came from his wife’s stay at the sanatorium, and his own brief visit. Hans Vaget notes Katia Mann’s criticism of “the brazen alliance between medicine and commerce” at the sanatorium (“The Making” 17); Mann, upon being diagnosed tubercular at Davos-Platz, noted a “profiteer’s smile” on the doctor’s face, and resisted the institution’s narcotic lures. Lukács more forcefully articulated the notion of a critical vision in the text, in excess of Mann’s intention, noting “Castorp’s unease at the cruelty and inhumanity of life under capitalism” (43), and this critical lineage extends to more recent work as well (cf. Kenneth Weisinger, Thomas Sprecher, Stephen Dowden, and Katrin Max).
Mountain reveals a dimension of its social-historical vision that has remained unstudied.\textsuperscript{69}

Intoxication is in fact woven into the central imaginative construct of the novel—the juxtaposition of the world of the flatlands and that in the heights of Davos-Platz,\textsuperscript{70} of the life of bürgerlich productivity and that of the sanatorium, productivity’s other. The experience of sanatorium life is that of an altered state, one that through its difference disrupts the myth of necessity to structures of the everyday, of clock-time, and the concomitant demands for efficiency and productivity. For Hans Castorp, who has a predilection for reverie, dormancy, and lazy gazes, sanatorium life provides an escape from the more sober structures and concerns of the flatlands, and a location from which to reflect upon them. In the elevated heights of Davos, temporal experience stands in stark contrast to the successive chronology of bourgeois enterprise, and I suggest that the novel can be read as opening a space for critical reflection achieved through the foreignness of intoxicated reverie. Within that space are inscribed the commercial and historical determinations of intoxicants, as well as the various discourses and coercive forces surrounding the intoxicated body in the text. Written in a period in which German pharmaceutical companies Merck, Bayer, and Boehringer Ingelheim were producing morphine, heroin, and cocaine (aided by standard colonial practices), and one in which

\textsuperscript{69} I thus oppose Harold Bloom, who sees the novel as historically outdated and nearly quaint. By examining intoxication in The Magic Mountain I hope to show not only that there are still unearthed layers of historical sediment in the text, but ones that are perhaps particularly ripe for a contemporary perspective that may only now be growing more accustomed to deeming intoxications, drugs, and all their effects, as legitimate concerns for literary scholarship. The reading of Mann’s text that I suggest, in tracing intoxications, drugs, and their aesthetic and cultural symbolism, is much closer to the “narcoanalysis” Ronell offers of Madame Bovary.

\textsuperscript{70} Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei has recently understood the novel’s geography in terms of the numerous ways the text inscribes the exotic and familiar, and its implications for Western notions of selfhood and autonomy—this distinction clearly has consequences for understanding the role of intoxication in the novel as well.
the addict was becoming an increasingly prominent social identity,\textsuperscript{71} The Magic Mountain inscribes intoxications in many curious ways that cannot be reduced to Mann’s being under the influence of Nietzsche, nor to his trying to kick the habit.

Certainly it would seem that admitting a notion of excess, of aberrant or altered states, into one’s aesthetic conceptions, as Mann often does, introduces the danger of it growing out of conceptual control, and if not in the author’s production of that work, then perhaps in the work itself. In his introduction to the novel, Mann himself notes that “It is possible for a work to have its own will and purpose, perhaps a far more ambitious one than the author’s—and it is good that it should be so” (“The Making” 723). If Mann understands the reception of the work in terms of its potential excess of authorial intention, it is worth noting that he describes the genesis of the novel in similar terms.

Planned initially as a humorous short story to accompany the more serious Death in Venice, The Magic Mountain “outgrew both spatially and intellectually the limits its author had set. The short story became a thumping two volume novel” (724). The novel itself—its girth aside—is replete with figures of excess: Castorp’s stay at the sanatorium grows from its initial three weeks to seven long years, lavish meals are served and consumed throughout the day, and excess is, of course, a hallmark of Mynheer Peeperkorn, and the bacchanalians he oversees. Even Settembrini’s attempt to participate in a scholarly enterprise of categorizing and mastering all human suffering, a sobering endeavor by the novel’s most sober character, speaks to a certain type of excess as well. Questions of therapeutic and toxic drugs and their functions as markers of the eastern and the Western figure prominently throughout the novel, as does an elaborate discourse of toxicity as in excess of the limiting force of definitions of health. And of course, the

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. Ronell, Sedgwick, Clej and Ziegler.
ability to stay at the sanatorium—an institution that throughout the novel profits quite nicely—necessitates its patients’ excess of capital.

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At one point early in the novel, when some background information is given about the protagonist and soon-to-be engineer, Hans Castorp, the narrator finds Castorp’s earlier experience with alcohol worth noting. On account of anemia during his youth, he is prescribed by Dr. Heidekind “a nice daily glass of porter,” which the doctor believes helps “build the blood” (28-9). In this way, the intoxicant is introduced into the narrative in relation to a discourse of health: it allegedly helps one achieve a more industrious state of body, a body more fit for the activities of commercial productivity. Likewise, the distinct Britishness of Porter is another reminder of the influence of and admiration for English naval industry and capitalist enterprise particularly present in Castorp’s burgeoning mercantile hometown of Hamburg.

The drink, however, has the opposite effect on him: it makes him “‘doze’—as his uncle… put it—when he would sit with his mouth slightly open, dreaming away without a single thought in his head” (29). Nonetheless the Porter is “much to [Castorp’s] satisfaction,” and he develops the habit of a breakfast beer, as well as a clear proclivity for a certain oneiric stupor. The drink does indeed have a therapeutic effect, yet therapeutic in relation to a different type of health than that of bourgeois society, which values industriousness and productivity, and the states of mind and body that are

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72 Sprecher offers perhaps the most thorough account of this.
73 Beddow notes attitudes towards British industry as particularly strong in Castorp’s native town, Hamburg. The English book he carries with him upon first arriving, Ocean Steamships, is but one indicator of this—the porter, I suggest, is another.
conducive to them—and decidedly not the unproductive “doze” of the young Castorp. Perhaps it is not surprising that Dr. Heidekind’s next prescription for Hans is a trip to the sanatorium (35).

As countless critics have mentioned since the novel’s initial reception, time is experienced differently at the Davos-Platz sanatorium: it is more circular and repetitive, paradoxically both looser and more compressed than the linear and progressive time that governs the world of capitalist productivity, and for which Hans Castorp, the novel’s protagonist, was destined. The novel’s opening chapter initiates the explicit discussion of temporality in the following way: “Time, they say is water from the river Lethe, but alien air is a similar drink [aber auch Fernluft ist so ein Trank]; and if its effects are less profound, it works all the more quickly” (4). The alterity of temporal experience on the mountain and of the alien air are from the beginning of the novel both figured in terms of narcotic drafts. This positioning of the text in a different realm, in an altered state, is a significant preliminary gesture, for not only will we be told by Dr. Behrens, the facility’s chief doctor, that the “alien air” (Fernluft) of the sanatorium is “intoxicating” (berauschend), but in fact the incorporation of foreign substances will be an important trope throughout the novel.

This initial narcotic draft in the text, itself a drinking in of inspiration—as if an invocation of a pharmacological muse—establishes an important background. This incorporation of a foreign substance, of taking in the air “up there,” is in fact omnipresent, a process constantly taking place beneath the awareness of the characters.

74 A very long critical tradition that begins with Mann himself and his earliest American critic, Weigand, and runs through contemporary scholarship as well, including Ricoeur’s Time and Narrative. For more recent work cf. Kavaloski, who notes the textual performativity of time, and Cohn, whose argument I’ll address.
and the readers of the text as well. The otherness of the air and the otherness of consciousness at the sanatorium are throughout the text deeply intertwined. And in a novel that dramatizes “consumption” in so many ways (including the tuberculosis of the patients), the consumption of the foreign air and the consumption of capital are two of the necessary conditions of life at Davos-Platz. Insofar as this deeply historical novel of Mann’s looks in part to depict European modernity, it seems important to note that consumption is deeply constitutive of it.

In fact, the incorporation of substances and awaiting their effects is a recurring motif throughout the text. Coffee, tobacco, and alcohol are all consumed and their effects frequently described, anticipated, or commented on in one form or another: the consumption of two consecutive cigars nearly ends Dr. Behrens’ life, an incident in which he experiences intensely and simultaneously both “fear and euphoria” (250); and coffee alters his moods in various ways, often producing melancholy. One of the first indicators of Castorp’s response to the altitude is his reaction to alcohol, the physiological and cognitive effects of which are described in detail on several occasions (14, 67, 81). The consumption of a cigar leaves him “dizzy, anxious, and dreamy” (76), causing him to reflect “on how very strangely things were going for him up here,” and he gains “Clarity of Mind” (Gedankenschärfe) in a drunken stupor, conjoining befuddlement and reflection as happens often throughout the novel.

The novel shows a preoccupation with a certain unpredictability of pharmacological effects, and this is reflected as well in the intoxicating air of Davos-Platz. Dr. Behrens, the sanatorium’s medical authority, upon first diagnosing Castorp, offers an interesting commentary on the sanatorium’s air:
“First and foremost: there’s the air up here. It’s good for fighting off illness, wouldn’t you say? And you’d be right. But it’s also good for illness, you see, because first it enhances it, creates a revolution in the body, causes latent illness to erupt, and you catarrh—no offense intended—is just such an eruption. You felt tipsy (beschwipt) right off, I presume,” the director said to prove the point.

“That comes from the soluble toxins released by the bacteria; they have an intoxicating (berauschend) effect on the central nervous system, you see—which gives you those flushed cheeks. And so first off, Castorp, we’re going to stick you in bed; we’ll see if we can’t get you sobered up with a few weeks of bed rest. (179).

The incorporation of the air harms and heals, is both therapeutic and toxic, remedy and poison. It sobers and inebriates, and its effect throughout the novel exhibits what Ronell has noted as “the ambivalent structure of stimulant/depressant” (5)—it both stimulates Castorp to intellectual, erotic, and aesthetic endeavors, yet prevents his engagement in furthering the activities of commercial productivity. And it is partly through that uncertainty of the air’s effect that the sanatorium’s practices come under question. It problematizes the idea of a simple opposition of symptom and cause by complicating the origin of toxicity (Gift), a concept that is both critical to diagnoses at the sanatorium, which regulates its patients’ bodies largely in relation to it, and a notoriously loose signifier in the novel, as toxicity seems to be diagnosed largely arbitrarily.

Joachim Ziemßen, the cousin whom Castorp had initially come to visit at the sanatorium, recounts to Castorp a lecture by Dr. Krokowski, the institution’s psychiatrist, in which Krokowski had analyzed the peculiar phenomenon of “the organism poisoning itself” (185). He notes the “decomposition of a certain, still-unidentified substance present throughout the body; the byproducts of that decomposition had an intoxicating effect on certain centers in the spinal cord, not at all that different from when other poisons, such as morphine or cocaine, are introduced into the body.” Natural (internal) processes, according to Krokowski, are practically indistinguishable from those induced
by artificial (external) means, and toxicity is problematic insofar as it located internally—and this is not only the view of Krokowski, the psychiatrist. Behrens himself identifies “old spots” in Castorp’s lungs, the result of an early sickness that Castorp himself cannot recall—illness was something already on the scene. The relation between a latent toxicity and the intoxicating air brings the medical diagnoses to the aporias of interiority and exteriority—toxicity in Mann’s novel calls into question precisely the distinction that Derrida has argued is itself the “matrix of all possible opposition” in Western metaphysical thought (“Plato’s Pharmacy” 103), here evidenced by a Bacchic blush that Castorp acquired upon his first ascent in to the heights of the sanatorium, and which remains a feature of his for some time.

