

Rebekah Hyneman's *Leaves of the Upas Tree*: A Tale of (In)temperance and (Im)morality

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*The intent of this paper is to examine the use, by nineteenth-century American authors, of the temperance novel, a popular literary sub-genre in antebellum America, as a literary means for presenting the widespread controversy in the nation as regards the achievements of temperance societies. Moreover, my goal is to show that the popularity of temperance novels, in spite of their didactic and moralistic nature, displays the public's readiness to consume temperance literature, thus reciprocating the attempt of writers to promote social ideals and heal social ills. Finally, since Rebekah Hyneman, a convert to Judaism, is the only Jewish-American writer who wrote a temperance novel, and is one among a small number of female writers who used this genre, it is interesting to examine if and how her double "Otherness" (being a Jew and a female novelist) distinguishes her from her literary Christian male and/or female counterparts. Hyneman's novel *Leaves of the Upas Tree: A Story for Every Household* (1854–55) serves as a case in point of a temperance novel that demonstrates how a dysfunctional American family operates as a microcosm and how temperance and other charitable societies fail to cope with individuals' tribulations. More importantly, the novel aims to attest that a familial defective unit, affected by excessive drinking, breeds a ruthless societal macrocosm, lacking compassion, empathy, and social and communal support. The merciless, xenophobic and anti-Semitic community depicted in the novel serves as a prism through which the author presents much more acute plagues afflicting America.*

Keywords

Temperance; social hostility; postpartum depression; free-will; determinism

Rebekah Gumpertz-Hyneman was born in Pennsylvania in 1816 to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. In 1835, she married Benjamin Hyneman, a Jewish merchant who was killed several years later while on a journey to

Texas, leaving her with a baby boy and pregnant with their second son. In 1845, Rebekah converted to Judaism and started publishing poetry and prose in *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, edited by Rabbi Isaac Leeser, one of the most important Jewish publications in mid-nineteenth-century America. She also wrote short stories, novellas and three serial novels published in *Masonic Mirror and Keystone*, a newspaper edited by her brother-in-law Leon Hyneman, whose publishing house also printed her collection of poems, *The Leper and Other Poems* in 1853.¹

Though several critics, such as Diane Lichtenstein and Dianne Ashton have referred in brief to Hyneman's poetry, her prose has not received critical notice. Hyneman's Jewish prose includes the novella *The Lost Diamond* (1862) and the novel *The Black Izba: A Tale of Ancient Russia* (1855). Her non-Jewish prose consists of two novellas: *Woman's Influence* (1854) and *The Doctor* (1860), and a long novel, *Leaves of the Upas Tree: A Story for Every Household* (1854–55), all serialised in *The Keystone and Masonic Mirror*.

Leaves of the Upas Tree, published on a weekly basis, starting January 1854 and running until July 1855, might be considered as a "temperance novel"², a very popular nineteenth-century genre, which somehow has lost its allure among contemporary critics, though several major American writers published "temperance novels" which enjoyed considerable popularity in antebellum America.³ In addition to dealing with the widely-spread temperance campaign⁴, which may be attributed to the rise of reform literature and the growing involvement of entire communities and especially of women in social movements, the novel also brings up aspects characterising other prevalent nineteenth-century genres, such as the provincial novel, the redemption narrative, the rags-to-riches story, the Bildungsroman, etc. Moreover, it clearly displays elements of social realism, depicting the domestic and banal activities and experiences of the middle-class and lower-class individuals of Atherton, a small (fictional) rural town in Pennsylvania. Hyneman, unlike many of her literary colleagues who used this genre, neither uses sensational images, nor portrays "disgusting and scandalous"⁵ affairs.

Hyneman's choice of the novel's title and sub-title is quite curious and raises some questions. Apparently, the myth surrounding the extraordinary qualities of "the Upas Tree"⁶, according to some critics, was quite popular with writers and botanists in the nineteenth-century.⁷ According to Hyneman's contemporary, Frank Leslie, "this terrible plant, to which was for a long time attached a sort of fabulous interest – killing, it was said, man, bird, and beast, that came within the circle of its influence [would die immediately]" (1). The

social climate described in the novel is as venomous and corrupting as the seeds of the Upas tree. Most of the novel's plot occurs in Judge Morton's house, set amongst seemingly calm, green and almost idyllic scenery:

A large rambling stone house, completely sheltered by trees and vines [...] a fine old apple orchard, white with blossoms, and a beautiful flower garden, the whole surrounded by well cultivated fields and bounded by a dense old forest. (*Leaves*, Chapter I).

