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“*When the Cup Has Been Drained*”: *Addiction and Recovery in The Wind in the Willows*

Sarah Wadsworth

The year 1908 was a watershed in the publication of children’s literature in Britain, Canada, and the United States. In Canada, the year ushered in Anne Shirley of *Anne of Green Gables*; in the United States, L. Frank Baum brought out the fourth of the Oz books, *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*; and in England, Beatrix Potter introduced Jemima Puddleduck, while Kenneth Grahame gave us Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad of Toad Hall. Yet even as these very public debuts occurred in the literary field, a number of important developments took place behind the scenes that bear on childhood studies. In Britain, that year brought the passage of the Children Act of 1908, which granted authorities the power to deprive “inebriates” of custody of their children; it was also the year in which a parliamentary committee issued an official inquiry into the body of legislation known as the Inebriates Acts (Valverde 87, 69). Both of these actions had potentially momentous consequences for the lives of alcoholics and their families, especially their dependent children.

The Children Act of 1908 and the earlier Inebriates Acts may seem improbably remote from the idyllic world of *The Wind in the Willows*. Yet the public debate over the causes and consequences of excessive drinking, as well as possible cures, held profound personal significance for its author. For before Fowey, the Cornish hamlet where Grahame enlivened letters to his son with early versions of his animal stories; and before Cookham Dean, the village on the Thames that provided the immediate inspiration and setting for the novel; and before Cranbourne, where Grahame spent his later childhood, there was his boyhood home in Argyllshire, and prior to that the family’s fashionable Edinburgh townhouse, both of which slipped away under the influence of a father’s uncontrollable drinking. In fact, the dissolution of these early homes, linked to the perceived dissoluteness of James Cunningham Grahame, resulted in the removal of the Grahame children to their grandmother’s home in Cookham Dean: an event that led, many years later, to the composition of *The Wind in the Willows*. In his published work, Grahame seldom made reference to the period before Cranbourne, yet he claimed unusually vivid memories of his early childhood, once commenting: “I feel I should never be surprised to meet myself

as I was when a little chap of five, suddenly coming round a corner. . . . the queer thing is, I can remember everything I felt then, the part of my brain I used from four till about seven can never have altered” (qtd. in Gooderson 7).¹ Consistent with this assertion, numerous scenes and incidents in *The Wind in the Willows* suggest that Grahame’s early exposure to alcoholism (or “inebriety,” as the Victorians termed it) worked its way into the narrative as a sequence of imaginatively transformed memories.

Literary historians from the mid-twentieth century onward have explored a variety of uses of intoxication in literary texts. Such scholars as Anya Taylor point to the Romantic duality that allows inebriation to expose a monstrous aspect of human nature even as it provides access to an inspired, perhaps divine, state of being. Thomas L. Reed, J. Gerard Dollar, and Robin Warhol have investigated, respectively, the Victorians’ preoccupation with the moral, legal, and physical consequences of drinking; the sin/sickness models of inebriety; the link between alcoholism and the psychological notion of a divided self; and the impact of Victorian attitudes toward inebriety on twentieth-century treatment protocols. Meanwhile, critics of modern American literature like Thomas B. Gilmore and John W. Crowley have further contributed to an understanding of the complex role of intoxication and addiction in literary texts, by analyzing simultaneously the biographical impact of alcoholism or heavy drinking and the thematic use of inebriation and alcohol dependence within twentieth-century novels, poetry, and plays. Taken together, these critics reveal how alcohol as a signifier carries numerous meanings, some complementary, and others contradictory.

The Wind in the Willows bears a veiled affinity to the literary texts these critics have mined, but it also differs from them in important ways. Most striking, alcohol, while not altogether absent from the narrative, is largely excised from the discourses of intoxication and addiction. To particularize the list of “negatives” Grahame famously ascribed to his book—“no problems, no sex, no second meaning” (qtd. in Prince 240)—we might silently add “no heavy drinking, no drunkenness, no drunks.” James Cunningham Grahame’s alcoholism was a “dark family secret” during Kenneth’s childhood; and even much later, it appears likely that the younger Grahame never divulged it to his wife (Prince 12; McBride 5). It is unsurprising, then, that the author would approach the subject indirectly, elliptically, and in a highly metaphorical fashion (usually with the tenor firmly suppressed). Repeatedly deploying tropes of intoxication and addiction outside the immediate context of drinking

and drunkenness, *The Wind in the Willows* reflects the perspective of a writer with first-hand knowledge of the way the effects of alcohol are not only immediate, direct, and contained, but also collateral, ramified, and impossible to isolate.

This essay explores the echoes and figurative uses in *The Wind in the Willows* of alcoholism and alcoholic behavior—considered unmentionable and disgraceful at the time (and, indeed, for generations thereafter)—to demonstrate how the text works imaginatively toward an equilibrium, or “cure,” that proved elusive in real life. My larger purposes are threefold. First, I want to point out that biographical criticism is neither as suspect nor as transparent as is commonly assumed. As a survey of Grahame biographies reveals, despite rather obvious clues the link between alcohol dependence and the development of characters, plot elements, and themes in *The Wind and the Willows* has been largely glossed over. Second, I argue that the submerged motifs of intoxication and addiction, far from being discordant elements, are integral to the text’s broader treatment of the tensions between desire and contentment, unfettered freedom and the tonic of self-control, and voluntary regulation as opposed to coercive forms of social control.² Finally, through a series of close readings, I illustrate that the metaphorical discourse of inebriety ultimately becomes absorbed both thematically and structurally into a unified arc of “recovery” that the novel advances through its celebration of nature, domesticity, spirituality, and creative self-expression.

Return to Inverary

In chapter 6, “Mr. Toad”—surely one of the most memorable in the book—Mr. Badger, the Rat, and the Mole pay a surprise visit to Toad Hall in order to stage what Badger terms a “work of rescue,” the narrator describes as a “mission of mercy,” and readers today readily recognize as an “intervention” (Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* 62³). Toad has run amok, and not for the first time. His fascination with automobiles—following quickly on the heels of his prior obsessions with caravanning and boating—has spun rapidly out of control. Toad’s mounting desire for bigger and better cars has led him from vehicle to vehicle and from crash to crash, leaving him, finally, in a state of dwindling financial resources, “weeks in hospital,” and dust-ups with law-enforcement officers (65). Moreover, he has made a spectacle (“an awful ass”) of himself (121). As a result, Toad has become an object of

deep concern among his closest friends. Cherished by readers for its humor and verve, the chapter can be taken as an index to the critical mystification surrounding the alcoholic motifs of *The Wind in the Willows*.

In his classic 1959 biography of Grahame, Peter Green comments on the “near pathological emotions” evident in this episode, as well as in several others in *The Wind in the Willows*, suggesting that “Toad’s behaviour is irresistibly suggestive of an adult manic-depressive” (282). Curiously, however, he remains at a loss as to how to account for it. Green asks, “where did he find the model for Toad’s extraordinary, and very well-observed, symptoms—the specialized kleptomania, the complex manic-depressive behaviour?” The biographer then proceeds to suggest, somewhat unconvincingly, sources in Grahame’s “own unfulfilled and . . . firmly repressed urges” and, with somewhat less conviction, in Frederick James Furnivall, the flamboyant Bohemian man of letters (“a compulsive but harmless exhibitionist”) who took the young Grahame under his wing. (“There remains the fact that the *external* symptoms are delineated with uncommon fidelity, as though taken directly from life,” he speculates.) Green is clearly puzzled, however, as he concludes, “This problem remains something of a mystery” (283–84).

Building on Green’s groundbreaking work, many critics have subsequently cited “manic-depressive” and “compulsive” behavior in *The Wind in the Willows*, but without resolving the question of biographical models over which Green was admittedly flummoxed.⁴ For example, referring to Toad’s attraction to motorcars as an addiction, Roger C. Schlobin considers that Toad, who “fall[s] victim to a potion,” is addicted to the city itself and its “infernal creations”; for Schlobin, Toad, who manifests “compulsion and delusion,” is an example of the double (34–41). The most detailed analysis of Toad’s psychological case, however, is offered by Jonathan Mattanah, who locates in the Toad episodes “not only a rich account of the trials and tribulations of a person suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder, but also a snapshot of how the friends of such a person might respond to him, both appropriately and inappropriately” (88).