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In his work on drugs and addiction, Thomas Szasz notes that diagnoses of health and illness, which in earlier ages were issued by religious authorizes, in a secular age are issued by the field of psychiatry, which is accorded all the reverence, authority and deference as its sacred counterpart once was. Mann’s critique, it seems, may be even more radical, as it is not only psychiatry that is satirized and critiqued, but even the rigorously physiological fields of medicine, which seek to fix and determine patients’ bodies through quantitative procedures, and which Dr. Behrens, the institution’s medical authority, represents. Settembrini notes a “religious submission” (93) to the regulations of the sanatorium’s medical authorities, and particularly those regulations that coincide with the institution’s profit incentives. Behrens himself explicitly denies his ability to work miracles. Analyzing Joachim’s temperature measurements, he notes the following:
“‘Still toxic, still toxic,’ [nicht entgiftet] he said. ‘Well, it doesn’t happen from one day to the next—we’re not sorcerers here you know [hexen können wir auch nicht]’” (174). Indeed the rhetoric of the toxic (Gift), of “toxicity” and “detoxifying,” (Vergiftung/Entgiftung), is crucial to the diagnoses and procedures of the medical authorities at the sanatorium.

Bodies are regulated by such diagnoses, and at the sanatorium, it seems, the body is liable to toxicity in much the same way that in previous eras it was liable to sin. What the healthy and the holy share is a purified ideal, an ideal the body always falls short of, and if Behrens denies any association with witches and miracles it is not simply because his own practice has nothing to do with them, but rather because the reverence accorded science and medical authorities occupy a place in modernity that in previous eras had been the reserved for religious institutions, figures, and hierarchies. Toxicity in Mann’s novel becomes largely a placeholder for the human body’s resistance to the coercive force of medical discourses, that element that eludes—or is in excess of—conceptual and medical determinations, while simultaneously being the site of the body’s subjection to those same forces of coercion. The scientific articulation of “toxicity” is inseparable from the indeterminacies of intoxication—indeed if the air itself is intoxicating then the sanatorium’s diagnoses are always in some sense under the influence.

At a certain point in the text, Behrens, commenting on Castorp’s fever, credits him with being “more toxic [vergifteter] than we gave you credit for, my friend!” and proceeds to administer an “antitoxin” [Gegengift] (345) via syringe, the initial effect of which is the heightening of Castorp’s temperature, i.e., a sharpening of the symptom which occasioned its administration. Dr. Behrens, himself no sorcerer, wields the
antitoxin, pitting *pharmakon* against *pharmakon*. The puncture that Dr. Behrens makes with the needle into Castor’s flesh receives narrative attention as well: he performs this act indiscriminately, manipulating the syringe like a “virtuoso,” we are told; nonetheless he inflicts pain on account of his indifference to where he inserts it. In the name of a “toxicity” the body is opened to the other of exteriority—through being punctured by a syringe (itself a marker of modernity), the body is rendered capable of incorporating an “other” in new and unexpected ways, an incorporation which attests to both the polymorphous capacity of the body to open onto the exterior world, and its intense vulnerability to such intrusions.

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Addiction is not a topic that is particularly common in the scholarship on Mann’s work, but readers of *Death in Venice* are already intuitively familiar with how Mann writes addictive structures. Aschenbach becomes mortally addicted to a foreign substance, Tadzio, and unable to break the habit he is eventually destroyed by it. The erotic connotations *Rausch* in that work has been noted in particular by Webber. Scholarship has often noted a close relation between *Death in Venice* and *The Magic Mountain*, but has failed to notice how strongly evocative of addiction both texts are. It is not only in Peeperkorn’s alcohol consumption that addiction is present.

Castorp himself arrives at the sanatorium already with an inclination for addictive substances as noticed in his much beloved Maria Mancini cigars, which he notes having smuggled in. Discussing the matter with his cousin, Joachim, Castorp expresses perplexity at anyone’s abstinence from tobacco:
I don’t understand how someone could not be a smoker—why it’s like robbing oneself of the best part of life, so to speak, or at least of an absolutely first rate pleasure. When I wake up I look forward to being able to smoke all day… But a day without tobacco—that would be absolutely insipid, a dull totally wasted day. And if some morning I had to tell myself: there’s nothing left to smoke today, why I don’t think I’d find courage to get up, I swear I’d stay in bed. (46)

Joachim, who disagrees with his cousin’s sentiment, replies, “All the same it’s a sign of a rather weak will… to be so dependent on tobacco” (47). Similar to Castorp’s cousin, Settembrini forsweeps such pleasures as well. Noting to Castorp his unfamiliarity with tobacco, he claims himself to be, “in rather good company in that lack of experience. A great many noble and sober minds have detested tobacco smoke” (58). It is not clear whether the cigars’ effect is that of a “stimulant or narcotic” (248), yet Castorp comes up to the sanatorium with a supply of them, and immediately on his decision to prolong his stay, sends for more. And of course, the sanatorium is equally addictive. After the initial intoxication and stupefying effects induced by his arrival at the sanatorium, Castorp becomes rapidly accustomed to his accommodations, and repeatedly extends his stay, as if increasing the dose. Even when finally offered a clear opportunity to leave after being declared healthy, Castorp refuses to kick the habit and remains for several more years at the sanatorium Berghof.

Nor is the sanatorium without its pushers—its narco-profiteers; the institution profits considerably, we are told, from its patients. Indeed a good part of what takes place at the sanatorium is self-medication, and Settembrini notes (however ironically) that illness can effect a “merciful self-narcosis” (445). Even when finally offered a clear opportunity to leave after being declared healthy, Castorp refuses to kick the habit and remains for several more years at Davos-Platz. In The Magic Mountain the line between tuberculosis (Schwindsucht) and addiction (Sucht) not only figures prominently in any
attempt to understand the novel’s discourse on health, but it is also impossible to clearly determine. One is always left in some doubt regarding the extent to which diagnoses of toxicity are perpetrated for financial gain by the medical authorities,\textsuperscript{75} the dealers of the magic mountain’s narcosis—its “magic”—and thus to what extent tuberculosis (\textit{Schwindsucht}) becomes an addiction swindle—a \textit{Suchtschwindel} of sorts.

The repetitive structures of addiction are deeply inscribed in the sanatorium’s daily activities as well. Daily life is structured around habitual and ceremonial practices, including the ritual taking of temperature, the strict scheduling of meals, rest-cures, examinations, and so forth. Indeed, the habitual character of life at Davos-Platz becomes itself a habit that Castorp cannot break—much like Aschenbach, Castorp is hooked. In a novel that so explicitly thematizes time and repetition, the rhythms of addictions, the periodic administration of doses—of examinations, meals, and temperature takings—become yet another layer of temporal experience, and likewise contribute to the intoxicating lure of sanatorium life on the whole. These ceremonial and ritual practices serve, in part, to break up, or punctuate, what would otherwise be an infinite expanse of time. Like any addict, Castorp’s experience of time is formed in part in relation to his fixes. The cyclical rhythms of addiction stand in opposition to the linear time of progress and enterprise from which Castorp remains absent.

Perhaps no figure in the novel so clearly embodies intoxication and addiction as the Dutchman, Mynheer Peeperkorn. As is often noted, Peeperkorn himself embodies excess and \textit{Rausch}—and clearly part of the “heightening” that Mann himself identifies in the text is that which the Dutchman advocates. This advocacy constitutes his

\textsuperscript{75} On the highly questionable practices of the medical authorities throughout the novel cf. Sprecher; on \textit{Bakterienrausch} and an empirical and critical study of its importance to the novel’s representation of tuberculosis cf. Max.
contribution to Castorp’s “education,” and in spite of his broken, unintelligible sentences, and general incoherence, he communicates more effectively than either of his sober counterparts, Settembrini and Naphta. His body, drunken and massive, is frequently described in detail—at one point he is carried to bed by Hans and Clavdia, his enormous, drunken body draped over the two of them after a night of extreme inebriation. The excesses of Peeperkorn are those of the body itself—the space of the semantic looseness of the “toxic”—and if he is, as the narrator claims, “a totally different sort of fellow” (539), he nonetheless reinstatiates the somatic excesses of all the sanatorium’s patients, whose bodies the medical authorities monitor and regulate. Never fully mythologized Peeperkorn’s excesses come under medical scrutiny: Dr. Behrens attributes Peeperkorn’s illness partly to alcohol abuse (539). Fittingly it is Behrens, the chief medical authority, whose approach threatens to disperse Peeperkorn’s bacchanal, curbing its excess.

For all its mythical resonances, his wine maintains its materiality as well, and it is important to note that stimulants and narcotics of various sorts have distinct political inflections in these episodes. Peeperkorn is introduced in the narrative as a “colonial Dutchman, a man from Java, a coffee planter” (538), and participates in the commercial shipping of coffee, a substance whose narcotic, mood-altering effects are apparent in the text. Dr. Behrens is a coffee drinker, yet coffee, we are told, has the capacity to induce in him a melancholy as well. The coffee magnate Peeperkorn, accompanied by his Malaysian servant, drinks coffee in abundance, strongly brewed, presumably for the effect of a stimulant, much like his omnipresent wine. Indeed Peeperkorn orders both wine and coffee simultaneously, as both seem to contribute to his advocacy of the intensification of experience. In conversation with Castorp he claims, “I have known

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76 On his role as a Dionysus-Christ figure cf. Seidlin.
people, cocaine sniffers, hashish smokers, morphine addicts. Fine my dear Friend.

Agreed. Let them. We should not reprove or judge … depravity lies not in cocaine, not in opium, not in vice as such’’ (555). If Peeperkorn’s massive wealth acquired through the colonial enterprise of shipping caffeine is any indicator, his appetite for profit may be as great as his thirst for wine, and his comparatively lenient attitudes towards drug consumption may not be so much a product of his mythologized Dionysian excess as his sympathy for the activities of other colonial entrepreneurs. At the time of the novel, one of the leading cash crops of the Dutch colonial project in Java, alongside coffee, was the coca leaf, which the German pharmaceutical company Merck was processing and selling as cocaine. And in 1886 the biggest delivery of coca leaves from Java at that time (nearly 100 tons) was purchased in a key port for Dutch colonial enterprise, Hamburg (Karch 76), Hans Castorp’s hometown—conveyed no doubt by ships very much like the ones that the reader of Ocean Steamships was soon to begin producing himself.

After a night of intense intoxication and revelry, Castorp, who himself “had a bad headache” (566), on the subsequent morning comes to visit the Dutchman, who is in poor shape as well: “‘We overdid is last night,’ he said, ‘no permit me to say—overdid it badly’” (567). Peeperkorn then recommends that “the best thing was to pick up where one had left off the night before” (567), and proceeds to offer Castorp a glass of “sparkling

77 Karch notes how closely intertwined coffee production and coca production were among Dutch colonialists, who, even when confronted with the economic potential of coca plants, questioned whether promoting “another dangerous stimulant” (72) was in the best interests of maintaining an obedient colonial population.

78 Hamburg was in fact Europe’s main trade center for coca, importing heavily from Java and Peru in the first decades of the 20th century (cf. Gootenberg), and was itself a haven for drug activity. Stephens, citing the increase of addicts in German hospitals and asylums in the first decades of the 20th century notes “a substantial increase in drug consumption... in Germany before the First World War” (14). Opium, morphine, and cocaine became controlled substances in 1920 under a condition of the Treaty of Versailles, thereby opening a black market. Stephens continues, “the effects of the illicit trade of morphine and cocaine by the mid-1920’s had set off a panic” (15). This increasing awareness of drugs, I suggest, constitutes an important context in which to understand Mann’s novel.
wine.” The alcoholic drink, here both poison and remedy, prompts Peeperkorn to deliver perhaps his sole lucid exposition (or at least lucid as mediated through the narrator’s conspicuously clear voice). It is on the topic of pharmacology.