The Judge's estate is called "Clear Springs", and its owner is portrayed as a respectful, well-educated man, the pillar of the local community. Ironically, the reader soon discovers that the reverent Judge is a heavy drinker and a gambler, who loses his estate (granted by his wife's parents as part of her dowry) due to debts. Subsequently, for years, he subsides on the meagre teacher's salary of his dutiful daughter, Ada, whom he meanwhile abuses both mentally and physically. Ada's mother is no better; she is a selfish hypochondriac always after her daughter's, husband's or doctor's attention, dramatising every event to gain benefits, while emotionally abusing her only daughter.

The novel's subtitle is no less ironic – *A Story for Every Household*. Hyneman probably means to imply that no household is spared the ills of the poisonous seeds of the metaphorical Upas tree. Most families are plagued by destructive forces such as excessive alcohol consumption, gambling, incurable illnesses, physical and psychological abuse, mainly of children and women, and even murder. The social rapports among neighbours are mostly based on false accusations, envy, gossip and deception. It is a community where false pretence reigns, where society is rotten to the core, and where false appearances cover grim realities.

Moreover, the community exhibits strong xenophobic and anti-Semitic feelings. Already in the first chapter the Judge's wife, Mrs Morton, upon hearing that her rich and well-esteemed widowed neighbour, Mr Felton, is about to bring to town his new French wife, "a fascinating young widow, whom he met in Paris, [and who] has taken compassion on him" exclaims: "What a shame...to marry a foreigner; to put a French woman in the place of his sweet Agnes... I shall not call on her, I am determined on that, anyhow" (*Leaves*, Chapter I).

Mrs Morton is not the only community member to shun the newcomer; others comment that French women are frivolous, easy-going and sexually

promiscuous. Upon arrival, the latter felt as an outcast, looked at and criticised, and this might have led to her mental instability and drinking problems.

In another episode, the evangelistic, apparently pious, Miss Perrywinkle, who is in actual fact a brazen hypocrite, recounts to a friend, Mrs Rivers, her ingenious scam of converting a Jewish family to Christianity. Together with the local priest she conspires to bring the Jewish family to church, pretending a party is to be held there, and then to oblige the Jews who, she confesses “are very rich and very charitable, and give handsomely to any charitable object that is brought to their notice”, but whose “children, although so pretty and well-behaved, know nothing at all of the gospels” to convert. This, according to Miss Perrywinkle is “a little pious fraud, the end of which shall justify the means” (*Leaves*, Chapter XXXI). Paradoxically, just before relating the story of the “conversion scheme”, aimed at bringing the heathen to true faith, the same self-righteous enthusiast bears witness to a heart-breaking scene in which an orphaned girl, whose father died due to excessive drunkenness, is brutally abused by Mrs Rivers. The incident does not evoke any mercy; on the contrary, the devout Miss Perrywinkle sides with the abuser, not with the victim.

Hyneman, who converted to Judaism of her free will, and whose Jewish short stories and poems are mainly aimed at bridging the gap between Jews and gentiles (by portraying virtuous biblical and contemporary Jews) considers such forced conversions acts of crude violence. Though the incident is a marginal one, and the Jewish family does not play a role in the novel’s main plot, the narrator pointedly critiques the community’s scheme. The seemingly benevolent Protestant community seems to force its values and norms on minorities under the pretext of good Christianity, exactly in the same way it forces temperance, without respecting individual choice. The incident may be viewed in an even more ironic light if we consider the fact that Jews were actually involved in the temperance campaign, though not as members but as outside advisors.⁸ Jonathan Sarna suggests that thanks to their “expertise” in Scriptural matters, Jews were asked to advise on topics concerning alcohol consumption, drunkenness, slavery, etc. (279). Converting the Jews would therefore obstruct their role of “potential legitimators of Christian practices” (Sarna 269).