It is all the more surprising, then, that the first few pages of Green’s biography turn up a likely but overlooked source—James Cunningham Grahame, Kenneth’s father, whom Green characterizes as a “hedonist,” “heavy drinker,” and “well-known connoisseur” of claret (9). Green goes on to condemn Cunningham Grahame as an “essentially weak m[a]n” who buckled under to “aimless self-indulgence” after the death of Kenneth’s mother, Bessie, when the boy was five years old. As Green

narrates, “as soon as was decently possible” after his wife’s death, Cunningham Grahame sent Kenneth and his siblings to live in England with their grandmother while he stayed “alone in the great granite house with his cellar of claret and his black self-pity” (14–15). Two years later, he summoned them back despite “his crippling alcoholism,” and for “nearly a year,” the children were “witnesses to their father’s slow moral and physical disintegration.” Cunningham Grahame’s drinking finally led him to resign from his position as Sheriff, send the children back to their grandmother, and move to France, where he “scraped a wretched living . . . and died alone in a cheap Le Havre apartment house.” For twenty years, Green writes, Kenneth appears neither to have seen nor to have communicated with his father. In connection with Kenneth’s departure from his paternal home, Green focuses his comments on the “ugly split between hope and fulfillment, dream and reality” (29–30).

Biographical readings have become something of a staple in criticism of Kenneth Grahame’s best-known work. Critics have long recognized the world of Grahame’s peaceful childhood at Cookham Dean in the lovingly rendered scenes of the River Bank and the Wild Wood. They have viewed the comforting homosocial friendships in the novel as an “escape” from Grahame’s unhappy marriage to an overbearing, neurotic, socially ambitious woman. They have identified the pastoral world of leisure and pleasure as an idealized alternative to Grahame’s dreary workaday life at the Bank of England. They have even linked the privileged role of food and drink in *The Wind in the Willows* with Grahame’s own epicureanism. And yet, surprisingly, the influence of Grahame’s troubled relationship with his father, a chronic alcoholic, has been little noted by scholars, even those who recognize that Grahame was “elaborately evasive” and capable of a significant degree of “self-deception” (Steig 316, 319). This oversight persists despite an abundance of father figures, allusions to fathers, and unmistakable parallels throughout the novel to the often repetitive cycle of intoxication, addiction, withdrawal, and recovery.⁵ Perhaps the real biographical mystery, then, is why this aspect of Grahame’s life did not seem pertinent to Green as he pondered the question of Toad’s “complex manic-depressive behaviour” and the various other “pathological” traits that the characters in *The Wind in the Willows* present (283–84).

Several possibilities merit consideration. First, as Gilmore has argued, the fact that historically drunkenness has been considered a “taboo subject” has led to the neglect of alcoholism as a theme in literary texts (6).⁶ Second, as Green remarks, “Grahame was an essentially autobio-

graphical writer” who “mistrusted literary criticism and did everything he could to discourage biographers” (3); as a result, despite the autobiographical foundation of his fiction, critics have tended to view it through a veil of obscurity carefully arranged by Grahame himself. Then, too, the author’s deceptive insistence that his subject matter was “free of problems” may have contributed to a rather large critical blind spot that rendered “adult” themes, however submerged, seemingly irrelevant. In addition, as Peter Hunt has argued, the dispute over whether *The Wind in the Willows* was addressed to children or adults apparently “impeded critical appreciation of the book” (*Fragmented Arcadia* 18). Finally, Green’s biography, psychological in approach, emanated from a period in which “psychiatrists . . . openly refused to consider alcoholism as a proper object for their particular specialty” (Valverde 11). Perhaps it was this disassociation that led Green, alluding to the “hysterical sobs” of Mole, the “hysterical trance” of Rat, and the compulsions and “eccentricities” of Toad, to ask, “What was it gave Grahame the impulse to introduce all these pathological traits of behaviour into *The Wind in the Willows*?” (282–283).

Green’s attention to Grahame’s family history of alcoholism centers on the personality of Cunningham Grahame. Recent studies of alcohol dependence, however, emphasize its impact not only on the individual but on social relations as well: diagnostic criteria include “social damage that . . . extends . . . beyond [the] individuals themselves” and “disruption in social and family relationships, vocational or financial difficulties, legal problems” (qtd. in Valverde 40, 26). Although such disruptions receive relatively little notice in Green’s biography, Alison Prince’s *Kenneth Grahame: An Innocent in the Wild Wood* (1994) probes the “immense secrecy” of the “ever-worsening alcoholic habit” in order to investigate its familial impact. As Prince concludes, Cunningham’s drinking was “[t]he grit in the Grahame oyster.” In her analysis, a sense of “impending disaster” explains the family’s sudden and “drastic” move from Edinburgh to Argyllshire and the father’s exchange of a prominent professional post in the Scottish capital for an obscure sinecure in a rural backwater, with its attendant loss of status, connections, income, security, and prospects. Following the death of his wife, Prince explains, Grahame “was lost.” He “turned blindly to the analgesic effects of alcohol” (4–6) and before long had “shut himself away in an alcoholic stupor” (11–12).⁷

Prince’s estimation of the effect on Kenneth Grahame of his father’s drinking is worth quoting at length. She ventures:

One senses that it was the loss of Cunningham, rather than Bessie, which was most deeply traumatic to the small boy. His mother had been removed, not by her own choice, but by death, whereas his father continued to live somewhere, complete with his power to bewitch, entrance and fascinate. In all Grahame's work, the lost father is insubstantially present, cropping up as the wise older man (or animal), culminating in the bearded, powerful figure of Pan himself. . . . To be motherless, whether actually or in effect, merely demanded an earlier acquisition of strength and self-reliance, but to be fatherless was a disaster, for it robbed a boy of a semi-magical concept of what he might become. (18–19)

Despite the acuity of her analysis, Prince, like Green, refrains from connecting Cunningham Grahame's drinking to the motifs of freedom and control, drink and intoxication, addiction and recovery in his son's masterwork. Along with a host of other critics, she finds, in the character of Toad, a reflection of Kenneth Grahame's own troubled son: ". . . Toad was, above all, Alastair" (230).⁸

Mr. Toad's Wild Ride

With the example of Cunningham Grahame in view, let's take a closer look at the scene at Toad Hall. A brief analysis reveals that this episode dramatizes the central tensions and contradictions that defined the cultural meaning of inebriety in the first decade of the twentieth century. At the same time, the significance of the scene—like the debate over alcohol and temperance—extends beyond the immediate matter of uncontrolled consumption. Like the larger cultural preoccupation with alcohol use and abuse, ultimately it involves what Mariana Valverde brilliantly crystallizes as "the soul's relation to itself" (25).

In her revelatory study of the management of excessive drinking in Britain and North America, *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom* (1998), Valverde repeatedly returns to the tension between free will and determinism in the shifting understandings of alcohol dependence over the past two centuries. In her estimation, "questions of addiction have been and continue to be important sites upon which the complex dialectic of personal freedom and control/self-control has worked itself out historically" (5). The philosophical implications of Valverde's research are provocative. Because, as she explains, the will is "that part of the self/soul that Western culture regards as the seat of

freedom,” the motif of excessive or uncontrolled drinking is bound up with much larger issues involving the self, the soul, spirituality, and free will (33). Recognizing the ways in which *The Wind in the Willows* reflects the struggle with alcohol Grahame witnessed early in life clarifies how this “complex dialectic” (5) operates in Grahame’s deceptively simple, but actually quite sophisticated, text.