On his nightstand is a bottle of quinine, whose therapeutic effects he praises. On the one hand it kills germs and regulates body temperature, but it also enhances appetite and produces intoxication: “It was a true regaling cordial, a splendid drink that invigorated, stimulated, and quickened the system—an intoxicating drug, as well, by the way; one could very easily get a little tipsy and mellow from it” (568). Quinine is ironically an intoxicating medicine, and Castorp, articulating the uncanniness of the force of the pharmakon, notes the “almost eerie” (fast unheimlich) effect of even hearing about such “dynamic drugs and poisonous Asian trees” (575).

Quinine was also a very important Dutch colonial export from Java, where Peeperkorn made his fortune, and the discussion of quinine shows how the drug and its effects are appropriated by a colonial discourse. Made from china bark, quinine, according to Peeperkorn, is something that western pharmacology had not yet mastered. Colonial science, he explains,

could not yet claim to understand [quinine’s] composition well enough to produce it artificially. In general our pharmacologists would do well not to be too overweening about their knowledge, for they had the same problem with a great many things: they knew this and that about the dynamics and effects of a substance, but any question as to precise causes all too frequently proved an embarrassment. The young man need only look at toxicology. No one would be able to give him any information about the elementary properties that produced the effects of so-called poisons. Snake venoms, for instance, why, no more was known about then than that as animal products they were included among the complex proteins… the world of substances was such that they concealed both life and death simultaneously, all were both therapeutic and poisonous. Pharmacology and toxicology were one and the same thing—we were healed by

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79 Cf. Karch.
poisons, and a substance considered an agent of life could, under certain circumstances, in a single convulsion, kill within seconds. (568)

For Peeperkorn the apparently simple polarity of medicine and poison is anything but simple—the study of the toxic is also the study of the *pharmakon*. Determinations of toxicity necessitate determinations of health, but it is the very concept of health itself that comes under scrutiny throughout the novel. The paradoxical moment in which the proof of real knowledge would come through artificial production is perhaps a significant moment in a novel which seems to call into question the status of artificial paradises of various sorts. In fact, it is important to note that in Peeperkorn’s speech the eastern substance exceeds western theorizations of it—a *pharmakon*, in excess of metaphysical determinations. “Primitave peoples’ understanding of such drugs far exceeded our own” (569), he claimed. Peeperkorn gives this very detailed, analytic, and informative discourse, as usual, with drink in hand, combing again befuddlement and lucidity in a manner that becomes a definitive gesture of the novel. Peeperkorn’s waning health seems connected symptomatically to his excess of life, and it is largely his increasing incapacity to feel the intensities of life as excess that prompts him to commit suicide—an act he accomplishes by poison.

Nonetheless, Peeperkorn’s preference is for alcohol, which he praises as among “the classic gifts of life” (557). At a moment in which the mercurial Peeperkorn’s anger is about to erupt, Castorp manages to mollify him by praising wine, calling it “the philanthropic invention of a god who was associated with civilization,” and stating that “culture is not a matter of reason and well articulated sobriety, but rather is bound up with enthusiasm, with intoxication, and a sense of regalement” (559). The Dutchman
seems to approve, confirming wine as the marker of Western culture and civilization, a
notion that contrasts sharply with one of Castorp’s more sober educators.

Settembrini is the Italian man of letters who undertakes to educate Castorp; he
repeatedly urges Castorp to leave the sanatorium in order to return to the world of
progress and industrious labor. Championing liberal values of freedom, scholarly
enterprise, and capitalism over proletarian revolution, Settembrini aligns himself with
western notions of development, expansion, and growth, and has been identified as
representing the linear conception of time as progress in contrast to the repetitive
structures and lack of productivity of life at Davos-Platz. He is likewise throughout
noted for his sobriety (Nüchternheit) and sobering influence on Castorp. He warns the
“engineer” against numerous narcotic substances, and by implication against the narcotic
effect of the sanatorium itself. In a scene early on, in which Castorp drinks his breakfast
beer while listening to a musical performance on the terrace, he is described as follows:

Dazed from the beer and the music, which as always made him lay his head a
little to one side with his mouth hanging open, he looked with bloodshot eyes out
at the resort life around him. It came to him that all these people were subject to
an inner decay that would be halted only with great difficulty… but that
realization did not bother him at all, on the contrary there was a certain special
intensity and intellectual charm to the whole scene (109-110).

The stupefied gaze of Castorp is again a reflective one as well, a state that Settembrini, in
this scene, will find worth an ironic remark: “Beer, tobacco and music,” he says to
Castorp, “behold the fatherland. I see you’re caught up in a patriotic mood” (110). 80 His
subsequent discussion of art makes clear the narcotic potential for music in particular:

Art is moral in that it awakens. But what if it were to do its opposite? If it were to
numb us, put us to sleep, counteract all activity and progress? And music can do
that as well. It knows all too well the effect opiates have. A devilish effect,
gentlemen. Opiates are the Devil’s tool, for they create dullness, rigidity,

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stagnation, slavish inertia. There is something dubious about music, gentlemen.

(112)

If music is narcotic and intoxicating, the sanatorium is just as much so. From the sober perspective of Settembrini, time spent at the sanatorium is time wasted, time not invested in promoting Western notions of progress, industry and enterprise. Intolerant of irony, Settembrini is an upholder of Platonic values insofar as he insists that things not slip into their opposite, and life at the sanatorium for Settembrini is a dangerous supplement that he repeatedly warns Castorp against. Life at the sanatorium takes place at a remove from the sober narrative of historical progress, and Settembrini, the novel’s water-drinker, is largely the representative of that temperance.

The otherness of opium is evoked again at an explicitly self-reflective moment in the text, a moment of narrative parabasis that conjoins once more a narcotic state and a reflective one. Mann’s narrator notes that narrative itself is different from music insofar as time is both its medium and can itself be thematized in the narration. The narrator can greatly compress experienced time, letting years lapse in a few pages, a process he refers to as “diminishment.” “Diminishment” is an “illusory or, to be quite explicit, a diseased element” (532). We are told,

diminishment occurs to some extent whenever a narrative makes use of hermetic magic and a temporal hyperperspective reminiscent of certain anomalous experiences of reality that imply the senses have been transcended. The diaries of opium-eaters record how, during the brief period of ecstasy, the drugged person’s dreams have a temporal scope of ten, thirty, sometimes sixty years or even surpass all limits of man’s ability to experience time—dreams, that is, whose imaginary time span vastly exceeds their actual duration and which are characterized by an incredible diminishment of the experience of time, with images thronging past so swiftly that, as one hashish-smoker puts it, the intoxicated user’s brain seems ‘to have something removed, like the mainspring from a broken watch’.

A narrative, then, can set to work and deal with time in much the same way as those depraved dreams (Lasterträume). But since it can ‘deal’ with time,
it is clear that time, which is the element of narrative, can also become its subject, and although it would be going to far to say that one can ‘narrate time,’ it is apparently not such an absurd notion to want to narrate about time—so that a term like ‘time novel’ may well take on an oddly dreamlike double meaning. (532)

Narrative “diminishment” is “diseased” and the opium-eater’s dreams “depraved” *(Lasterträume)* in the narrator’s sober rejection of drug-induced experience. Yet the opium eater’s reverie resonates strongly with the “hermetic enchantment” of Mann’s protagonist. Castorp himself, as we know, is inclined to dreams—he has numerous dreams throughout the novel, one of which, in part aided by the befuddlement of alcohol, produces a vision of Dionysian insight in the chapter, “Snow,” a section of the novel that has received tremendous critical attention. Reverie is clearly not an uncommon state for Castorp, and in explicitly rejecting any associations with the effects of opium, the narrator effectively raises the question of the narcotic quality of the mountain’s magic. If time is, as the narrator claims, both the element of narrative and of life (531), then art and intoxication share a capacity to produce a warp in the temporal texture of experience. In her narrative analysis, Dorrit Cohn understands the invocation of the opium eater’s diary in the novel to illustrate the disjunction between “clock time” and “experienced time,” yet perhaps the more apt analogy would be the disjunction between time devoted to the sober, productive enterprise of the modern, industrial economy, and time wasted, time devoted to capitalist productivity’s “other”—the land of Lotus-Eaters, Sirens, artificial paradises, or utopian narcoses.

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81 Dorrit Cohn is apparently the first to pay attention to this conjunction of narcotic invocation and metanarrative reflection, and claims that the reference to the diaries of opium eaters provides a “faulty simile” (214), since the feeling of the expansion of time found in such works she claims to be the opposite of Castorp’s experience of time’s contraction. I find this a reductive dichotomization of Mann’s rich exploration of temporal experience, in which the expansion and contraction of time are never considered mutually exclusive. Thus rather than taking the narrator’s exclusion of the opium reverie at face value, I focus instead on the incorporation of that reverie into the text.
The “oddly dreamlike double meaning” that comes through narrating “about time,” through explicitly thematizing time, is the task of both the narrator and the opium diary writer. Both reflect upon the dreamer’s dream, the intoxicated vision, as do De Quincey, Baudelaire, and Benjamin. Both narrative time and the opiated experience of time are uncanny representations of time, supplementary to authentic modes of temporal experience—and it is precisely that similarity that the narrator here addresses, and at the exact moment at which the structuring principle of narrative, time, becomes the content of its narration.

The mention of opium occurs again, and at another moment in which the audience is addressed by the narrator. Mann’s narrator overtly expresses some degree of anxiety about the oneiric quality of the narrative, and offers the following ironic exculpation:

We have been up here for years now, that much is certain—a dizzying stay, an addict’s dream [Lastertraum], but without opium or hashish. The censor will soon be after us. And yet to counter all this nasty befuddlement we have intentionally introduced a great deal of clear reason and rigorous logic. It is not by accident that we have chosen to associate ourselves with minds like those of Messrs. Naphta and Settembrini, instead of surrounding ourselves with vague Peeperkorns. (565)

Here the narrator notes how the text itself mimics the effect of eastern drugs and (however ironically) expresses his anxiety over the judgment of the law, of the narrative being regarded as foreign substance. In an interesting dialectic gesture, the narrative becomes high—it incorporates the drug that it putatively excludes; yet at the same time it is under the accusation of being high—caught with an illicit substance. That it is only the presence of Castorp’s allegedly rational interlocutors that prevents this is yet another layer of irony in the passage; the ultimate incomprehensibility of their putatively sober discourse is among the critical commonplaces on the novel. No clear discursive
conclusion emerges, and their rationality and rhetoric often amount to incoherency. In spite of the narrator’s insistence, they seem rather to be unreliable pegs on which to hang the novel’s sobriety.

In many ways life at the sanatorium is an “artificial paradise,” and in spite of the narrator’s ostensible rejection of opium intoxication, nevertheless the expansions and contractions of time, the altered states of body and cognition, and the manifold alterations of perceptions and moods that figure so prominently in Mann’s novel, have all been noted as hallmarks of the literature of opium, from De Quincey and Coleridge, to Poe, Baudelaire and Benjamin. Indeed the presence of drugs and the powerful associations of the text’s narrative with the literature of opium reveries is one of the defining features of the modernity that Mann’s novel engages.