In addition to attempts aimed at religious conversion and temperance (viewed as a social and moral conversion), the novel brings up the issue of “moral redemption”, though quite an ironic one, being yet again partially forced upon the individual by the community. Shulman rightfully comments that the “rhetorics of redemption as deliverance always seem to identify the

saved by marking the damned, and always seem to purify conditions seen to stain life, rather than wrestle with conditions that constitute it". He contends that "human beings must 'redeem' the past, because they cannot escape or change it: they must fashion a fruitful relationship to the past, or they live by amnesia, resentment, and repetition" (140–141).

The novel presents several parallel "temperance" and "redemption" plots, at the centre of three of which are people who became victims of excessive drinking. The first one deals with the working-class Hamer family: a mother, the father, Joe, and their young girl, Maggie.

Joe Harmer was ... Not viciously inclined, but unable to resist the temptation of indulging in drink, he had sacrificed all that man should hold dear to obtain that which was hurrying him on to destruction. He ... won over by her kindness and his child's love... but as often came the tempter to force him from his resolution, and again and again he fell. (*Leaves of the Upas Tree*, Chapter IV)

Joe is a typical case (actually, a prototype in many temperance novels) of an honest and hard-working man of weak character who, once he has started drinking, cannot bring himself, in spite of multiple promises and regrets, to stop. His young wife dies of agony and disease; Joe while heading home from the local pub on a very stormy night, falls into a ditch and dies; the orphaned Maggie is taken to the home of Mrs Rivers as a servant where she is physically and emotionally abused. Joe's death serves as a pretence for bringing about the inauguration of a Temperance Society⁹ in the town which allows the narrator to aptly present the public controversy regarding the efficacy of such institutions to battle alcoholism. Major Felton, a respectful member of the community, holds libertarian views about human free choice. He believes, like some others do, that efforts of Temperance clubs are quite pointless since people choose to drink out of their free will, which should not or cannot be interfered with. "If that man drinks", says the Major, "he does so because a drunkard's life has greater charms for him than a virtuous course would have" (*Leaves*, Chapter X). His fiancée, on the other hand, embracing a humanist or philanthropist point of view, contends that with some help from the community, inebriation may and ought to be cured. The Major's sister-in-law, Marion, who later dies of excessive alcohol consumption and who throughout most of her adult life fought her addiction, holds a totally different opinion, a deterministic one:

The world generally sympathizes with their [alcoholics'] families, who suffer and bear shame for them; but, gracious God! what torture must a poor soul endure... the curse, withering and scorching up all that was bright and cheerful, suspending a funeral pall over the cherished hopes, not only of his own heart, but of those whose being was once dearer than his own; who sees and knows all this, and yet has not the power to prevent it. (*Leaves*, Chapter X)

The Major's libertarian viewpoint clashes with Ada's somewhat naïve belief in the natural goodness of man and in charitable communal activities that may lead to human beings' transformation. It is also in definitive conflict with Marion's deterministic or even fatalistic standpoint according to which a human, though aware of his/her misdeeds, is incapable of acting upon a change. The clashes between the "free will" philosophy and the "deterministic" and the "philanthropic" standpoints are at the heart of the novel, exactly in the same way it divided the Temperance Movement's proponents and opponents for almost a century.

Marion dies of over consumption after years of great efforts to combat her passion. As a young mother (during her first marriage, while living in Europe) she, being inebriated, accidentally dropped her baby into the sea, causing his immediate death. This tragedy was known to only a few people, among whom was her former maid. The latter, probably out of revenge, comes to America and publicises the story, thus causing a huge scandal in Atherton. As a result, Marion, who most likely was on the way to abstinence, started drinking again and in an act of madness escaped from home, got sick and eventually died. This sub-plot clearly demonstrates a deterministic stance: no matter what efforts are made to change one's conduct, one cannot escape one's fate; it chases and overpowers one.