For our understanding of the “Adventures” and “Further Adventures” of Toad (a sequence of chapter titles that recalls the Freudian notion of “the compulsion to repeat one’s trauma”), it is instructive to consult the leading British expert on addiction at the close of the nineteenth century, Dr. Norman Kerr. As Valverde explains, Kerr employed the term “inebriety” not to mean drunkenness, but rather to refer to “a condition characterized by losing control over one’s consumption, whether of alcohol, coffee, morphine, or of any other substance” (15). The openness of this definition, which underpins the discourse of alcohol dependence from the late nineteenth century until the First World War, facilitates an understanding of Toad’s behavior as a form of inebriety, for his serial purchasing and destruction of various types of vehicles is unquestionably a form of uncontrolled “consumption.” Indeed, comparing Toad’s narrative to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (a text Reed convincingly reads as an allegory of alcoholism), Schlobin characterizes Toad’s relationship to automobiles as an “almost fatal addiction” (34).⁹

At the heart of Kerr’s conception of inebriety lies what Valverde terms the “dialectic of freedom and necessity,” a behavioral dynamic manifested in “those who, despite being burdened with ‘the inebriate diathesis’ (i.e. an inborn tendency to consume uncontrollably), managed to fight against it, in a valiant battle of the free will against its own determinations” (Valverde 15). As Valverde points out, “this dialectic of freedom and determination could be deployed just as easily to sing the praises of some recovering alcoholics as to coerce other alcoholics into locked asylums so that, losing their freedom, they would be given the opportunity to regain it” (16). Valverde’s wide-ranging study explores this paradox of restricting a person’s liberty in order to free him or her from an enslavement of the will, demonstrating its embeddedness within a long history of contradictory approaches to the problem of alcohol dependence. My much more modest study finds precisely the same paradox operating in the varied attempts of Badger, Rat, and Mole to reform the inebriate Toad.

As readers of *The Wind in the Willows* discover, eventually Toad does lose his freedom: in chapter 6, he is locked up in gaol. Before his incarceration, however, Badger makes a concerted effort to “cure” Toad verbally through chastisement and edification. Historically, as Valverde has shown, the long-standing reliance on moral approaches to treating addiction reflects the ambiguous identity of inebriety (or, later, alcoholism): Is it a disease? A consequence of a weak will (in other words, a moral failure)? Or, somewhere in between the two, is it merely a habit? Badger’s initial response is consistent with culturally sanctioned treatment alternatives, ranging from temperance homes in the nineteenth century to AA from the twentieth century onward, and an array of hybrid approaches that combine medical treatments and psychoanalytic methods with spiritual components.

Also of interest is the way in which Badger’s lecture contains elements of the “despotic” as well as of the “pastoral,” contrasting forms of “moral support” that Valverde finds intertwined in the nineteenth-century discourse of treatment for inebriety. Having summarily dismissed the chauffeur (for enabling Toad’s addiction), Badger, with the help of Rat and Mole, physically overpowers the resisting, verbally abusive Toad. Once he has been subdued, Badger holds forth, delivering himself of a “sermon” on the lamentable consequences of Toad’s folly—a lecture that Green, despite the blind spot that allowed him to overlook the significance of Cunningham Grahame’s drinking, associates with the “inflexible moral fervour of Alcoholics Anonymous” (245):

“You knew it must come to this, sooner or later, Toad,” the Badger explained severely. “You’ve disregarded all the warnings we’ve given you, you’ve gone on squandering the money your father left you, and you’re getting us animals a bad name . . . Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and that limit you’ve reached. . . . I’ll make one more effort to bring you to reason. You will come with me into the smoking-room, and there you will hear some facts about yourself; and we’ll see whether you come out of that room the same Toad that you went in.” (*Willows* 63)

In response to “Badger’s moving discourse,” Toad, “a soft-hearted and affectionate fellow, very easily converted—for the time being—to any point of view,” begins to dissolve in “long-drawn sobs,” and finally emerges, after forty-five minutes, “a very limp and dejected Toad” (63).

At this point, Badger appears confident that his lecture has had the desired effect. “I am pleased to inform you,” he announces to Rat and Mole, “that Toad has at last seen the error of his ways. He is truly sorry for his misguided conduct in the past, and he has undertaken to give up motor-cars entirely and for ever. I have his solemn promise to that effect.” The Rat, however, is less assured of Toad’s conversion, for as he has already recognized, “*Talking* to Toad’ll never cure him. He’ll *say* anything.” Admitting to the problem, taking responsibility for one’s actions, and pledging to mend one’s ways are, of course, well recognized steps on the path to recovery. Toad, however, is not prepared to take these steps. When Badger presses him to apologize and admit to his folly, Toad retorts, “No! . . . I’m *not* sorry. And it wasn’t folly at all! It was simply glorious!” (*Willows* 63–64). So much for the first phase of treatment.¹⁰

Following the dismal failure of the purely moral approach, Toad’s friends resort to more coercive measures that rely upon the deprivation of freedom. Dismayed by Toad’s “backsliding,” Badger resolves to lock him up in his bedroom, for his own good, until he has been “converted . . . to a proper point of view.” Enforced confinement “until the poison has worked itself out of his system” now seems the only hope for Toad to recover from what the Rat describes as “this painful attack” (64–65).¹¹ Grahame humorously recounts the efforts of Badger, Rat, and Mole to keep watch at Toad Hall after Toad has been “hustled through the door, struggling and protesting” (62), and confined to his bedroom. During this period of house arrest, Toad’s friends take care of his domestic and financial affairs, for Toad has lost control not only of the regulation of the physical self but also of his household and day-to-day affairs. As addiction specialist Andrew J. McBride synthesizes, “Toad’s friends variously conceptualise his problems with cars as a consequence of his personality, a phase, a sin, a failure to learn from his mistakes, an illness, a poison and eventually perhaps as part of life, a nuisance to be borne”—a “range of responses [that] probably reflects different notions of dependence and its treatment in the Edwardian period” (5).

What begins as sentry duty outside the prisoner’s door soon turns to nursing duty at the patient’s bedside, as Toad experiences “violent paroxysms,” delusions, prostration, “painful seizures,” languor, and depression (*Willows* 65)—symptoms that parallel the physical and emotional effects of alcohol withdrawal.¹² These symptoms also point to the medicalization of addiction, a process of uneven development that has come into and gone out of favor at various junctures. In the

late nineteenth century, the “disease” model of alcohol dependence had been displaced in the mainstream culture by an understanding of inebriety as a moral failing; but by the early twentieth century, when Grahame composed *The Wind in the Willows*, inebriety was generally regarded as a “hybrid condition, part physical and part moral” (Warhol 100; Valverde 62). Also pertinent is the way in which Toad’s forced convalescence mimics that of the favored “cure” for upper-class alcoholic men in late Victorian and Edwardian England: isolation in a luxurious country retreat, remote from the temptations of city life but with ample amenities for gentlemanly pursuits such as shooting, golf, and bowling.

Although, as his various symptoms suggest, Toad passes through the successive stages of a physical withdrawal, he has not managed to overcome his craving. Moreover, the persistence of that craving leads to behavior of questionable morality and sets into motion a popular plotline that Dollar characterizes as “the late Victorian psychodrama of addiction,” consisting of several “acts”—including temptation, “the resolution to reform,” and a tragic fall (270–73). Through a calculated ploy, Toad manages to trick the Rat into letting down his guard, sneaks out the window, and absconds, leaving his exasperated friends to anticipate his return “at any moment—on a stretcher, or between two policemen.” In fact, the first stop along the journey of the newly liberated Toad is a pub, The Red Lion, where, in the midst of a restorative meal, Toad, “irresponsible” and brimming with “conceit,” is suddenly beset with tremors upon unexpectedly encountering the object of his desire (*Willows* 68). When a party of motorists arrives, Toad grips the table-leg in order “to conceal his overmastering emotion.” One thing leads to another and, as if in a dream, without even quite realizing how it happened, he finds himself once more in the clutches of his passion, “completely mastered . . . body and soul,” and “all sense of right and wrong, all fear of obvious consequences . . . temporarily suspended”; Toad “was only conscious that he was Toad once more, Toad at his best and highest, Toad the terror . . . fulfilling his instincts, living his hour, reckless of what might come to him.” It is only a matter of time before he lands in court, answering to the charges of “stealing a valuable motor-car . . . driving to the public danger; and . . . gross impertinence to the rural police” (69–70). In the critical assessment of McBride, in this scene “we have the clearest and most elegant account of any relapse in literature: cue exposure, akrasia, lapse and immediate loss of control” (7).