It is, of course, precisely this notion of the artificial, of being other than “real” experience that The Magic Mountain explicitly problematizes. In his 1939 introduction to the novel, written in English, Mann mentioned Castorp’s “hermetic enchantment,” and claims that a “fundamental theme” in the book is “that of a ‘heightening’, enhancement (Steigerung)” (“The Making of the Magic Mountain” 723). Mann, discussing in English the “heightening” that the novel thematizes, noted the following: “[Castorp’s] story is the story of a heightening process, but also as a narrative it is the heightening process itself. It employs the methods of the realistic novel but actually is not one” (“The Making” 724). The artifice of the narrative denies any contamination by the artifice of drugs, yet the narrative itself participates in the trope of being “high”—an artificial paradise, a magic mountain, elevated above the strictly mimetic domain of the “realistic novel.” The sense of aboveness is something common to both our vocabularies for articulating drug
experience and the hermeneutic positioning of critical and aesthetic vantage points, such as that of Mann’s work. With no exaggeration one could say that Mann’s novel poses the question of what exactly it means to “be high.”

It was precisely this supplemental relation that he would address when he referred to life at the sanatorium as follows: “it is a sort of substitute existence, and it can, in a relatively short time wholly wean a young person from actual and active life” (719).

Clearly the health facility itself has a narcotic lure; it is a dangerous supplement with a similar potential for addiction as opium had for De Quincey. In his discussion of drugs and addicts, Derrida had noted that we impugn the addict because “he cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from objective reality and the real life of the city and the community; that he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction” (25). Indeed it seems that Castorp’s time at the sanatorium opens precisely that simulacral space.

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If the presence of intoxication in Mann’s work suggests, as I hope to have shown, a dimension of the novel’s stance on European modernity, it is worth noting in conclusion that an important intertext in Mann’s novel is one that that Adorno and Horkheimer draw on to articulate the emergence of the bourgeois self. In The Dialectic of Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer note the dangers that the Sirens pose to the emergent bourgeois individual consciousness of Odysseus, a figure very similar to the emerging bourgeois consciousness of Castorp in Mann’s variation on a Bildungsroman. The Sirens represent for Odysseus a “narcotic intoxication” (33) that lures the individual towards self-forgetfulness, the complete dissolution of the boundaries of the self, much as
the narcosis of the Lotus-eaters poses the threats of “oblivion and the surrender of the will” (62). The fruits of the Lotus-Eaters conjoin forgetfulness and narcosis in a way that is not entirely dissimilar from the effect that life at the sanatorium has, and the narcotic lures of sanatorium life are clearly figured as threats to the emergence of Castorp as a fully formed bourgeois subject.

For Castorp, as for Odysseus’s men, the threat posed by narcosis is never that of violent destruction, but of oblivion and loss of the sense of individuality and individual self-determination. Yet that narcosis, Adorno and Horkheimer claim, bears with it an “illusion of redemption” (70), an unspoken protest against domination that critical theory gives voice to in the idea of utopia realized through historical labor. Mann’s novel, as well, seems to participate in that critical gesture, and likewise locates intoxication in a certain antithesis to the apparent sobriety of “civilized” Western modernity. Life at the sanatorium is the utopian vision of full release from the demands of modern life, of having to embark upon a career to earn one’s way (as Castorp must); it is a yielding to intoxication, to Lotus-eaters or Sirens, to all principles antithetical to the autonomous self—and yet a vision only attainable through possession of sufficient material means. Castorp’s experience at the sanatorium is that of a utopia, an artificial paradise, one that enables a critical perspective by virtue of its alterity, but one whose attainment, as Adorno had claimed of all realized dreams, leaves it with “a peculiar character of sobriety… and beyond that, boredom” (“Something’s Missing” 1)—the banality and everydayness of an addiction, and a dominant affect of sanatorium life. Like utopias, intoxications lapse into addictions, stimulants become depressants, means of escape
themselves become prisons, and magic—of any and every sort—ultimately yields to disenchantment.

Mann’s narcotic narrative ends with a set of questions that has been implicit since its outset—questions pertaining to the relation between intoxication, consciousness, and narrative. The novel concludes with a sobering thunderbolt, the beginning of the war, and a narrative awakening: “Where has our dream brought us?” (703)—it brings us to Castorp, called back to the flatlands to serve in the war, dodging bombs on the battlefield. The narcotic reverie of his time spent at the sanatorium seems clearly to have ended. Indeed insofar as this intoxicated dream is brought to a conclusion in the narrative, Mann’s novel bears a certain structural similarity to Keats’ Nightingale ode. Each work concludes with a shift of consciousness, as the protagonist emerges from the waking dream that constitutes the work. In a moment that has received tremendous critical attention, Castorp’s final appearance in the novel, we are told that he, “limps and stumbles forward on mud-laden feet, singing thoughtlessly” (705). He sings Schubert’s Lied, “Der Lindenbaum”, based on the romantic poet Wilhelm Müller’s poem “Am Brunnen vor dem Tor”: “...and all its branches rustled as if they called to me [und seine Zweige rau-uschten, als riefen sie zu mir]” (705). The remainder of the lyric, which Mann omits yet implicitly invokes, articulates that narcotic call—a darkly alluring song like that of the Sirens:

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Come to me, companion,
Here you’ll find your rest!

The cold winds blew
Directly in my face,
My hat blew off my head
I didn’t turn around.
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Now I am many hours
Distanced from that place,
And always I hear it whisper [rauschen]:
There you’ll find your rest!

The ode itself expresses a lure towards peace and quiescence—its speaker a sleepy
dreamer, the relief (or Linderung) the Lindenbaum offers beckons to him with its Siren-
like call. The novel concludes with a final Rausch (in the verb rauschen), another
curious moment in the dialectics of intoxication. It is the call of a narcotic as well—or
perhaps a call placed through narcosis. It echoes the lure of the Sirens, or of the Lotus-
Eaters, or any of a number of other narcotics that call Castorp to quiescence. Indeed the
sobriety of the flatlands and of rational progress that Settembrini had championed seem
to slip into their opposite with the eruption of warfare, exemplified at its most gruesome
in combat. Castorp again yields to the lures of an intoxication—“his face flushed” (705),
as it was on his first arrival at Davos-Platz, he exhibits one last time his proclivity for
both intoxication and narcosis: signing “thoughtlessly” he numbs himself to the horror of
war, his inclination to reverie now being appropriated to very different ends. The novel
thus ultimately poses the question to what extent the activities of “the Flatlands” embody
the sober Enlightenment notions of progress and rationality; or to what extent are they
defined by their most intoxicating moments—the eruptions of war, the shattering of
communicative discourse, and the yielding to the haunting lures of the chthonic.

Through its commercial, medical, technological, and aesthetic formulations
intoxication proves to be a curious site of repetition in Mann’s novel, a compulsive point
of recurrence. In Mann’s text intoxication is not set in simple antithesis to sobriety, but
rather is a lurking presence, something that seems to undergird the determinations that
seek to comprehend it—something that emerges even in the text’s most sober moments.
Like any *pharmakon*, intoxication insinuates itself into the text in a way that permits of no absolute determinations—rather, intoxications, narcoses, and sobriety intermingle and overlap, exhibiting a porous logic that tugs at the boundaries of their social, political, and historical significances. And yet few texts seem to illustrate as adroitly and intricately as does *The Magic Mountain* the stakes of the ambiguities of drugs and drug effects—their historical and material inflections, their phenomenological effects, their discursive appropriations, and their addictive potentials. Insofar as Mann’s novel constitutes a reflection on modernity and modern experience, drugs and states of intoxication play a profound role.
Chapter 5

Dreaming Intoxications: Walter Benjamin’s Curious Dialectics

In his essay of 1929, “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” Walter Benjamin explicitly connected the Surrealist aesthetic to intoxication. There he noted that the Surrealists set before themselves a specific task: “To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution—this is the project about which Surrealism circles in all its books and enterprises” (Reflections 189). The Surrealist project, as Benjamin identified it, sought to harness those energies to disrupt the bourgeois conception of subjectivity, to loosen the borders of the self, and to use art (however loosely defined) as a catalyst for effecting social change. Central to the work of the Surrealists was a type of experience that Benjamin identified as “profane illumination,” a type of illumination that sets itself in antithesis to religious illumination by its “materialist, anthropological inspiration, to which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give an introductory lesson” (179). Profane illumination comes about through the defamiliarization of the perception of the ordinary, such as the street signs, postage stamps, advertisements, or any of the other cultural clutter that litter Benjamin’s own foray into Surrealist perception in One Way Street. That disruption in perception—aided sometimes by dreams, and sometimes by intoxication—harbored for Benjamin the potential for social transformation through the liberation of calcified modes of perception and experience. Benjamin found in the Surrealists the most profound expression of freedom since the anarchism of Bakunin, due in part to the strong connection between the “ecstatic comportment” of the Surrealist aesthetic and the ecstatic component that necessarily belongs to anarchic revolution. The loosening of confining social structures,
particularly of the petit-bourgeois notion of the discrete, autonomous self, Benjamin identified as “an intoxication… that we badly need” (180).

And yet Benjamin was explicit about the position of the critic in relation to the movement he critiqued, beginning his essay by specifying that relation:

Intellectual currents can generate a sufficient head of water for the critic to install his power station \([\text{Kraftstation}]\) on them. The necessary gradient, in the case of Surrealism, is produced by the difference in intellectual level between France and Germany… The German observer is not standing at head of this stream. That is his opportunity. He is in the valley. He can gauge the energies of the movement \((\text{Reflections} \ 180)\).

The hermeneutic position of the critic is one of geographical and intellectual differentiation—the critic, located downstream, receives energy from above; and the power station in which he or she is installed translates that energy, performing a conversion or transformation that is always a highly charged activity in Benjamin’s thought—it is the task of the critic par excellence. Intoxication was something to be translated into the vernacular of the critic, incorporated into the critical reflection, without allowing the reflection to yield fully to it.

And it was this critical stance that Benjamin sought to achieve in his relation to the Surrealism. Of intoxication’s role in the Surrealist project he noted the following:

This component is identical with the anarchic. But to place the accent exclusively on it would be to subordinate the methodical and disciplinary preparation for revolution entirely on a praxis oscillating between fitness exercise and celebration in advance. Added to this is an inadequate, undialectical conception of the nature of intoxication. The aesthetic of the painter, the poet, \(en \text{ état de surprise} \), of art as the reaction of one surprised, is enmeshed in a number of romantic prejudices. Any serious exploration of occult, surrealistic, phantasmagoric gifts and phenomena presupposes a dialectical entwinement to which a romantic turn of mind in impervious. (189)

For all its investment in the avant-garde aesthetics and cutting-edge psychoanalytic exploration, the excesses of Surrealist intoxication inadvertently harkened back to the
Romantic era, employing precisely the type of formless intoxication—sheer excess, exuberance, and mystical immersion—that Nietzsche (and later, Adorno) had faulted Wagner for.\(^8\) Those “pernicious romantic prejudices” that Surrealist intoxication risked falling into were far from unknown in Germany—in spite of the sobering rhetorical distance that Benjamin geographically invokes. He claimed, “histrionic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious takes us no further; we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday” (190). Insofar as it was conceived as absolute alterity, intoxication had little to offer efforts to elevate critical consciousness—the relation to intoxication that Benjamin himself would attempt to obtain was one of reconciling the ecstatic and the quotidian, reading the hermetic and mystic through the lens of the mundane.

And yet the political potentials of intoxication contained their own mediations, a point which Benjamin would make explicit in the same essay. In the ecstatic state of intoxication he saw a component of every revolutionary act, and yet that revolutionary potential was never fully separate from a certain type of narcosis induced by modern alienation, what Benjamin referred to as “that most terrible drug—ourselves—which we take in solitude” (190). The ambivalences of intoxicated states—alternately alienating and redeeming, shock inducing and numbing, were among the crucial dialectical tensions at the nodal points of poetics and political subjectivity, and Benjamin sought to capture

\(^{8}\) Adorno disparagingly speaks of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* as “an intoxicating brew,” whose blending of the arts produces an illusionary unity that serves to naturalize and humanize the reified and alienated state of relations in modernity (*In Search of Wagner* 89). Nietzsche’s own rejection of Wagner and Wagnerian intoxication appears most explicitly in his direct engagements with his mentor (viz., *Nietzsche contra Wagner* and *The Case of Wagner*) which I discussed in chapter 2.
those ambiguities by positioning himself variously inside and outside of states of intoxication.