The third sub-plot related to drunkenness is that of Edward Hughes. Edward, a devoted son of a poor widow, is a hard-working youth who takes any odd job offered in order to help his mother. Once, after a tedious working day, he is offered a glass of wine by his employer. This innocent incident leads to the youth's ruin. Edward starts drinking regularly; he leaves his mother's house, and goes to the big city where his addiction exacerbates, finally leading to his association with gamblers and criminals, one of whom Edward erroneously kills during a drinking fit. Edward is imprisoned for many years, and once released, becomes a vigorous temperance activist, travels across America and

preaches against the dangers of alcoholism. In a very lengthy and emotionally loaded chapter the narrator describes his whereabouts:

A new star has arisen in the West – a disciple of temperance more zealous than any that ever yet stood up to champion the cause [...] When he speaks, strong, bearded men are moved to tears, and the sobs of women interrupt his glowing eloquence. [...] He has journeyed through the length and the breadth of the land... Crowds who are indifferent to the cause for which he is battling, throng to hear him, and hang mute upon his words. (*Leaves*, Chapter LIV)

Edward seems reformed and redeemed; nevertheless, his “redemption” is questionable. He is estranged from society and resides in a deep mountain gorge, far away from the world. People admire his eloquent preaching, but do not accept him as one of the crowd. Edward’s story is not a joyful story of redemption. It ends with a series of questions Hyneman asks her readers:

Who shall say how his audit stands with heaven? Shall the blood of his fellow-man, the mother’s darkened mind, forever rise up between him and his, God, shutting him out from light and mercy? or shall a life-long penitence, deeds of mercy and charity, and the self-sacrificing devotion of his heart to her who suffers for him, plead his pardon? His lonely nights of remorse and agony, his tears, his penitence, will they avail him nothing? (*Leaves*, Chapter LIV)

The narrator has a definite opinion regarding the roles that the familial microcosm and the societal macrocosm should play when dealing with the victims. Sympathy, compassion and emotional support seem to offer the best means to help the sufferers. Taking the guilt and remorse upon oneself and spreading the Temperance Movement’s agenda does not necessarily bring happiness. The merciless, cruel and hypocritical society depicted in the novel is quite unlikely to forgive and forget. It is the same society that did not stop Joe Hamer from falling deeper and deeper into ruin and the same one that condemns Marion for her past transgression. Some people are ready to attend temperance assemblies, but are reluctant to act for social transformation.

While the story of Joe’s fall and Edward’s ostensible salvation are rather in line with contemporary “fall” and “redemption” narratives, Marion’s story is

quite out of the ordinary in the realm of salvation/fall stories. Marion belongs to society's upper strata. She is a rich, well-educated and extremely beautiful woman who suffers from alcohol abuse. Noteworthy is that female drunkards in nineteenth-century literature usually belonged to the lowest classes, suffered from abuse at childhood or during married life, and often were prostitutes. In general, "drink became masculinized as it moved from the home to the tavern" (Rosenthal 161), hence nineteenth-century society considered women who drank to be morally degraded, as "their most brutal and repulsive penchants came to the surface". Actually, "men who killed inebriated wives or mistresses were treated with extreme leniency" (Harris 243). Inebriated women violated "the very ideal of womanhood as passive, respectable, and virtuous" (Zedner 2). In 1846, *The Female's Friend* (a short-lived British magazine published with the goal of campaigning against the curse of prostitution) warned that the female criminal "abandons herself to sensuality, drinks to drown her sense of shame, becomes unsexed in her manners, practices every vice for the sake of a living, and in her delirium of guilt and infamy spares neither men or women" (Qtd. in Zedner 31). Female inebriation was equated with insanity. When talking to Marion's doctor, her-brother-in law exclaims: "Good heaven!" ejaculated the Major, aghast; "is she insane?" The doctor explains:

Not impossible, Fred, but improbable, you would say. She is all you have enumerated, ... and, doubtless, keenly feels the degradation of her conduct when it is over; but it is true, nevertheless. (*Leaves*, Chapter XXI)

It is worth mentioning that Marion's emotional difficulties emerged right after giving birth. It was then that she went for the bottle, while suffering from severe mood changes and physical ailments, which led to her inexplicable escape from home with the baby in her lap. Typically, nineteenth-century doctors tended to blame women's irrational behaviour and physical and mental ailments on hysteria. Numerous studies¹⁰ have been conducted on the depiction of hysterical women in nineteenth-century literature. Hysteria was viewed as an illness that exhibits an array of symptoms ranging from fainting, irritability, and heart palpitations to impaired vision, hearing, limb paralysis, etc. (Smith-Rosenberg 662).