Significantly, the alternative images that present themselves to the minds of Badger, Rat, and Mole upon discovering that their friend has escaped—“on a stretcher, or between two policemen”—point up a dichotomy in the way Victorian and Edwardian treatments addressed inebriates of distinct social classes. As Valverde explains, under the Habitual Drunkards-Inebriates Acts of 1879 and 1898, while gentlemen were often encouraged to commit themselves voluntarily to care in well-appointed country retreats, lower-class men tended to be criminalized and confined to jail. In *The Wind in the Willows*, Toad’s successive adventures thus describe a rapid descent down the social ladder, as he plunges from the upper-story window of the improvised sick-room of his stately home into a decidedly *déclassé* world of pubs, courtrooms, prisons, gaolers’ daughters, female impersonators, barge-women, and gypsies.¹³ And, in keeping with the class-determined responses to inebriates in turn-of-the-century Britain, Toad of Toad Hall receives the moral support of compassionate peers and the physical comforts of an elegant estate. By contrast, the renegade Toad—shorn of the security of his ancestral home, its trappings, and its resources (including ready cash)—is arrested, jeered at by schoolchildren, tried by the Bench of Magistrates (a court accustomed to presiding over cases of public drunkenness; see Lerer 145n41), scorned and verbally abused in court, dragged away in chains, and reduced to “a helpless prisoner in the remotest dungeon of the best-guarded keep of the stoutest castle in all the length and breadth of Merry England” (*Willows* 71). Beneath the hyperbole, the consequences of Toad’s inebriety parallel the effects of alcoholism on Grahame’s family life: the loss of home; a kind of exile or fugitive existence far from friends and family; embarrassment (financial and, no doubt, emotional); and, one may safely infer, shame, remorse, and regret. In *The Wind in the Willows*, Grahame converts all of this misfortune and drama into comic relief.

Of the two approaches to treatment dramatized in the novel, coercion proves no more effective than gentle persuasion, and at the end of chapter 10, “Further Adventures of Toad,” we find the fugitive animal once more in possession of a stolen car that “intoxicated his weak brain” (*Willows* 117). Neither Green nor Prince identifies any treatments Cunningham Grahame may have received, but it is safe to conclude that whatever they might have entailed, they failed. One may infer that young Kenneth witnessed a recurrent pattern of temporary abatement and relapses, particularly in the period in 1866–67 when Cunningham requested that his children be returned to him. What-

ever the circumstances of these relapses, Toad's adventures suggest that Kenneth recognized that neither forced confinement in a private retreat nor institutionalism at public expense can be effective without a corresponding effort of the will. As Valverde explains:

In general, alcoholism treatments have been based on the assumption that weak wills can only be strengthened by their own action, not by any outside intervention. Just as muscles that have degenerated through inactivity can only be built up by their own action, not by medicine, so too the cure for the diseases of the will has always been thought to lie in exercising the will itself in a sort of moral physiotherapy. Although drugs, vitamins, and hypnosis have all been tried, the consensus has been that none of these external treatments work in the absence of a valiant effort of the diseased will to overcome its disease. Or, to put it differently, freedom cannot be distilled into people by force or through medication: the will's capacity for freedom can only be built up by freely exercising that very will, however diseased or out of shape it might be. (33)

It is only in "The Return of Ulysses," the twelfth and final chapter of *The Wind in the Willows*, that we see Toad freely exercising his will in this manner. After "Some of the younger and livelier animals" complain among themselves "that things were not so amusing as they used to be in the good old days," and try to coax him to sing and pontificate in his rowdy old manner, Toad gently but steadfastly resists the temptation to oblige the assembled guests. Now "mild," "modest," and "earnest," Grahame writes, "He was indeed an altered Toad!" (143–44).

Readers who have detected in Toad's journey and, in particular, "The Return of Ulysses" a mock epic may be interested to learn that Norman Kerr, the Victorian authority on inebriety (and himself a recovering alcoholic), conceived of the alcoholic's struggle over addiction in much the same terms:

The continuous and victorious struggle of such heroic souls with their hereditary enemy—an enemy the more powerful because ever leading its treacherous life within their breasts, presents to my mind such a glorious conflict, such an august spectacle, as should evoke the highest efforts of the painter and the sculptor. Before so protracted and lofty a combat, the immortal group of Laocoon contending with the serpents, grand though that great work of art is, must pale its ineffectual fires. (Qtd. in Valverde 65)

If, in *The Wind in the Willows*, the epic journey seems far-fetched and the return inconclusive, it may be unsurprising to learn that Grahame, too, expressed a lack of confidence in Toad's recovery. When asked about the outcome for Toad, Grahame responded in a way that clearly marks the boundary between fantasy and realism: "Of course Toad never really reformed; he was by nature incapable of it. But the subject is a painful one to pursue" (qtd. in *Willows* 170n144). Significantly, Mattanah expresses bewilderment at Grahame's statement, querying, "Why was the subject a 'painful one to pursue'? I have found no biographer or critic who has been able to explain why Grahame added those words. . . . if one believes that Grahame had [his son] Alastair in mind when speaking these words about Toad, perhaps the pain reflects his growing awareness of his inability to 'reform' Alastair" (104). On the contrary, as my discussion of Grahame's early childhood suggests, Toad's affinity with James Cunningham Grahame provides a satisfactory explanation for why the subject would be "painful . . . to pursue."¹⁴

At the time Grahame composed the Toad stories in letters to his son, Alastair was seven: the same age as Kenneth when Cunningham Grahame summoned his children back to Scotland, hoping that he could care for them himself. If, at the age of five, Kenneth was too young to comprehend the impressions of his father's drinking, at seven he would have absorbed much more, although inevitably he would have understood the situation in a childish way. It is possible that in telling Toad's adventures to Alastair, Grahame was mindful of his own seven-year-old self and the ordeal of addiction he had witnessed. According to one source, when his son was between the ages of four and seven, Grahame "began to identify with him in a way untypical of Edwardian fathers," and during this three-year period "their relationship was at its closest" (Gooderson 7–8). With Alastair's demands for stories perhaps summoning forth memories of his own disrupted childhood, Grahame may have drawn on a child's-eye view of an adult's loss of control to transform the incomprehensibly tragic episodes of his own childhood into the kind of high (or low) comedy in which children delight.¹⁵

A Tale of Two Rats

If the Toad episodes playfully evoke personality traits associated with inebriety along with the effects of uncontrolled consumption and addiction—effects on the mind and body as well as on the tangible conditions of life—chapter 9, "Wayfarers All," foregrounds the role

of the will with respect to the allure of intoxication. Like the Toad chapters, “Wayfarers All” has lent itself to biographical readings. Here, too, however, I will suggest an alternative biographical foundation for the episode. Most often, the Water Rat’s temptation to leave the River Bank and follow the Sea Rat to distant southern ports has been linked to Grahame’s dissatisfaction with his stultifying job at the Bank of England, his sense of confinement in a dissatisfying marriage, and his long-standing attraction to the charms of Italy.¹⁶ As in the Toad chapters, however, the language of the text is riddled with intimations of intoxication, addiction, withdrawal, and recovery. And while Toad’s adventures hint most conspicuously of the physical, moral, and legal consequences of inebriety through veiled references to the sin/sickness models of causality and the medical/legal modes of response, “Wayfarers All” powerfully evinces its emotional and spiritual dimensions through the juxtaposition of “low” human (animal) nature and “free, inspirited spirit” (Taylor 1).¹⁷

Early in the chapter, the birds, preparing for their annual southerly migration, set up an “intoxicating babble . . . of violet seas, tawny sands, and lizard-haunted walls,” while the restless Water Rat indulges in daydreams of “purple islands of wine and spice” (*Willows* 96). When the Sea Rat steps onto the scene, he finds a receptive audience for his tales of faraway ports with their “long bobbing procession of [wine] casks, like a mile of porpoises,” where he “sat late into the night, drinking with . . . friends.” Before long, the Water Rat is preparing a picnic lunch for the Sea Rat: a repast that includes “a yard of long French bread, a sausage out of which the garlic sang, some cheese which lay down and cried, and a long-necked straw-covered flask containing bottled sunshine shed and garnered on far Southern slopes.” After the meal, red wine succeeds the white, as the Sea Rat “filled his glass with the red and glowing vintage of the South.” Meanwhile, both the wine and the Sea Rat’s talk continue to “flow” (100–101).