In his essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” Benjamin developed an analysis of modern gamblers in relation to alienated labor, and did so again in terms of narcosis—employing intoxicated states to think through modern experience. Much like wage earners whose day always starts anew without any cumulative effect of prior labor, gamblers likewise orient themselves to the game of chance: every roll of the dice is independent of all prior rolls. Thus Benjamin speaks of “the narcotics with which the gamblers seek to submerge the consciousness that has delivered them to the march of the second hand” (Illuminations 180). He specifies in a footnote that “the narcotic effect that is involved here is specified as to time, like the malady it is supposed to alleviate. Time is the material into which the phantasmagoria of gambling has been woven” (198). This type of temporal orientation Benjamin identifies as Erlebnis, the temporal structure of alienated experience in which each moment is isolated from all others. The clock passes indifferently from one minute to the next reducing the experience of time to the same type of dull repetition as the drudgery of the repetitive motions of the modern factory laborer. The temporal structure of Erlebnis resembles the product of alienated labor as well. Like the mass produced commodity, the divisions of the clock are all exact copies of the others, and therefore completely isolated and unrelated. The gamblers seek to escape the narcosis of wage labor through the game, yet gambling itself, which Benjamin repeatedly identifies with addiction (178-9), re-instantiates the narcosis of Erlebnis through its own form of addictive repetition.
This contrasts with the structure of experience Benjamin identifies as *Erfahrung*, in which the quantities of time that clocks measure are subordinated to the nuanced qualities of temporal experience. The mémoire involontaire, by means of which a moment thought to be lost reappears seemingly of its own accord, revived through a new juxtaposition, is a way in which the qualitative dimension of temporal experience is redeemed from the sterilization of quantitative measurement. It is activated not by conscious effort, but rather triggered by a particular sense stimulation, as in Marcel’s tasting a madeleine, or through evocative power of a scent. He notes, “If the recognition of a scent is more privileged to provide consolation than any other recollection, this may be so because it deeply drugs the sense of time. A scent may drown years in the odor it recalls.” (*Illuminations* 184). The moment of recognition is brought about through a narcotic effect—the narcosis of time is a definitive dynamic of redemptive time. The rush of experience which Benjamin articulated in terms of an intoxication could be induced through any of a variety of acts of incorporation, not just through the incorporation of substances narrowly defined as “intoxicants.” The narcosis of the gamblers and factory workers, and the drugging of time that occurs through the mémoire involontaire, suggest that intoxications of numerous sorts pertained for Benjamin both to modern alienation and likewise to revolutionary consciousness.

In a letter to Horkheimer in 1938 Benjamin again made clear the ambiguity of intoxication’s social potential. There he claimed that certain powers of intoxication were crucial to the struggle for reason’s liberation, yet nonetheless, at the present time Benjamin acknowledged that those powers were appropriated by a right-wing politics—
the intoxication of fascism. By the late 30’s it became evident that the loosening of the self was a highly ambiguous state of affairs in even more ways than Benjamin had suggested some ten years before. In the Surrealism essay Benjamin noted that “the dialectics of intoxication are indeed curious” (Reflections 181) and that is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen than in their social and political potentials. These various positioning of intoxication would be a pervasive point of concern for him throughout his writings on the topic; indeed, in Benjamin’s writing intoxication repeatedly figures as a site of mediation—a state that he alternately positions himself inside of and outside of, that he conceptualizes as liberating and enfettering, and one which he approaches through an array of rhetorical forms. Intoxication was a rich source of mediations in Walter Benjamin’s thought.

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And yet if Benjamin’s concern with the social, cultural and historical potentials and implementations of intoxication was a prominent feature of his writing on the topic, his concern with it was by no means limited to the sphere of the political, narrowly construed. Intoxication in fact played a crucial role in Benjamin’s engagement with art and aesthetics. A study of his body of work reveals, in fact, a sustained engagement with an idea of intoxication, from his earliest writings to his latest, and suggests that the concept occupies a position of particular significance in his thought. In addition to his essay on Surrealism, he addresses the concept of intoxication in some of his writings on aesthetics from as early as 1915, in his own drug experiments and protocols of the 20’s

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83 Speaking of “the powers of intoxication” Benjamin explicitly stated “[i]t’s true that at present they appear conformable to fascism” (On Hashish 145; Gesammelte Briefe 6, 23).
and early 30’s, and likewise in his later work on Baudelaire and the flâneur in *The Arcades Project*. All of these discussions make clear his preoccupation with the relationship between intoxication and creative practice of some sort; his persistent reformulations of that connection are suggestive of the considerable extent of his interest. And yet in spite of that, critical attention to the significance of intoxication in Benjamin’s work has been relatively minimal, or periphery.\(^\text{84}\) The nexus of the aesthetic and the intoxicated is in fact intricate and, as I will show, has much to do with Benjamin’s attempt to address both embodied experience and questions of critical and aesthetic form—a domain that I identify, as I have throughout this work, as a “poetics.” As I will argue, the mediations that intoxications lent themselves to made them a dynamic storehouse for the productivity in Benjamin’s critical thought.

His writings on intoxication frequently feature negotiations between the polarities of excess and constraint, chaos and structure, between the transcendent and finite, and likewise between left and right wing political potentials. The liminal spaces that drugs presented were of particular interest to Benjamin, who always thought in terms of thresholds and mediations. What his writings on drugs reflect is a repeated concern with

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\(^{84}\) Among the most important works to devote serious critical attention to Benjamin’s hashish protocols is the co-editor of Benjamin’s *Gesammelte Schriften*, Hermann Schweppenhäuser. In “Propaedeutics to Profane Illumination,” which originally appeared as an introduction to *Über Haschisch*, Schweppenhäuser draws particular attention to how Benjamin uses intoxication to address the reified relations between subject and object; this is a strain of thought Thompson continues in “From ‘Rausch’ to Rebellion: Walter Benjamin’s *On Hashish* and the Aesthetic Dimension of Prohibitionist Realism,” by reading the hashish protocols as a direct counter to Kant’s concept of experience. Eiland, in addition to writing a general introduction in the recent English translation of *On Hashish*, has also discussed intoxication in relation to the dialectics of distraction and concentration (“Reception in Distraction”). The present study perhaps bears a closer resemblance to Forrest’s attempt (*The Politics of Imagination: Benjamin, Kracauer, Kluge*) to situate the hashish experiments in relation to Benjamin’s theory of perception; insofar as Forrest is acutely attuned to Benjamin’s notion of embodied experience I concur with her approach. Yet the argument I’ll attempt to develop will suggest that perception alone is not adequate to understanding Benjamin’s intoxications, or to the way he thinks of embodiment, in which perception is entangled with the affects, as the protocols make clear; nor does Forrest’s discussion adequately account for the discussion of form, which for Benjamin (as Nietzsche before him) is crucial to the discussion of intoxication.
how to position himself hermeneutically in relation to such states. Even the Surrealists, whose concept of intoxication was not sufficiently dialectical, used the loosening of the self in intoxication as “precisely the fruitful, living experience [Erfahrung] that enabled these people to step outside of intoxication” (Reflections 179). This negotiation of polarities is a hallmark of Benjamin’s discussion of intoxication. Nearly all of his work on topic is concerned with this type of liminal positioning; the apparent threshold positions that intoxicated states afford fit well with some of Benjamin’s major concerns, and the occupation of these thresholds seems to be a chief reason for Benjamin’s recurrent interest in intoxication. Contrary to certain commentaries that have suggested that Benjamin identified intoxication with formlessness, intoxication in Benjamin’s work in fact becomes one of the chief ways in which he engages questions of aesthetic and critical form, and the liminal character of it is partly evidence of this. I propose to explore the liminality of intoxication in Benjamin’s work, particularly insofar as it relates to the “aesthetic”—a domain which I take to include art works both in their production and reception, as well as a certain philosophical discourse about them, and, as the word “aisthesis” initially designates, an important relation to embodied experience, which for Benjamin is also connected to moods and perceptions. I want to suggest in particular that Benjamin’s various writings on intoxication are crucial to his engagement with “aesthetics” and precisely a debate over the breadth of that field. His various discussions of intoxication, like much of his other work, reflect an attempt at reconfiguring the

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85 McCole, in particular, speaks perhaps too generally of the concept of intoxication when he claims that for Benjamin “Intoxication was another of those romantic dummies that must be broken open…” (226). Benjamin’s sustained engagement with intoxication seems evidence enough that he never considered it far more nuanced a concept than McCole seems to suggest, and I’ll develop this argument throughout.
relations between the sensuous and the rational, moods and perceptions, and art and understanding.

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Benjamin’s writings on intoxication (and in states of intoxication, as well) seem to implicitly counter a tradition of aesthetic discourse whose main figures, Kant and Hegel, had—albeit in very different ways—subordinated art to reason. That Benjamin’s project was in part to engage and to counter both Hegel and Kant is something that much scholarship on Benjamin has made amply clear, and that the aesthetic dimension of intoxication can partly be understood in relation to that engagement is something that I suggest. Through very different means, Kant and Hegel had consigned art works to a cognitively inferior realm, to a considerable extent on account of their sensuousness and singularity. Thus, Kant denies conceptual knowledge to aesthetic judgments—art works are important for Kant because our judgments of them are proof that the faculty of judgment exists in a pure form, independent of the concepts of the understanding and the investments of interest that are found in the purposiveness with “purpose” of conceptual categories. Likewise, Hegel’s historical narrative had proclaimed the death of the art in favor of abstract thought, the highest manifestation of Spirit. For Kant and Hegel the problem with the work of art pertained, to a considerable extent, to the epistemological consequences of its sensuous status: its particularity was seen as incompatible with (or inferior to) the stronger universalizing force of reason.
Part of Benjamin’s project is to counter that tradition by attributing to physical, sensuous experience a more nuanced connection with the understanding, and his explorations of intoxication, both from within the intoxicated state and outside of it, are particularly illustrative of this nexus. The profanity of the illumination that occurs in the hashish trance has much to do with the materiality of the substance that produces it, and what it reveals is likewise concerned with the plasticity of embodied experience—the potential transformations of both perception and affectation. The material status of the drug is clearly evocative the notion of a materialism that was so resonant in Benjamin’s thought. In the first impression of hashish Benjamin notes “an inclination… to stylize oneself, to stylize one’s body” (On Hashish 20). The body in its intoxicated state is likened to the plasticity of aesthetic form; it becomes a horizon for reconfiguration—a prime locus for a materialist poetics.