Nonetheless, almost no medical consideration was given to possible postpartum depression¹¹ as a potential cause to a woman's mental instability after giving birth. I suggest that in the case of Marion, drunkenness may be

the result of misdiagnosed postpartum depression. Similarly to Charlotte Perkins-Gilman's story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), which has recently been regarded by some critics¹² as a story depicting a protagonist suffering from severe postpartum depression or even postpartum psychosis, I believe that Marion's story, written almost forty years prior to "The Yellow Wallpaper", should be read in the same context. Gilman, in a well-known article, "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wall-paper" (written as a justification or an explanation of the motives behind writing the story), claims that her intent was not "to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked". Similarly, Hyneman's narrator insinuates that Marion was mistreated and misguided by her first and second husbands and was the victim of doctors' malpractice. Like Gilman's protagonist, Marion is prescribed "home cure" whose effect is quite questionable when a severe disorder is at stake. Gilman describes in detail the doctor's instructions given to his female patient:

This wise man put me to bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still good physique responded so promptly that he concluded there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with the solemn advice to 'live as domestic a life as far as possible', to 'have but two hours intellectual life a day', and 'never to touch pen, brush or pencil again as long as I lived'.
(348)

Similarly, Marion's doctor neither empathises with the sufferer's pain, nor delves into its source. For him, she is not an ailing patient but "a problem", and since society is reluctant to accept "problematic" women, his suggestion is to tell the servants and acquaintances that Marion's irrational conduct is the result of an unfortunate incident during which she was bitten by a dog. Her second husband, Mr Felton, is no better. His only concern is that his reputation might be tainted by his wife's irrational behaviour:

His pride, in fact, encompassed him on all sides and restrained him; it clasped him like a hand of iron, it was impossible to burst it; ... Fallen, degraded as she was, her name a by-word, a thing that every tavern loiterer might couple with a jest, and delicate woman shrink from, she was still his wife; bound to him by ties which death, or a public appeal to the laws of his country, alone could sever. He, so proud, so delicately sensitive on all subjects connected with himself, so super-refined in his ideas concerning

woman, to be made a theme for idle gossip, the innermost recesses of his home sanctuary rifled and laid bare to the world... (*Leaves*, Chapter XXIII)

The same wife whom he has cherished above all and whom he has proudly displayed to friends and neighbours becomes an unbearable burden due to her mental disorder. Like in the case of Gilman's protagonist, Marion may be viewed as the victim of a tyrannical patriarchal system, governed by unprofessional and indifferent male doctors and dysfunctional husbands. Referring to "The Yellow Wallpaper" from a feminist critical angle, Paula Treichler comments,

It is a male voice that privileges the rational, the practical, and the observable. It is the voice of male logic and male judgment which...refuses to see the house as haunted or the narrator's condition as serious. It imposes controls on the female narrator and dictates how she is to perceive and talk about the world. (65–66)

Although Hyneman is neither a feminist in the modern sense of the word, nor a suffragist, several of her novellas and her other novel, *The Black Izba: A Tale of Ancient Russia* (1855), suggest that she was well-aware and critical of the ills the patriarchal system imposed on women. She certainly advocated women's social progress and viewed women as capable of acting as professionals (a female doctor in *The Black Izba*, being just one example.) Most noteworthy is her profound understanding of, and sympathy with, Marion's emotional (and probably also physical) disorder due to postpartum depression, and her brave decision to raise the topic at a time when such sensitive issues were either censured or frowned upon.

In relation to Marion's tragedy, the female residents of Atherton are no better than their male counterparts; probably, even worse. The "female sisterhood" Hyneman strongly advocated in her poetry, calling it a "sweet communion", a special alliance of women, in which "our spirits [are] held together" (*Hyneman, The Leper*, 106–107) does not exist in the novel. The town's "sewing circle" is the epitome of its venomous social atmosphere. The narrator cynically describes this group's activities, saying:

A certain portion of its ladies met once a week to sew for the poor and

discuss the current news of the place. *Ripping circle* (Italics in original) some said it should have been named, inasmuch as more characters were ripped to pieces, mercilessly torn to shreds, than garments were made... [it] numbered some very refined and truly benevolent people among its members, as well as some who could very well have been dispensed with; the latter greatly preponderating over the former. (*Leaves*, Chapter XXI)