More significant than the quantity or quality of these beverages, however, is the association of the Sea Rat’s words with the wine and the intoxicating effect on the Water Rat of the Wayfarer’s tales of travel and adventure. As the Sea Rat’s voice becomes “more vibrant” and his eye “lit with a brightness that seemed caught from some far-away sea-beacon,” the Water Rat falls under the hypnotic influence of his errant companion and becomes transfixed. He listens “[s]pellbound and quivering with excitement,” as the Seafarer “lean[s] towards [him],” “compell[ing] his gaze and [holding] him, body and soul, while he

talk[s].” Describing the scene in rich detail, Grahame blurs the distinction between the effects of the wine and of the Sea Rat’s “changing foam-streaked grey-green” eyes, showing how both of these intoxicating agents seem to seep into the Water Rat’s soul, to take possession of him and subdue his will. At the same time, hints of self-deception and the weakness of the will course through the passage, as the Water Rat yields to delusional feelings of courageousness, independence, and decisiveness while all the time surrendering himself to the overpowering influence of the Sea Rat, who “hold[s] him fast” in a kind of “waking dream.” The pull becomes almost visceral, as Grahame writes, “. . . in the glass shone a hot ruby that seemed the very heart of the South, beating for him who had courage to respond to its pulsation. The twin lights, the shifting grey and the steadfast red, mastered the Water Rat and held him bound, fascinated, powerless” (101–102).

Significantly, rather than rendering what the Sea Rat *says* through the device of a frame narrative, Grahame describes instead what the Water Rat *hears*: a technique that effectively mirrors the latter’s confusion, with its sequence of interrogatives conveying uncertainty; detachment from the real world, as speech is transformed into sound and vice versa; synesthesia, or a befuddlement of the senses; and, most importantly, impairment of the will, reflected in the dreamlike images and in the compounding of phrase upon phrase in a sentence that seems to run out of control, as though incapable of coming to a reasonable stop:

The quiet world outside their rays [of the Sea Rat’s eyes] receded far away and ceased to be. And the talk, the wonderful talk flowed on—or was it speech entirely, or did it pass at times into song—chanty of the sailors weighing the dripping anchor, sonorous hum of the shrouds in a tearing North-Easter, ballad of the fisherman hauling his nets at sundown against an apricot sky, chords of guitar and mandoline from gondola or caique? Did it change into the cry of the wind, plaintive at first, angrily shrill as it freshened, rising to a tearing whistle, sinking to a musical trickle of air from the leech of the bellying sail? All these sounds the spellbound listener seemed to hear . . . Of deep-sea fishings he heard tell, and mighty silver gatherings of the mile-long net; of sudden perils, noise of breakers on a moonless night, or the tall bows of the great liner taking shape overhead through the fog; of the merry home-coming, the headland rounded, the harbor lights opened out; the groups seen dimly on the quay, the cheery

hail, the splash of the hawser; the trudge up the steep little street towards the comforting glow of red-curtained windows. (101–02)

As the hot, red, ruby-like glow of the wineglass crystalizes into this final image of glowing “red-curtained windows,” the sapping of the Water Rat’s will is complete. Soon he appears to have lost the ability to act on his own volition—he is left “paralysed and staring”—and behaves like an automaton: “Mechanically he rose. . . . Mechanically he returned home,” where he moves about “like a sleep-walker,” packing his satchel and selecting a walking stick for his anticipated journey (103).

Paradoxically, although the Sea Rat seems to offer freedom, an escape, the Water Rat actually relinquishes his freedom as he yields to the Wayfarer’s influence. As the chapter unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that the Water Rat is in thrall to the possibilities of freedom suggested by the Sea Rat, just as Toad is enthralled first by boats and then by caravans and automobiles. Like the Toad episodes, the situation echoes an irony that emerged in the Victorian temperance discourse, which yoked together the public’s demand for the freedom to drink and the resulting “slavery” or “bondage” of drinking, for the freedom ostensibly offered by the Sea Rat is not a choice so much as a compulsion: he confides, “Here am I . . . footsore and hungry . . . tramping southward, following the old call, back to the old life, *the* life which is mine and which will not let me go” (97). And, just as Toad can only achieve freedom of the will by relinquishing the physical freedom of mobility promised by the vehicles he covets, so, too, the Water Rat can only regain command of his will by resisting the Sea Rat and the freedom to roam that he seems to embody.

Ultimately, however, the Water Rat can no more resist the Wayfarer’s enticement on his own than Toad can cure himself of his penchant for excess. Instead he must rely on his true friend and support, Mole. When Mole suddenly arrives on the scene, Rat continues to act and speak like a sleepwalker, replying “in a dreamy monotone.” “Alarmed,” Mole intervenes, placing himself squarely in front of Rat and peering directly into his eyes. Discovering that the eyes “were glazed and set and turned a streaked and shifting grey—not his friend’s eyes, but the eyes of some other animal!”—Mole physically overpowers Rat, much as Badger overpowered Toad: “Grappling with him strongly he dragged him inside, threw him down, and held him” (103).

The pairing of the Sea Rat and the Water Rat suggests the kind of doubling that such writers as Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Hardy,

and Oscar Wilde used, also with reference to addiction, to explore the notion of a divided self.¹⁸ The image of the divided self sharpens as the mesmerizing power of the Sea Rat seems to infiltrate and alter the very being of the Water Rat. At length this unwholesome influence manifests itself in a host of physical symptoms, hinting at a form of mania resembling that which Toad experienced during his period of forced confinement in Toad Hall:

The Rat struggled desperately for a few moments, and then his strength seemed suddenly to leave him, and he lay still and exhausted, with closed eyes, trembling. Presently the Mole assisted him to rise and placed him in a chair, where he sat collapsed and shrunken into himself, his body shaken by a violent shivering, passing in time into an hysterical fit of dry sobbing. Mole made the door fast, threw the satchel into a drawer and locked it, and sat down quietly on the table by his friend, waiting for the strange seizure to pass. Gradually the Rat sank into a troubled doze, broken by starts and confused murmurings of things strange and wild and foreign to the unenlightened Mole; and from that he passed into a deep slumber. (103–04)

When Rat wakes, the influence of the Wayfarer and of the wine has worn off, and he is left “listless, silent, and dejected.” Although he is incapable of explaining to Mole the “haunting” influence, the “magic,” the “spell,” and although “he found it difficult to account for what had seemed, some hours ago, the inevitable and only thing,” “to the Mole this much was plain: the fit, or attack, had passed away, and had left him sane again, though shaken and cast down by the reaction” (104).

If the Toad chapters recall the moral, medical, and legal ramifications of “problem drinking,” “Wayfarers All” addresses a corresponding crisis of the spirit. In the scene that follows, Mole gently guides Rat along a path of recovery that leads not to a hospital bed or prison cell, but rather to the security and comfort of home. As in chapter 6, the approach here suggests a form of pastoral care. In contrast to the Badger’s overbearing tough love, however, the Mole is patient, nurturing, and nonjudgmental. First, he talks at length—calmly and gently, then waxing lyrical—of commonplace, homely matters, of nature and the seasons: fall, with its harvest and wholesome treats, and midwinter with its “hearty joys and its snug home life” (104). In this way, he interests his friend in the simple, healthy pleasures of a domestic life close to nature and the familiar cycle of northern seasons. He watches as the brightness returns to Rat’s eyes and the listlessness dissipates.