That the aesthetic category of style has significant epistemological significance is already apparent in The Origin of German Tragic Drama, particularly the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue,” in which Benjamin develops the idea of “philosophical style,” characterized by interruption, fragmentation, and the absence of polemic (32). He uses that to oppose the rigidities of epistemologies that conceive of knowledge as something to be grasped and obtained. The type of understanding Benjamin is concerned with throughout his work is never fully accessible by the sober rigidities of “method”; rather Benjamin’s work reflects a knowledge of indeterminate structures, a certain aesthetic logic, which he refers to as “form.” Distinguishing between knowledge, the province of traditional philosophical enquiry, and truth, he claims, “For knowledge, method is a way

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86 Cf in particular Howard Caygill for a thoroughgoing discussion of Benjamin’s relation to the tradition of German idealism.
of acquiring its object – even creating it in the consciousness; for truth it is self-representation, and is therefore immanent in it as form” (Origin of German Tragic Drama 29-30). Form is that which contains its own compelling interior laws, in which “form” and “content” have a relationship of compelling necessity, yet a logic that is also at the same time entirely contingent. There are infinite potential styles, much as there are infinite potential aesthetic or epistemological forms, and the state of intoxication is one of the ways in which those potentials are actualized. Concerned with a domain that encompasses critical-poetic form and questions of style on the one hand, and sensuous, affective experience in both creation and reception on the other, intoxication for Benjamin suggests a type of understanding that is always indefinite and open-ended—a type of knowledge that does not see sensuous experience as antithetical to understanding, but somehow constitutive of it. The importance of “aesthetics” for Benjamin has much to do with the importance of embodied experience in modernity. The transformations of sense perception in the technological age, the types of moods available and unavailable in modernity, and the finite world as the ultimate horizon of experience in an age of secularization—all these notions inform Benjamin’s thought on the scope and significance of embodied experience, and likewise inform his thought on intoxication.

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Benjamin’s own decision to experiment with hashish and opium was at least to some extent due to his reading of Baudelaire’s writings on the topic, particularly Artificial Paradises, in which Baudelaire offers aesthetic, social and ethical evaluations of hashish
and opium, as well as a partial translation of De Quincey’s *Confessions*. There Baudelaire, making an apparently clear moral judgment, describes hashish as one of the “solitary pleasures” that “renders the individual useless to his fellow man” and brings him to “the very brink of a luminous abyss in which he admires his Narcissan face” (*Artificial Paradises* 74). This, for Baudelaire, stands in stark contrast to the sociability and camaraderie that wine produces and enhances, a distinction he makes clear in his other work on intoxicants, “On Wine and Hashish.”

Yet the seemingly facile moral condemnation of hashish that Baudelaire develops throughout his writing on the topic sits uncomfortably alongside a dramatic exploration of the aesthetic qualities and dynamic potentials of the drug. For Baudelaire, the hashish intoxication produces both a heightening of the senses and a heightened perception of form. Baudelaire notes that “[h]armony, linear symmetry, eurythmy in movement appear to the dreamer [i.e., the hashish smoker] as necessities, as duties not only in relation to all beings in creation but also to himself…” (*Artificial Paradises* 65). The heightening of aesthetic perception assumes a cognitive dimension as well, which becomes particularly clear in Baudelaire’s discussion of allegory:

Fourier and Swedenborg, the one with his *analogies* the other with his *correspondences* are incarnated in the flora and fauna that stretch before you… they indoctrinate you with form and color. Your comprehension of allegory assumes dimensions you had heretofore never conceived. Let us note in passing that allegory, this highly *spiritual* genre… is restored to its legitimate dominance in the mind illumined by this intoxication. (63)

The cognitive component of hashish is a decidedly aesthetic one, for art, like intoxication, reveals the malleability of perception and cognition, its potential for reconfiguration

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87 A letter to Ernst Schoen from 1919, Benjamin mentions Baudelaire’s text as “an extremely reticent, unoriented attempt to monitor the ‘psychological’ phenomena that manifest themselves in hashish or opium intoxication for what they have to teach us philosophically. It will be necessary to repeat this attempt (Versuch) independently of this book” (*On Hashish* 144).
through aesthetic modes of experience. The Swedenborgian correspondences that appear in the hashish trance are of considerable significance to Baudelaire’s own aesthetic project, in which correspondences figure prominently.

This is evidenced again in a certain rewiring of the corporeal sensorium that hashish provokes: “External objects assume unique appearances in the endless combining and transfiguring of forms. Ideas are distorted; perceptions confused. Sounds are clothed in colors and colors in music” (50). The effects of hashish are synaesthetic and hyperaesthetic; the drug both blends the body’s sensation and intensifies them. The possibility of inscribing one sense upon the other, rewriting the significatory force of sense perception and producing a potentially infinite number of reconfigurations of embodied experience, is not only something that Benjamin found appealing in Baudelaire’s writings on drugs, but in many ways becomes a central philosophical concern of his throughout his life.

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Clearly throughout Benjamin’s work art and intoxication bear an intricate relation to one another, and frequently, one becomes a means of describing the other. A certain intoxication is experienced in art, and not just in the works of the Surrealists. Already in “The Rainbow: A Conversation about Imagination,” one of his earliest essays on aesthetics written in dialogue form, Benjamin locates a similar connection between intoxication and poetics. 88 There, in a moment that seems to echo the physiology of

88 This essay, although not among Benjamin’s more well-known works, has attracted recent scholarly attention. Caygill, who finds in it a host of concerns that will occupy Benjamin throughout his later writings, claims that the essay “is the common origin of Benjamin’s philosophy of visual art and the speculative concept of experience” (82). Fenves has likewise recently drawn attention to it, offering a new
poetic creation in Nietzsche’s intoxication, Benjamin identifies “the consuming intoxication of creation” as “that intoxication which flows through our nerves during the highest intellectual clarity” (Early Writings 216). Intoxication denotes a heightened state of both bodily and cognitive intensity—much as in Nietzsche’s intoxication, the production of aesthetic form is accompanied by a heightened physiological state. This state of intoxication, claims Benjamin, is likewise replicated in the reception of the work through the imagination. Through the imagination “the intoxication of one who enjoys” is connected with “the intoxication of the artist” (217). Already here intoxication is put in circulation, translated from production to reception through the imagination via the work of art.

Yet if intoxication becomes a means of describing states of both aesthetic production and reception, it becomes apparent in Benjamin’s drug protocols that aesthetic qualities become a crucial means by which the intoxicated experience itself is conveyed. The alterity of art and of intoxicated states bear significant resemblances to one another as both produce a type of understanding markedly different from that of the sobering force of Enlightenment epistemologies. Benjamin’s drug protocols are dated from December of 1927 through May of 1934. They are the records of his experiments primarily with hashish, but with opium and mescaline as well, and were undertaken with friends, including Ernst Bloch, Jean Selz, Ernst Joël, Gert and Egon Wissing, and Fritz Fränkel, sometimes as co-participants, other times as observers and chroniclers. Benjamin had mentioned to Gersham Scholem a plan to devote an entire book to hashish—a book that of course never materialized. What remains of the protocols, which

translation. It is worth adding that it also marks Benjamin’s first attempt to address the aesthetic significance of intoxication.
were gathered together by Schweppenhäuser and published decades after Benjamin’s
death under the title Über Haschisch (On Hashish), is in fact highly fragmentary; the
collection contains neither terribly clear descriptions of the drug-induced experiences, nor
consistent expositions of their significance. Nonetheless what they do reflect is
Benjamin’s attempt to access a sphere of experience that is other than, yet also deeply
related to, more common modes of cognitive functioning—a sphere that might be thought
of as para-cognitive—that which takes place not necessarily prior to cognition, and by no
means beyond it, but always alongside it, and frequently problematically intertwined with
it. The epistemological significance of Benjamin’s trances has much to do with their
decidedly sensuous character throughout.

That the protocols reflect an aesthetic attunement becomes clear throughout the
numerous evocations form, genre, style, and specific qualities of works of art; all of these
are used to convey the experience of the altered states of mind and body that the
interaction with the drug produces. Benjamin also repeatedly describes certain
experiences through evocations of Poe, Delacroix, van Gogh, and Baudelaire, each of
whom becomes a means of articulating the various nuances and textures of drug-induced
states. In fact a heightened sensitivity to aesthetic qualities seems to underlie many of the
experiences: under the influence of mescaline Benjamin even identifies a specific
Rorschach card as “having aesthetic value” (88). In the second hashish trance, after
noting the dominance of the color red in the room, he notes that “[t]he room itself became
more velvety, more aflame, darker. I uttered the name of Delacroix” (23). The
description indicates an “aesthetic” experience insofar as it is simultaneously visual,
tactile, and mooded, much like the painter’s surface. The intensities and textures of
color, so difficult to articulate in conceptual language, become intertwined with the intensities and textures of mood, and as happens throughout the protocols, the altered state finds its most apt description in relation to the artist’s style.

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Colors, in fact, become particularly prominent throughout the protocols. In the most developed study of the significance of color for Benjamin, Caygill suggests that color plays a central role in Benjamin’s attempt to counter Kant’s conception of the transcendental, structuring principles of experience.\(^89\) Benjamin’s account of experience replaces the rigidities of Kant’s forms of intuition (space and time) with color as a transient medium of intuition. Caygill suggests that colors are thus intensive rather than extensive—they exist autonomously of the Kantian categories of space and time, and therefore disrupt the a priori conditions of knowledge. In the “Crocknotes,” Benjamin’s opium protocol, the experience of color becomes particularly conspicuous. Turning his attention to certain corner of the room, he notes the predominance of “the most diverse shades of red,” and dubs it “Laboratoire du Rouge” (83). As often occurs throughout the protocols, a seemingly trivial, if not entirely fanciful description, gesture toward broader epistemological concerns of Benjamin’s. The laboratory and the color red suggest conflicting epistemological orientations: the juxtaposition of the objectivity of the scientific experimentation and the intensity of color suggests a contrast in modes of understanding. In the hashish trance the coloring effect of mood upon cognitive

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\(^89\) Caygill, Howard. *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* London: Routledge, 1998. Caygill’s otherwise excellent study nonetheless neglects to situate Benjamin’s theory of color in relation to a long aesthetic discourse about color, much of which Benjamin was familiar with, including Goethe’s *Theory of Colors*, sections from Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, and Schopenhauer’s *On Vision and Colors*. 
functioning becomes particularly apparent. In this way the “Laboratoire du Rouge” mimics precisely the type of dialectical relation that Benjamin’s drug experiments feature throughout: the drug protocols are simultaneously both experiments and experiences, both objective and subjective, and thus become a means of exploring the polarities around which understanding revolves.

In the same passage Benjamin notes that “[c]olors have a very strong effect on the smoker” (83). That impression is something which he would attempt to recall—reviving its significance for critical reflection:

For a moment it seemed to me that my task was to discover the meaning of the color with the help of this absolutely incomprehensible instrument… All I remember of this undertaking at present is that the problematic for me had become displaced. It became more general and extended chiefly to colors. What distinguished them seemed to me to be, above all, that they possessed form, that they made themselves perfectly identical to the matter in which they appeared. Yet insofar as they looked quite alike on very different things—for example, a flower petal or a sheet of paper—they appeared as intermediaries or go-betweens. In the realms of matter. (83)

Colors, in fact, figure significantly in Benjamin’s work, particularly in his earlier writings on aesthetics, and what seems to interest him in particular is their relation to questions of form. In “A Child’s View of Color,” an early and very brief essay, Benjamin contrasts children’s perception of color with that of adults. Discussing the image of a rainbow, he claims, “[i]n it color is wholly contour; for the person who sees with a child’s eyes, it marks boundaries, is not a single layer of something superimposed on matter as it is for adults” (Selected Writings v.1 50). Form does not precede color, as it had for a philosophical tradition that had consigned color to the epistemologically inferior realm of secondary qualities, and as it does for adults; rather, color itself marks the contours and
boundaries of perception, not in any absolute fashion, but rather as in the fluid divisions of a rainbow.

Benjamin makes clear that contours of color are deeply related to an aesthetic mode of perception when he claims that “[t]he child’s view of color represents the highest artistic development of the sense of sight” (*Selected Writings v.1* 50). It becomes equally clear that the perceptions of colors in his drug experiments are deeply related to the artistic attunement of the child. In perceiving the color content of objects, the child is able to create “the interrelated totality” of things in the world (51); similarly, through color the hashish smoker is able to perceive similarities between different realms of matter, “for example a flower pot or a sheet of metal” (*On Hashish* 83). “Only through [colors] could the most widely divergent of the realms [of matter] be wholly united with one another” (83). Colors cross domains, as becomes apparent in another of Benjamin’s vivid images from an opium trance: “Red is like a butterfly alighting upon each shade of the color red” (85).