The same circle arranges an extra meeting on the occasion of Marion's disaster, accusing her of the worst crimes possible (including an attempt to poison her family) and labelling her "a disgrace to her sex" (*Leaves*, Chapter XXIII). In the merciless world depicted in the novel, no one is spared public scrutiny and victimisation. The town's women, who probably also went through emotional and physical hardships during and after childbirth, who had to cope with abusive husbands, financial hardships, ailing children, etc., cannot feel compassion towards another human being's suffering. Temperance societies show no pity to weakened individuals, blaming them for their fall. Goodrich, one of the leaders of the Washington Temperance Society, labels the sufferers the "infatuated victims of appetite" who need to "dissolve the vicious and habitual bonds which have connected them with inebriety and degradation, and to assume among the temperate and industrious of the community, the useful, respectable and appropriate stations" (3). Many temperance novels, commissioned by Temperance societies, and usually written by men, did not show compassion toward human suffering, in general, and toward women's suffering, in particular, and hence often failed in their "mission" to rehabilitate drunkards.

Conversely, Hyneman's narrator neither judges the victims nor believes in moral or religious preaching as means for recovery. Instead, genuine salvation, according to Hyneman, seems to be a product of familial and communal support.

Hyneman's message is harsh – in such a hard-hearted environment, the poisonous seeds of the metaphorical Upas tree, which germinate in the narrow familial microcosms, produce venomous trees whose leaves intoxicate the entire habitat. American society, it seems, with its apparently benevolent Temperance Movement, hypocritical pseudo-reformers, Evangelist charitable societies, women's clubs and seemingly progressive social ideas is unable to cope with human misery unless it embraces human sympathy.

It might be speculated that Hyneman's scrutiny of the American (Gentile) temperance struggle is of a distinctive and hence noteworthy nature. Hyneman,

the only Jewish writer who wrote a “temperance novel”, is both an insider (American-born and raised) and an outsider, which grants her a broad perspective. As a woman (one of very few female temperance writers), and especially as a member of the Jewish community (often referred to as “a sober nation/religion”), Hyneman’s treatment of alcoholism is unique. It was suggested by Immanuel Kant that

Women, ministers, and Jews do not get drunk, as a rule, at least they carefully avoid all appearance of it, because their civic position is weak and they need to be reserved...those...exposed through their eccentricity and alleged closeness to the attention and criticism of the community and thus cannot relax in their self-control, for intoxication. (Jellinek 777)

According to this premise, Hyneman as a woman and as a Jew was twice dissociated from drinking within her community. Nevertheless, as a careful social observer, a moralist, and as a regular contributor to the *Masonic Mirror and Keystone*, edited by her brother-in law and close friend, Leon Hyneman¹³, she was well aware of its ills.

Notes

1. For biographical records on Rebekah Hyneman see Irina Rabinovich’s *Re-Dressing Miriam: 19th Century Artistic Jewish Women*, Diane Lichtenstein’s article “Rebekah Hyneman.” Jewish Women’s Archive. “Diane Lichtenstein.” (Accessed on November 9, 2019). <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/author/lichtenstein-diane> and Nina Morais Cohen’s article, “Rebekah Hyneman.” *American Jews Annual 5646* (1885).
2. Temperance novels were very popular from the 1830s till the 1860s. According to David S. Reynolds, “[c]onventional temperance literature features straightforward, didactic exposition or exempla against drinking, with emphasis on the benign rewards of virtue rather than the brutal results of vice” (22).
3. Among such novels, the most prominent ones are: Maria Lamas’s novel *The Glass; or, The Trials of Helen More* (1849), Timothy Shay Arthur’s *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, And What I Saw There* (1854), Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons* (1862), Mrs. Henry Wood’s *Danesbury House* (1860), Anne Brontë’s *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), Walt Whitman’s novels: *Franklin Evans, or the Inebriate* (1842) and *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* (1852), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s tale “A Reel from a Town Pump”, etc.
4. According to Matt Reimann, approximately 12 percent of all published novels in the 1830s were “temperance novels”. Rosenthal and Reynolds contend that the Temperance Movement’s strong impact may be assigned, in principal, to the popularity and efficacy of the temperance novels: a huge number of these tales were published during the second half of the nineteenth century (3).