But there's one more step Mole takes to help his dejected friend: "Presently the tactful Mole slipped away and returned with a pencil and a few half-sheets of paper, which he placed on the table at his friend's elbow." Writing, he suggests, will be a better occupation than "well, brooding over things so much" (105). For like James Cunningham Grahame, who was "at heart a poet" (Chalmers 2)—and like the young Kenneth Grahame, who "'began to spout poetry'" in the period surrounding the children's brief, ill-fated return to their father's household (Prince 23)—the Water Rat composes verse.¹⁹ A long time has passed, says the Mole, since Rat wrote any poetry, and jotting something down will make him feel better. Although Rat at first pushes the paper away wearily, before long Mole, peeping in, observes a change: ". . . the Rat was absorbed and deaf to the world; alternately scribbling and sucking the top of his pencil. It is true that he sucked a good deal more than he scribbled; but it was joy to the Mole to know that the cure had at last begun" (*Willows* 105). Most crucial here is the role of writing in Rat's recovery, and, by extension, the role of Grahame's own writing as a means of effecting a belated and vicarious "cure" for an affliction whose remedy proved elusive in real life. For Grahame himself, the liberatory shift would follow from the death of Cunningham: as Prince observes, "From that time on, as if released from a hidden presence which had caused him continual pain, he began to write with more confidence . . . With new courage, he wrote of his own feelings" (76). Three years later, the long-term consequences of this release would culminate in a six-year period "of intense creativity" in which he "produc[ed] story after story" (87).

A Thirst to Thank Heaven On

Ironically, in both the Toad subplot and in "Wayfarers All," home is associated with the "disease" as well as its cure. The luxury, idleness, and excesses of Toad Hall—and perhaps Toad's isolation there—are conditions conducive to his malady. The Sea Rat's narrative suggests a different scenario, with its own set of triggers. In recounting his initial turn to the intoxicating life at sea, the Wayfarer explains: "Family troubles, as usual, began it. The domestic storm-cone was hoisted, and I shipped myself on board a small trading vessel bound from Constantinople . . ." (*Willows* 99). In the final two chapters of *The Wind in the Willows*, the loss of Toad's home and the desire to reclaim it provide a powerful incentive to reform—a parallel perhaps to Cunningham

Grahame's attempt at recovery when Kenneth was seven. Moreover, as we have seen, Mole's homey ministrations help the Rat recover his sense of identity and resume the relationships and activities that are meaningful to him: a textual analog to the young Kenneth's new home life at Cookham Dean, correcting, compensating for, but not entirely erasing the recurring bouts of intoxication, addiction, and withdrawal that he witnessed as a small boy.

In the two chapters bracketing "Mr. Toad"—"Dulce Domum" (ch. 5) and "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" (ch. 7)—Grahame reinforces the link between the idea of home and tropes of inebriety. In contrast to "Wayfarers All" and the Toad sequence, however, these chapters enlist the language of intoxication and addiction for very different ends. In fact, they oppose and balance the Toad and Sea Rat episodes in several respects. Unlike the "action" or "adventure" chapters discussed earlier, "Dulce Domum" (coinciding with Christmastime) and "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" (corresponding to Easter and the renewal of spring) are "reflective" chapters. Rather than hinging on the lure of faraway places—whether the open road or the sunny south—these chapters, like "The Return of Ulysses," describe the reverse trajectory of a lost character returning home. Most importantly, both employ images associated with inebriety to evoke inspiration and truth, culminating, metaphorically, in what Anya Taylor terms a kind of "rapturous, divine drunkenness" (122) as the spirit hearkens to a higher call rather than bending to a baser instinct. As Taylor has argued, British Romantic writers often associated the figure of the drinker with inspiration and freedom; she commends the "Romantic achievement in holding a fragile balance in their representations of drinking, whether they explored the fragmentation of self, the defeats of the will, the pressure of hedonistic anxiety, the power of predictive language, or the vivacity of poetic fervour" (221). In the period of *The Wind in the Willows*, the philosopher William Sharpe theorized that alcohol may lead the mind "intuitively into the veiled and distant regions of universal truth" (Reed 40); William James claimed that drunkenness "brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth" (Gilmore 13). Read against the Toad and Sea Rat subplots, "Dulce Domum" and "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" illustrate how Grahame tapped the same tropes of inebriety to elicit a kind of mystical enlightenment, spiritual healing, and equilibrium of being. The duality of these tropes—suggesting in some instances a heightened, inspired state of awareness and in others debasement

and loss of control—reflects the dualism of the human-like animal characters themselves as well as of the “pagan” spirituality embodied in the half-man, half-beast figure of Pan.²⁰

In an essay titled “Loafing,” published in the *National Observer* in January 1891, Grahame describes the experience of a Whitmanesque character he calls “the Loafer,” who, “quit[ting] the village” and “mak[ing] his way towards solitude and the breezy downs,” lies “on his back on the springy turf, gazing up into the sky” while his “spirit ranges at will among the tranquil clouds.” In this state, he “is now an astral body, and through golden spaces of imagination his soul is winging her untrammelled flight”—that is, until “his vagrom spirit is called back to earth by a gentle but resistless, very human summons, —a gradual, consuming, Pantagruelian, god-like, thirst: a thirst to thank Heaven on.” In the next sentence, the metaphorically divine thirst becomes literal, even as the literal means of satisfying it—beer—modulates to the metaphoric: as the Loafer “bends his solitary steps towards the nearest inn,” Grahame proclaims that “beer is a thing of deity—beer is divine” (36–37). With its evocation of a semidivine state inspired by communion with nature, its attention to a “resistless” “summon” or “call,” its association of an intoxicating agent with the divine spirit (echoed elsewhere by “the ancestral, the primeval, Centaur,” a “perfect embodiment of the dual nature” [man and beast]—“a being with the nobilities of both of us, the basenesses of neither”) (94), this early composition eloquently prefigures salient elements of both “Dulce Domum” and “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.”²¹

The beginning of “Dulce Domum” finds Rat and Mole returning from the Wild Wood on a cold winter’s night after a long absence from the River Bank. When Mole suddenly catches a whiff of his long-forsaken home, he is overcome by sensations and symptoms that parallel those experienced elsewhere by Toad and Rat: he is cast into “a distressful state of mind,” and although he tries “to control himself” he is soon overwhelmed by “a paroxysm of grief.” When, with the Rat’s blessing, he surrenders himself to the “call” of home, he assumes “something of the air of a sleepwalker,” a condition that eventually gives way to a “fit of the blues” (51–54). In due course, Mole’s “dark despair” succeeds to his taking the head of the table “in a sort of dream” (54, 59). Similarly, in “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn,” the “call” of the Piper (whom Prince, it may be recalled, regards as the culmination of the “lost father” motif) inspires a painful “longing.” Responding to it, the Rat is “entranced” and “spellbound,” and later “rapt, transported,

trembling” and “possessed in all his senses.” Ultimately, his “helpless soul” is rendered “powerless” to resist. The Mole, too, quickly yields to this superior power, which Grahame renders as both “liquid” and “intoxicating”:

Breathless and transfixed the Mole stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly. He saw the tears on his comrade’s cheeks, and bowed his head and understood. For a space they hung there, brushed by the purple loosestrife that fringed the bank; then the clear imperious summons that marched hand-in-hand with the intoxicating melody imposed its will on Mole, and mechanically he bent to his oars again. (75)

When Rat falls into a trancelike state, Mole observes him “cowed, stricken, and trembling violently.” Finally, Mole responds to “the call and the summons . . . dominant and imperious” in a like manner: “Trembling he obeyed” (76–77).

What’s important here is that the keyword “intoxication” and the physical symptoms that mirror those of addiction and withdrawal—running the course from enchantment and trance-like wonder, to trembling and paroxysms, to loss of control and even a loss of selfhood—operate metaphorically to signal an entire sequence of stages involved in the surrendering of the will—in this case to a higher power. Although Grahame applies this metaphorical sequence to radically different kinds of longings in *The Wind in the Willows*—for luxury goods, distant horizons, home, and spiritual transcendence—in each case the language of inebriety conjures a string of associations that ultimately emphasize the susceptibility of the will. And susceptibility, the novel suggests, carries both risks and rewards. Flexible, malleable, flawed, and pitifully weak, the will is vulnerable to the temptations of self-indulgent pleasures and destructive influences. At the same time, if the will were inviolable and incapable of submission, it would be impervious to the kinds of transcendence his characters experience. Whether achieved through homecoming, friendship, nature, or the ministrations of a mystical “Friend and Helper,” spiritual fulfillment is, in consequence, time and again couched in the fraught, incongruous language of inebriety.