In “The Rainbow: A Conversation about Imagination,” Benjamin explicitly thematizes the relation between color and intoxication, once again in relation to a concern over the issue of form. That he does so in the form of a dialogue seems suggestive, as it is not a rhetorical mode in which Benjamin frequently wrote—the work conveys the content under discussion through what was for Benjamin, a highly experimental aesthetic form. The dialogue itself is principally concerned with the role of the imagination in both artistic production and in perception more broadly. Margarethe relates to Georg a dream in which she saw colors of remarkable intensity. She claims, “I was not my understanding that deduces things from images transmitted by the senses. I was not
someone seeing; I was only the seeing itself. And what I saw was not things, Georg, but only colors. And I myself was only something colored in this landscape” (*Early Writings* 215). The subject dissolves into the intense concentration of perception that is precisely the “pure vision” that Benjamin attributes to the child’s experience of color (*Selected Writings* 51). Georg replies,

> What you describe is like being intoxicated. Remember what I told you about that rare and delicious feeling of drunkenness I knew in earlier times. I felt myself to be quite light in those hours. Of everything around me I was aware only of that through which I was in the things: their qualities, through which I penetrated them. I myself was a quality of the world and floated over it. It was filled with me as through color. (215)

The colors of Margarethe’s dream vision and those of Georg’s drunkenness are states of concentrated perception, particularly that of sight, and are expressed principally through color. The experience of colors and the experience of inebriation are hyperaesthetic insofar as they feature an intensifying of perception and embodied experience. The drunkenness that Georg describes both lightens the body and intensifies it. Those intensities and potentialities of the sensuous lie for Benjamin at thresholds of experience, much as dreams and intoxications do.

The dialogue in certain ways anticipates Benjamin’s engagement with Surrealism in which dreams and intoxication become crucial aesthetic modalities. Benjamin’s engagement with intoxication as an aesthetic concept is in fact frequently coupled with, and often indistinguishable from, the experience of dream. This confluence of aesthetic modalities in Benjamin’s work reflects a similar concern with the significance of form and affective intensity as they do throughout Nietzsche’s work. A certain physiological intensity accompanies the expression of form. Yet contrary to at least the earlier work of Nietzsche, Benjamin’s drug-induced trances in the protocols often belong to a space in
which dream and intoxication are not oppositionally related, but rather indistinguishably overlap in the drug reverie. A strongly oneiric quality is clearly a hallmark of Benjamin’s drug experiments.

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Benjamin claims for color a certain modality of understanding that is not strictly cognitive, but rather one that registers at the level of affect. Colors and moods frequently overlap, mutually informing moments of experience. In “A Child’s View of Color” he claims, “The concern of color with objects is not based on their form… It cancels out the intellectual cross-references of the soul and creates pure mood, without thereby sacrificing the world” (*Early Writings* 51). The pure seeing of the child’s view of color and the pure mood that it creates are both significant to Benjamin’s understanding of experience. He continues, “imagination never engages with form, which is the concern of the law, but can only contemplate the human world from a living point of view creatively in feeling” (51). Imagination, for Benjamin, is separate from the cognitive domain of law—rather it is concerned with creative activity, a *poesis* of mood. Both colors and moods have their own autonomy from the rigidities of law – in a sense, they are performative rather than constative, or qualities rather than quantities.

Like colors, moods are intensive, and the two are explicitly intertwined at certain points in the experiments. At a decisive moment in a hashish trance, Gert Wissing takes out a syringe to inject morphine; Benjamin notes his revulsion at the instrument, and claims that their relationship itself seemed to be colored black, yet notes that this was “undoubtedly a result of the black pajamas she was wearing” (*On Hashish* 59). Colors
don’t just cross domains in the realms of matter, between flower pots and metal sheets, but they also cross the domains of matter and mood as well. They become, in this sense, vehicles of translation.

A reader of the protocols soon becomes aware that Benjamin is acutely attuned to the mood-altering qualities of the drug. The protocols are replete with changes in mood, sometimes subtle, other times dramatic, and those changes are frequently explicitly mentioned by Benjamin himself or those documenting his meditations on the experiences. “Hashish in Marseilles,” one of the only texts on hashish that Benjamin published, begins by noting (in a passage quoted from Joël and Fränkel) that “one of the first signs that hashish is beginning to take effect is ‘a dull feeling of foreboding and uneasiness…’” (On Hashish 117). It becomes clear in particular moments that part of what Benjamin grapples with in the experiments is an understanding of how the affects are constitutive of cognitive functioning. Benjamin’s interest in affective life and its problematic relation to understanding and perception is evidenced elsewhere in his writings as well. In his essay on the work of art Benjamin notes the following: “The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is a familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods” (Illuminations 237). The affects inflect understanding in a problematic manner—a full knowledge of affective life is at least equally remote as a full comprehension of perception.

Benjamin’s experiments with hashish were among the ways that he addresses the conjunction of knowledge and moods. At one point in a fragmented note not uncharacteristic of the protocols he stated the following: “misty world of affects (the
affects are at first undifferentiated)” (On Hashish 97), a point which Fränkel’s notes in observation of Benjamin clarify: “He attempts a psychological derivation of impertinence [Ungezogenheit], characterizing it in terms of the ‘misty world of affects,’ by which he means to say that in an earlier stage of life the affects were not yet clearly differentiated, and what is later called ambivalence was the rule” (87). The initial indeterminacy of the affects suggests that Benjamin understood them to harbor an ambiguity that their subsequent categorizations in simple emotional terms obscures by imposing upon them a univocity that is in fact foreign to them.\(^{90}\) As intensities the affects pose a problem for the supposed neutrality of signifying systems that operate under the law of the excluded middle. The affects partake in a chiasmatic motion that reveals their engagement with form to be contingent—always open to re-formulation; the state of intoxication is one in which that potential becomes apparent.

The intensity of the affects becomes at certain points explicitly connected with bodily experience. The mescaline protocol, as recorded by Fränkel, begins with a shift in mood upon the drug taking effect, and another shift occurs again ten minutes later. As the protocol continues there is note of an intensification of sensitivity to both auditory and visual stimuli. Benjamin’s body, as it is elsewhere, seems extended beyond itself: he is “extraordinarily sensitive to the slightest contact” (On Hashish 87). The body is

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\(^{90}\) This point by Benjamin can be illuminated by recent theoretical work on affect. In his article “The Autonomy of Affect,” Massumi notes participants in a study who have a pleasant response to viewing “sad” images. He claims not just a difference between the content of the images and their effects upon the subjects, but rather the following: “[t]he gap… is not only between content and effect. It is also between the form of content—signification as a conventional system of distinctive differences—and intensity. The distinction between form/content and intensity/effect is not just negative: it enables a different connectivity, and different difference in parallel” (85). I suggest that the gap that Massumi identifies between the intensity of affect and the ossifying of signification by convention is something that Benjamin was already attuned to. Likewise, the enabling of a different connectivity that Massumi finds in affect’s autonomy is similar to the rewiring of sensual experience that becomes a preoccupation of Benjamin’s, particularly in his discussion of Baudelairean correspondences, to which I’ll return.
intensified through both its heightened perception—visual, auditory and tactile—and likewise intensified through its exposure to the dynamics of mood. The intensity of the intoxicated experience has much to do with the body’s extension in space, and its inflection by the coloring effect of various moods.

This bodily intensity comes up again in the protocols, particularly in reference to the aesthetic category of aura. During a hashish experiment Benjamin notes that “Bloch wanted to touch my knee gently. I could feel the contact long before it actually reached me. I felt it as a highly repugnant violation of my aura” (On Hashish 27). The body, felt in the thrall of trance, is not discrete, not something clearly separated from an outside, but turned out toward a world in a state of intense receptivity. It is sensitive to that which has not yet touched its surface, and that tactile sensitivity is accompanied by an intense feeling, one of repugnance. The body is in excess of itself, extended both in terms of its perception and in terms of its exposure to the extremities of mood.

In commenting on his laughter and simultaneous mental vacillations during his first impression of hashish, Benjamin again makes note of the significance of the affects. He claims that an “irresolution—a potential for affectation [Affektation]—is, to a certain extent, an external projection of the sensation of internal ticklishness” (On Hashish 21-22). The image of an interior ticklishness turned outwards speaks to the liminal state of the body, its resistance to absolute distinctions of outside and inside. Recent theoretical work has suggested that “Affect arises in the midst of inbetween-ness” (Seigworth and Gregg 14), an insight with which Benjamin was entirely familiar. That inbetween-ness—the location of affective potential, articulated in terms of a “ticklishness”—insofar as it evokes the possibility of an intensely pleasurable bodily experience and the
possibility of an intensely unpleasant one, reveals how dynamic Benjamin’s affective
exposure during a drug experience is, and also how dynamic he considers the realm of the
affects in inflecting experience in general.

In the mescaline experiment that ticklishness appears again when Fränkel notes
that Benjamin connects his intense bodily sensitivity with “the phenomenon of
ticklishness” (*On Hashish* 87). Benjamin then describes tickling as “a thousand-fold
coming-at-you, [and] laughter as a defense.” Here, as elsewhere in the drug protocols, a
certain dialectic of the affects emerges throughout the course of the experiments: pleasure
and joy, laughter and the comic, are intertwined with pain and discomfort. The
ticklishness that Benjamin mentions is both the body’s sensitivity to its environment and
its defense against it. Weber has rightly noted the prevalence of “abilities” in Benjamin’s
work, including translate-ability, reproduce-ability, and criticize-ability, among others.
Partly through this “potential for affectation” and partly through the extension of the
tactile surface of the body, the drug protocols make evident another important “ability” in
Benjamin’s thought: vulnerability. Benjamin elsewhere refers to as “the tiny, fragile
human body” in relation to the weaponry of modern war,91 and the dynamic state of the
affects and perception during a drug trance (and by implication, outside of it as well) is
likewise part of that vulnerable exposure of embodied existence.

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If the body occupies a medial ground in the state of intoxication, it is clear as well
that the state of intoxication itself becomes a medium of experience. It is in the
subjective state of intoxication that the immediacy of the qualities of objects becomes

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apparent. The medial quality of the drug intoxication becomes apparent in the protocols, which themselves reflect a constant process of translation. Some are notes from within, others from without the state of intoxication; some are by Benjamin, others by co-participants, others still by presumably sober observers. The experiences undergo their own transformations through their transmission into language, frequently through the additional mediation of another. Benjamin notes that “It is a law: there is a hashish effect only when one speaks about the hashish” (*On Hashish* 77). The distortions that occur in translating the experience, much like those of all forms of translation, reflect the problematics of perception and understanding in the intoxicated state.

These states of transition are figured in the protocols’ images and tropes as well. Benjamin’s first hashish protocol features the following description: “Feeling of understanding Poe much better now. The gates of a world of grotesquerie seem to be opening. Only, I don’t wish to enter” (20). Conjoining understanding with the aesthetic of grotesquerie, the image suggests a close relationship between cognitive and affective capacities. The “feeling” (*Gefühl*) is one of being on certain thresholds of both art and understanding; understanding, the image suggests, does not come upon the passing through the gate, but rather through the affective perception and awareness of its presence. Often precariously balanced between two potentials, the hashish smoker occupies a threshold, a position of considerable uncertainty.