5. Jozef Pecina's article "Within That Cup There Lurks a Curse: Sensationalism in Antebellum Temperance Novels" discusses the widespread use of sensational images in temperance novels aimed at maximising their moral and didactic impact and their popularity.
6. According to Andrew M. Stauffer, the legend of "the Upas tree" became popular in English literary circles, following the publication of a thrilling, romantic report about the tree published in the *London Magazine* in 1783. The article, later proved to be a hoax, was purportedly written by a Dutch surgeon, N. P. Foersch, who was apparently an eye-witness to the tree's magical qualities of spreading poison, thereby causing no animal or human to survive within miles of it. Erasmus Darwin (Charles Darwin's grandfather), a poet, physician and natural-scientist, in his poem *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) reprinted Foersch's article as an appendix to the poem, thus spread the hoax, probably unintentionally.
7. The image of "the Upas tree" is alluded to by British poets such as Blake, Coleridge, Southey, and Byron, and referred to in plays by George Colman the Younger and Stephen Reynolds Clarke. In American literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne was probably referring to "the Upas tree" in his tale "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844). According to Jack Scherling, "although there is no concrete evidence that Hawthorne actually read Darwin's book, the unique parallels in the two works indicate that Hawthorne was familiar with and influenced by a singular episode given detailed treatment in [Darwin's] *The Botanic Garden*. Several elements in Hawthorne's story have antecedents in Darwin's book. One of these is the deadly shrub in Dr. Rappaccini's botanic garden" (203). In Russian literature, Alexander Pushkin in 1828 wrote a famous poem "Ancar", translated into English as "The Upas Tree".
8. According to David J. Hanson, The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was inaugurated in 1874, and was one of the key players in temperance propaganda. "For years [it] did not accept as members Catholics, Jews and African-Americans. Nor women who had not been born in North America. Consistent with these views, the WCTU also promoted eugenics or selective breeding of people".
9. The Temperance Movement that started in America in the late eighteenth-century was organised mainly by elites "whose goal was to reduce alcohol consumption rather than to eradicate it...The middle classes, under the influence of evangelical Christianity and the pressures of an industrializing economy, then appropriated temperance in the antebellum era, and gradually teetotalism rather than moderation became the standard. Men dominated the movement, though women did assume a visible but passive role" (Berkley Fletcher 4-5). Interestingly, Mark Reimann maintains that "perhaps what makes the cause of temperance most significant is that it provided citizens, namely women, with the means to organize and enact social change. Their allegiance to temperance made sense; after all it was women who had to endure the ravages of alcoholism as husbands turned impoverished, negligent, and abusive".
10. Seminal research devoted to the depiction of hysterical women in nineteenth-century literature includes books by Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1890-1980*. London: Penguin Books, 1987. Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. Gilman, Sander L., Helen King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

11. The history of postpartum depression goes back to the 1850s when psychiatric professionals first recognised the disorder, although as early as 700 B.C. Hippocrates already wrote on the emotional difficulties many women faced in the postpartum period. Nowadays, health professionals estimate that between 15% and 20% of women who have recently given birth will be affected by postpartum depression. While it is a serious condition, women who receive proper medical attention can expect to recover fully. Some people refer to postpartum depression and the “baby blues” interchangeably. However, it is important to note that these are two completely different types of depressions. Unlike the baby blues, which show-up within the first few days after birth and might disappear after several weeks, postpartum depression can begin anywhere during the first year after giving birth and may last for a long time. https://www.itsamomsworld.com/moms_room_health_postpartum_depression.html.
12. See, for example, Hume, B. A. “Managing Madness in Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wall-Paper.’” *Studies in American Fiction* 30.1 (2002): 3–20. Post, S. L. “His and Hers: Mental Breakdown as Depicted by Evelyn Waugh and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.” *Literature and Medicine* 9 (1990): 172–180. Tucker, P. et al. “Helping Medical Students Understand Postpartum Psychosis through the Prism of ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.” *Academic Psychiatry* 28:3 (2004) 247–250.
13. Most Masonic Lodges, starting in the 1840s, outlawed drinking inside the lodges and did not accept saloon owners as members.

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