The Wind in the Willows thus reflects complex, ambivalent, and sometimes paradoxical ideas concerning the will and its relation to selfhood, other individuals, and the divine or transcendent. This ambivalence is reflected not only in the language of inebriety, but also in the recurrent

images of captivity and confinement that appear throughout the novel. These images can signal loss of freedom, as with Toad's imprisonment and the pet canary of the gaoler's daughter (doubly imprisoned in its cage within the keep); but they can also augur comfort and security. In "Dulce Domum," for example, as the friends pass hurriedly through the village, hoping to outpace an approaching snowstorm, they observe a caged bird in a cottage window; an allusion to "long absent travelers from far oversea" follows shortly (49). Yet in contrast to "The Open Road," in which the caged bird "[sobs] pitifully and [calls] to be let out" when Toad's caravan is forced off the road by a reckless motorcar (23), this bird's confinement is pleasant and snug, while the travelers from afar (foils to the restless Sea Rat) are eager to return home. Then, when Mole senses he is in close proximity to his home, it "send[s] out its scouts and its messengers to capture him and bring him in." Grahame explains: "Since his escape on that bright morning he had hardly given it a thought, so absorbed had he been in his new life, in all its pleasures, its surprises, its fresh and captivating experiences" (50). With a further elaboration, later in the chapter Mole provides a synopsis of a play the young field-mice performed the previous year in which a mouse's adventures at sea end when he is taken captive by a pirate. Upon regaining his freedom he returns home, only to find that his "lady-love" has entered a convent.

Finally, near the end of the chapter, after a meal in which the Mole "let himself loose . . . on the provender so magically provided," the Rat climbs wearily into bed, where "slumber gathered him forthwith, as a swath of barley is folded into the arms of the reaping-machine" (59). This rather violent image is echoed in "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," when the Rat, "dreamful and languid," translates the Piper's music: "Lest limbs be reddened and rent—I spring the trap that is set—As I loose the snare you may glimpse me there—For surely you shall forget!" (79–80). In these latter examples, the novel defies readerly expectations by inverting images of freedom and captivity, escape and confinement, security and danger to suggest that relinquishing one's will to an overpowering force may in fact be psychically liberating as well as soothing.

In *Diseases of the Will*, Valverde makes a similarly surprising discovery: "The genealogy of alcoholism, it turns out, takes us far beyond the sphere of medical history: it begins to offer elements toward what we might call the genealogy of the free will" (67). Thus she sees "'Alcoholism' and its successor terms" as referring "not to any objective

state of affairs” but rather “to the relation of the soul to itself” (28). In *The Wind in the Willows*, the episodes hinting of inebriety and recovery and incorporating the language of intoxication and addiction lead in the same direction. Nowhere is this correlation more apparent than at the end of “Dulce Domum,” where we find the Mole “in just the frame of mind that the tactful Rat had quietly worked to bring about in him.” At this moment, the Mole realizes “the special value of some such anchorage in one’s existence” (*Willows* 59). The double meaning of that “anchorage in one’s existence” is key: is it an external, physical place (“home”), or an internal condition, a “frame of mind”? Does one facilitate or depend upon the other? Are they even separable? The idea of anchoring oneself, whether externally or internally, resonates in the episode of the lost otter-pup in “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn.” In seeking to find young Portly, Rat and Mole discover an “anchorage” that is both a physical place and a spiritual “port”—a dual status that the text both signposts and mystifies through the trope of personification: “a small island lay anchored, fringed close with willow and silver birch and alder. Reserved, shy, but full of significance, it hid whatever it might hold behind a veil, keeping it till the hour should come, and, with the hour, those who were called and chosen” (76). The resolution achieved at the end of this chapter epitomizes the novel’s persistent and overarching drive toward equilibrium—between human and animal, movement and stasis, homecoming and wayfaring, body and soul, the individual and the collective, the obstinate “selfish” will and the pliable “selfless” will—that is inherent in the very architecture of the book.²²

The Ruby in the Glass

In *The Wind in the Willows*, a text in which stories have the power to enchant the listener, the “best stories”—the ones that are most captivating—spring from the heart of nature itself. In the opening of the novel, the Mole, upon viewing the river for the first time, is “bewitched, entranced, fascinated” and soon becomes “intoxicated with the sparkle, the ripple, the scents and the sounds and the sunlight” (6, 8). Uniting the charm of nature with the magic of storytelling, Grahame writes: “By the side of the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, by the side of a man who holds one spellbound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea” (6). In this

passage, the multisensory stimuli of the River Bank coalesce in what will become a recurring trope in the narrative: the extended metaphor of intoxication. Not coincidentally, the connections among storytelling, enchantment, and nature in this initiatory passage mingle through simile and personification with a veiled suggestion of Grahame's charismatic, alcoholic father, who, to his young son, similarly possessed the "power to bewitch, entrance, and fascinate" (Prince 18).

The critic C. W. Sullivan III has argued that in *The Wind in the Willows* Grahame "build[s] a sub-structure of food events that both underscore the importance of home throughout the novel and build toward its conclusion" (147). Similarly, as this essay has shown, Grahame provides a "sub-structure" of events that evoke, while seldom overtly referencing, conditions relating to alcohol use, extending from intoxication to addiction and withdrawal. Yet even as Grahame incorporates these elements in ways that are often quite subtle, inebriety points metaphorically to such a wide spectrum of experiences, ranging from the criminal to the divine, that it becomes overdetermined, reflecting, perhaps, what McBride refers to as the "Janus-faced aspect of 'addiction'" (6). States of mind (or, as David Rudd describes them, "psychological crises" [15]), modes of behavior, and aspects of character as various as those arising from a lack of self-control (Toad), an inclination toward escapism (Rat), attachment to home (Mole), and spiritual awakening (Rat and Mole) seem to collapse into a singular condition that Grahame conveys metonymically through the recurrent language of inebriety.

Composed just a few years after researchers began to examine the impact of parental alcoholism on offspring, the episodes discussed in this article, rather than simply manifesting "an alcoholic sub-text" or tracing what Crowley identifies as "the drunk narrative," operate at a significant remove from the immediate context of alcohol abuse. In doing so, these episodes bypass a "latent construction" (McBride 8) of alcohol dependence syndrome to explore diverse aspects of physical, mental, and spiritual identity embodied in the concept of the self. From the exaggerated yet still very "human" failings of Mr. Toad, to the swallows' "sweet unrest" in "Wayfarers All" (94), to the "spirit of divine discontent and longing" that bubbles up in "The River Bank" and reaches its apotheosis in "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" (5), Grahame's appropriation of the language and imagery of inebriety helps define and flesh out characters that reviewer Richard Middleton identified as "types of that deeper humanity which sways us all."²³

Notes

¹Referring to the abortive reunion of the Grahame children with their father, biographer Eleanor Grahame wrote: “Kenneth was seven that March. After that summer ‘he did not remember anything particularly.’ In those few rich years lay the seeds of *The Golden Age*, and much of the inspiration went to make the perfection of *The Wind in the Willows*, since he carried in him for the rest of his life exact and brilliant memories of what it had felt like to be a boy of four, of five, of six, of seven” (14). See also Prince 21.

²As Valverde has shown, this tension lies at the very core of the debates over alcohol use and abuse from the eighteenth century to the present. An exception to the critical silence over addiction is McBride (129), who posits a connection between Grahame’s family history of alcohol dependence and Toad’s addiction to “joy riding.” According to McBride, “The clustering of phenomena now labelled as the ‘dependence syndrome’ was understood in medical circles by the . . . 1920s, although . . . Grahame got there earlier” (6).