These tropes of passageways are of course highly charged throughout Benjamin’s work, (they become a focal point in the Arcades Project), and recur throughout the protocols. Their presence frequently reflects epistemological concerns—the structural components of dialectical thought, interiority and exteriority, are repeatedly thematized in
Benjamin’s trances. In the second hashish impression, Benjamin, deeply under the influence of Baudelaire, speaks of a “satanic knowing” and a “satanic contentment”—yet the knowing and contentment arise not from obtaining understanding in the trance, but rather from a refusal to being drawn into that understanding. This occupation of a threshold reflects the type of negative knowledge that is characteristic of Benjamin’s intoxications. The denial of knowledge is inseparable from a type of negative knowledge, or critique of “knowledge,” that is central to Benjamin’s project. He continues: “no matter how deeply you penetrate you are always moving on the threshold. A sort of toe dance of reason” (20). A kind of reason that can dance, reason in physical motion, evokes a sensualized form of understanding, both kinesthetic and cognitive. The image reflects the liminal, open-ended quality both of the experiences themselves and of the type of knowledge they make possible. The experiences of drug intoxication are never fully translatable into discursive articulations, but rather are better expressed through images (often those of passages) and the medium of performance, such as dance.

Dancing figures again in the protocols when Gert Wissing dances before Benjamin on one occasion. Benjamin begins the protocol by situating the experience both affectively and sensually: “Feelings of passionate love for Gert” (62). Claiming that he was intent to let Gert please him, he notes,

As she danced I drank in every line she set in motion… I tried to describe her dance for her while she was in the midst of it. What was magnificent above all was that I saw everything about this dance, or, better, so infinitely much that I realized clearly: everything—that would be inconceivable. (63)

The dance provokes a circuit of translations, the most explicit of which is that from perception to articulation. Like the Adamic task of putting the language of things into the language of human beings that Benjamin develops in his essay “On Language as Such
and on the Language of Man,” the process of translating from the namelessness of the
dance into the names of human language is not an innocent, transparent one. The
translation from the language of things to that of humans is “the translation of an
imperfect language into a more perfect one, and cannot but add something to it, namely
knowledge” (Reflections 325). The cognitive component in Benjamin’s perception of the
dance is here conveyed with a trope of incorporation, particularly of that of imbibing. His
sight perceives everything in the dance by drinking in its delineations, and this perception
is accompanied by the understanding of the impossibility of an “everything”. Gert’s
dance and Benjamin’s description of it show cognition taking place in a medium of
experience that is corporeal. The twists and turns of the dance, its tropes, are ultimately
beyond full perceptual apprehension and discursive articulation: the knowledge added is
decidedly negative.

The sensuousness of Gert elsewhere takes on epistemological significance —
Benjamin notes at the beginning of another protocol that while contact with others is
necessary for the hashish smoker to articulate his thoughts in language, his contact with
Gert has “too sensual a coloring” [etwas zu sinnliche Färbung] “to make possible a
purely distilled intellectual outcome” (57). The intoxications repeatedly address the
problematic relation of cognition and sensation. The body in motion in the midst of a
dance and the very tactile “contact” that accompanies it have significant epistemological
consequences.

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92 I here alter the translation slightly only to emphasize the nuanced contrast between the sensuousness of
colors and cognition in “sinnliche Färbung.”
Benjamin’s drug experiments reflected his effort to obtain broader notions of experience—the certain potentialities of moods and atmospheres that drug-induced states opened up, or at least inflected. They contain potentials for reconfiguring cognition, perception and affective experience. Frequently in the protocols a mood is diffused throughout a sphere of perception, filling a certain space. It lies neither in the subject nor the object, but rather in interaction between moods and fields of perception, a “space”. Thus, in the second hashish protocol, Benjamin notes that “the room dons a disguise before our eyes, assumes the costume of each different mood, like some alluring creature” (On Hashish 24).

Those moods seem to intermingle throughout the protocols, layered one upon another: they maintain throughout the nebulous character Benjamin attributes to them by referring to the “misty word of affects” (On Hashish 97). Yet if distinguishing the moods prompted by hashish frequently proves difficult, both for Benjamin and the reader of the protocols, nonetheless at certain points moods do crystalize, as they do in Benjamin’s dialectical image of the labyrinth in “Hashish in Marseilles.”

In Hashish in Marseilles Benjamin approached intoxication through a different rhetorical medium. The text features mostly first person narration in past tense, in recollection of the effects of the previous evening’s hashish. It is largely modeled on Benjamin’s 4th hashish protocol, in which he begins writing of the effects of hashish in “real time”—or now time—before breaking off to compose the rest on the subsequent morning, at which time he remains under the “positively splendid aftereffects” of

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93 To the extent that Benjamin’s writings on drugs have received critical attention, this passage in particular is among the most commonly cited. Schweppenhäuser cites it at length, noting the connection between intoxication and imaginative production, and contrasts the materialist concerns of Theseus with the idealism that the implied Icarus flying to the sun evokes. Shapiro approaches it from a largely Derridean perspective, and explores the connection between the pharmakon of hashish in relation to writing.
hashish—i.e., the text is composed in a state of having passed through intoxication, yet not having emerged in a state of sobriety. This important juxtaposition of an immediate present and a state of recollection arises again in the work’s starkest image. Towards the conclusion of the piece Benjamin notes the following:

To begin to come closer to the riddle of the ecstasy of trance [um den Rätseln Rauschglücks näher zu kommen], one ought to meditate on Ariadne’s thread. What joy [Lust] in the mere act of unrolling a ball of thread! And this joy is very deeply related to the joy of intoxication [Rauschlust], just as it is to the joy of creation [Schaffenslust]. We go forward; but in so doing we not only discover the twists and turns of the cave into which we’re venturing, but also enjoy this pleasure of discovery against the background of the other, rhythmic bliss of unwinding the thread. The certainty of unwinding an artfully wound skein—isn’t that the joy of all productivity, at least in prose? And under the influence of hashish, we are enraptured prose beings [genießende Prosawesen] raised to the highest power [höchster Potenz]. (On Hashish 123)

The conjunction of contingency and necessity, chaos and structure, forwards and backwards motion, as well as life and death are all compressed in the dialectical image of the explorer passing through the labyrinth. Indeed the structure of the labyrinth along with the affective modality of joy both speak of various types of excess—the excess of the structure is deeply related to the intensity of the journeyer’s joy. In much the way that the critic navigates the complexities of the criticized work, the hashish smoker navigates the trance. The thread itself rescues the haphazard and inevitably erroneous turns through the structure from the oblivion of forgetfulness by ensuring their repetition, yet without ever renouncing the contingency of the journeyer’s path. Like the deep experience of Erfahrung that permeates the hardened shell of consciousness to reappear

94 I alter slightly Jephcott’s translation since “coming closer to” more accurately reflects the German, and more appropriately articulates how Benjamin engages with riddles, which is to eschew solutions in favor of bringing problems into focus.
in a new configuration, the string redeems experience through repetition and the imposition of form.\textsuperscript{95}

Yet perhaps the most perplexing thing about this “riddle” of modern experience is not its excessive quantity, but its quality, the affective modality of joy. This is a mood that stands in stark contrast to what Benjamin identifies as the predominant affective states of modernity, including the melancholic, Baudelairean spleen, and boredom.\textsuperscript{96} The Theseus figure thus evokes both continuity and rupture—the mythic is seen in an oppositional relation to the modern, but yet at the same time holds a certain key to its understanding.

In an early essay titled “The Happiness of Ancient Man” Benjamin again identifies the triumphant mythic hero as a figure of happiness \textit{[Glück]} in contrast to the happiness of modern man in Schillerian terms of the naïve and the sentimental. The happiness of the naïve hero has to do with the fact that he lives “in immediate contact with all the forces and forms of the cosmos…” (\textit{Early Writings} 229) and the hero attributes his good fortune to the external and capricious agency of the gods. This is in stark contrast to the modern experience of happiness. In the modern era the confining structure of interiority transforms the quality of happiness from the externality of tactile and affective contact with the cosmos to an internality that attributes fortune and

\textsuperscript{95}The scholarship on Benjamin’s hashish experiments has repeatedly emphasized its connection to the mimetic faculty. See Forrest, Boon, et al. The degree to which Benjamin’s intoxications address mimesis and repetition bears a certain strong resemblance to Nietzsche’s affirmation of eternal recurrence in the state of Dionysian intoxication. Benjamin’s own discussion of the eternal recurrence (“Boredom and Eternal Recurrence.” \textit{The Arcades Project.}) marked his effort to understand it historically, as capable of emerging in modernity and in antithetical relation to narratives of historical progress. Nonetheless, the “difference and repetition” (as Deleuze refers to it) in Nietzsche’s thought as well as in Benjamin’s suggests a deep similarity in the way they both think of the concept of “form.”

\textsuperscript{96}Perhaps the only work of scholarship to overtly address the significance of the affects in Benjamin is Flatley’s \textit{Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism}. Flatley emphasizes Benjamin’s understanding of the historicity, sociality and politics of moods. The melancholic temperament, insofar as it avoids the sanguine optimism of historical progress, engages with the past in a way that makes the transcendence of the conditions contemporary melancholy possible.
happiness not to fickle deities (as the ancient hero did), but rather—in good bourgeois style—to a belief in “merit,” an internal quality that is ironically more certain and enduring than the external force of fate.\textsuperscript{97} The happiness of the modern, Benjamin claims is “paltry” on account of “the artificial restriction of feeling.” In contrast to Fredric Jameson, who identifies the waning of affect, conceived as inward feeling, as a hallmark of postmodernity, Benjamin locates that affective waning as already endemic to modernity by virtue of those very structures of inwardness.

A similar juxtaposition of ancient and modern in relation to the intoxicated state is present in the concluding passage from \textit{One Way Street}. In “To the Planetarium,” Benjamin states the following:

Nothing distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the former’s absorption in cosmic experience \textit{[kosmische Erfahrung]} scarcely known in later periods. … The ancients’ intercourse with the cosmos was different: the ecstatic trance \textit{[Rausch]}. For it is in this experience \textit{[Erfahrung]} alone that we gain certain knowledge \textit{[uns versichern]} of what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never one without the other.

Much like meditating on Ariadne’s thread, which brings us closer \textit{(näher zu kommen)} to a riddle of modernity, here as well intoxication situates us by the temporal juxtaposition of ancient and modern. This type of knowledge, of course, is much different from that of the planetarium itself, the type of knowledge which is heir to the observations of Kepler, Copernicus, and Tycho Brache. The planetarium itself undoubtedly speaks to the distance of the cosmos in the modern era, an era in which the ultimate horizon for illumination is the profane.

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\textsuperscript{97} In an early essay, “Fate and Character,” that Adorno refers to as one of Benjamin’s most important, Benjamin makes a similar distinction.
Benjamin’s work illustrates a preoccupation with approaching intoxication through a host of hermeneutic and rhetorical positions—indeed one is tempted to suggest a kind of compulsion at work in his repeated efforts to think through intoxicated states. Hashish, crock, and mescaline, much like dialogue, montage, and narrative become the various means by which Benjamin negotiates states of intoxication; the chiasmatic crossings that drug-induced states give rise to was grist for critical thought, which sought to realize a type of knowledge that such liminal positions can afford. Alienation and redemption, quantity and quality, identity and difference, antiquity and modernity, joy and melancholia—the drug’s effect was a medium for the negotiation of the most highly charged ambivalences in Benjamin’s thought. The notion of profane illumination reflected an effort to absorb the contours of shifts in modes of consciousness—transitions, revolutions, or redemptions. That hermeneutic position—the luminous space of understanding—was one which drugs of various types could make available, and which for Benjamin was closely aligned with the definitive modern experience, the force of shock.
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