³All citations are to the Oxford World’s Classics edition (2010), edited by Peter Hunt.

⁴Michael Steig deftly summarizes Green’s biographical thesis, stating that “amply supported by the details of Grahame’s life . . . *the Wind in the Willows* is a transformation into symbolic form of rebellious and hedonistic impulses mildly evident in his earlier works, a process taking place under the extreme pressures of a late, unhappy, and unfulfilling marriage, being the father of a handicapped (half-blind) child, and tedious work in the Bank of England” (308). Green, who characterizes Grahame’s attitude toward Toad as “extremely ambivalent,” also suggests that Toad “is a sublimation of all his own unrecognized desires, and is harried by the forces which Grahame himself found particularly terrifying” (251). Later, Green traces Toad’s “faddishness” to “the unknown relative who inspired Uncle Thomas of *The Golden Age*,” speculating that “his flamboyant egotism, his *penchant* for after-dinner speaking, his scandalous downfall and imprisonment . . . must surely reflect something of Oscar Wilde’s tragedy.” Nevertheless, he concludes, “that queer pathological streak remains to tantalize us” (284). More recently, Peter Hunt has summarized, “[Toad] has been variously identified as Walter Cunliffe (a director of the Bank of England), Oscar Wilde, Alastair Grahame, Horatio Bottomley, Falstaff, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (among others)” (Introduction, xxx). See also Haining 106. For a fresh psychoanalytic reading, see Seth Lerer’s introduction and annotations in *The Wind in the Willows: An Annotated Edition*. Lerer also reads the opening of chapter 6 (“Mr. Toad”) as an intervention; as does Annie Gauger, editor of *The Annotated Wind in the Willows* (146n18).

⁵Pointing out that “The word ‘father’ . . . is mentioned eleven times [in *The Wind in the Willows*]—almost twice as many as ‘mother’” (166n5), Gauger traces a recurring theme of the separation of parents and children (146n18). Jackie Wullschläger notes that Grahame’s “books focus on homes lost and restored . . . but not once in his writing does he mention parents. From the time he left Scotland for the south, he built up his defenses and transferred his emotional allegiance to places, not people” (148).

⁶In “As Soon as I Sober Up I Start Again,” Jane Nardin identifies a similar gap in the critical response to the novels of Jean Rhys. In *The Transforming Draught*, Reed remarks upon an almost unaccountable oversight of the theme of alcohol (4).

⁷According to Prince, neither the financial difficulties that attended Cunningham’s drinking nor “the reason for Cunningham’s incapacity” were “mentioned in the children’s hearing.” Quoting from an unpublished letter from Kenneth’s sister Helen, Prince explains: “Had it not been for a later visit to their father, the children themselves might not have known the truth and, as it was, Helen found it difficult to touch on the subject, even in her old age. Writing about her mother’s death, she admitted that it ‘must have been a dreadful grief to my father—he was left alone to brood over it & the failing wh. he shared with many other clever men increased & made him unfit for work’” (12).

⁸Likewise, for Green, Toad is a biographical “transformation” in which the behavior of Grahame’s son Alistair is satirized. Steig suggests that Mole may be another “biographical transformation” of Alistair (visually impaired and nicknamed “Mouse”) (322n27).

⁹On Kerr, see Olsen 1174. The fact that Toad’s addiction is to vehicles is provocative, given that according to twentieth-century diagnostic criteria for alcoholism, “traffic accidents figure largely among the symptoms” (Valverde 27). For more Toad–Jekyll and Rat–Jekyll comparisons, see Gauger 142n6; and Hunt, Introduction xvi, xxx.

¹⁰Lerer discerns in this scene echoes of the “talking cure” (n13, 135), a then-recent innovation in the treatment of mental illness. As Badger’s talk comes across as an authoritarian “talking to,” it seems to me closer to the pastoral methods that had already become well established by temperance reformers.

¹¹Commenting on this line, Gauger observes that Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) seems to have been influenced by *The Wind in the Willows*, as “Waugh works with a similar theme in his novel—well-to-do characters with considerable wealth dissipate themselves though alcohol—while their devoted family and friends stand by them and unsuccessfully intervene” (148n21).

¹²McBride, an expert on addiction, documents Toad’s reaction in clinical terms: “Upon forced withdrawal . . . Toad displays hostility and then intriguing amateur theatricals, akin to occupational delirium, complete with marked autonomic changes, followed by depression, despair and anorexia” (7). With reference to technological addiction, McBride argues that “Grahame clearly describes Toad’s physiological responses to non-drug dependence long before experts in addiction seriously considered such a possibility” (7).

¹³Not coincidentally, in a letter to his son Alastair, relating the episode in which Toad is on the lam, Grahame wrote: “I fear he is a bad low animal” (*My Dearest Mouse* 23).

¹⁴For further discussion of the question of whether Toad changes and is indeed reformed, see Mattanah 95–105.

¹⁵Given that many critics have associated the character of Toad with Alastair on the basis of the boy’s recklessness and impulsiveness, it is worth noting that Grahame promised his son £100 if he abstained from alcohol until he was of age (McBride 5).

¹⁶For Prince, “Wayfarers All” speaks to Grahame’s “love-affair with travel and the lure of the South,” although, interestingly, she also recognizes that “in Grahame’s writing, the South is presented as a recurring compulsion, almost like the onset of a disease” (231, 53).

¹⁷On the sin/sickness models, see Franzwa 15–27.

¹⁸As Dollar explains, works by these authors present in terms of an addiction “the split between a ‘better self’, which in Victorian terms is a moral, earnest and public self, and that hidden ‘other self’—violent, demonic, self-gratifying yet ultimately self-destructive—to which each central character is compulsively and fatally drawn” (268). On Stevenson, whose work has been called “the biggest single influence on Grahame’s own writing” (Prince 33), see also Reed. Green takes the notion of the “divided self” further by identifying in this chapter a “private drama” in which “all three participants represent aspects of Grahame’s own personality” (255); while Gauger observes that “previous biographers have speculated that Kenneth Grahame’s friend Atky, the Fowey Yacht Club commodore, was the model for both the Water Rat and Sea Rat (214n20).

¹⁹In her biography, Prince comments on the response of Grahame’s sister Helen to this new “oddness” of Kenneth’s: “She makes it sound like the progress of a disease and, if grief is an affliction of the mind and heart, then she was not wrong” (23). As Humphrey Carpenter points out, “Toad is a poet too” (159–60).

²⁰In his study of alcoholism and twentieth-century literature, Gilmore also explores what he terms “the duality or equivocality of the spiritual dimension of drinking” (13). For Grahame’s own attitudes toward narcotics and alcohol (fascinated yet horrified at the self-destruction), see Prince 94; and Gauger on the Edwardian “cult of innocence” (175n26).

²¹Haining suggests that “Dulce Domum” is the antithesis of “Wayfarers All” (74). I propose, additionally, that “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn,” with its synthesis of animal and human natures in the figure of Pan, resolves the “divided self” motif of “Wayfarers All.”

²²In contrast to my reading, a number of critics have faulted *The Wind in the Willows* for what they consider its flawed structure. Green, for example, remarks that “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn” and “Wayfarers All,” “the two most personal and idiosyncratic chapters . . . lie outside the book’s overall structure” (252). See also Philip 308–09.

²³Quoted in Gooderson 15. On parental alcoholism, see Sher 1; Sher traces the origins of this line of research to MacNicholl (1905). For “alcoholic sub-text,” see Reed 4; for “drunk narrative,” see Crowley x. Reed’s interest, like Gilmore’s, is in authors who were either alcoholics or heavy drinkers, which Grahame was not. For Crowley, “the drunk narrative” is “a mode of fiction that expresses the conjunction of modernism and alcoholism in a pervasive ideology of despair” (x). Grahame’s use of intoxication and addictive behavior to articulate an affirmative ideology grounded in friendship, nature, and pagan-inspired spirituality aligns *The Wind in the Willows* with the Romantic writers discussed by Taylor and places it in opposition to Crowley’s “drunk narratives.”

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