

The Jellinek project: Summing up, so far

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This is the seventh in a series of papers depicting the mostly undocumented life of E.M. Jellinek. This paper wraps up and contextualizes the findings of the previous six papers, and points out potential areas for further research. The information in these papers was first presented at the 36th Annual Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS) Conference on May 1st, 2014, by seven presenters in a panel entitled "Mystery and speculations: Piecing together E.M. Jellinek's redemption."

I was delighted when Judit Ward invited me to "bat clean-up" -- or, in other words, offer some summing-up remarks for her Jellinek biography project's research experience and progress.

Let me begin by reminding readers that E.M. Jellinek was a key figure in the emergence of "a new scientific approach to alcohol" in post-Repeal America. He, more than others, saw "the big picture" regarding what was necessary to establish a beachhead for mainstream science's cultural "ownership" of the nation's alcohol-related concerns in the post-Repeal period. He also served as an adept and skillful "front man" or "impresario" (to use Penny Booth Page's apt term) for this newly emergent scientific specialty.¹ He had a knack for bridging vying (and not always friendly) camps within the new modern alcoholism movement that

emerged in the 1940s and 1950s², something evidenced, for example, by the affection accorded him by many members of the Alcoholics Anonymous fellowship.³ And he could be flexible and nimble in advancing science's values and advantages to different audiences. He also managed to displace "temperance science's" past hegemony by outlining the main features of a new, mainstream scientific presence and authority – even despite sometimes bitter and

¹ Penny Booth Page, "E.M. Jellinek and the evolution of alcohol studies: a critical essay," *Addiction* 92(12):1619-1637, 1997, see p. 1634.

² On disagreements and frictions across alcoholism movement factions, see Bruce Holley Johnson, *The Alcoholism Movement in America: A Study in Cultural Innovation*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Sociology, 1973.

³ A.A. co-founder William Wilson (Bill W., "Let's Be Friendly With Our Friends: Friends on the Alcoholism Front," *The A.A. Grapevine*, March, 1958), for example, wrote of Jellinek: 'Presently, the Research Council took on a live wire, Dr. E. M. Jellinek. He wasn't an M.D., but he was a "doctor" of pretty much everything else. Learning all about drunks was just a matter of catching up on his back reading. Though a prodigy of learning, he was nevertheless mighty popular with us alcoholics.'

vituperative objections from some dry diehards.⁴

Jellinek's career and life *after* joining the new alcohol science enterprise in 1939 became enmeshed with the story of alcohol science's subsequent evolution and growth. This period spanned, for Jellinek, the remarkable distance and journey from his role in the early Carnegie-funded literature review project to, in his final years, his important role in conceptualizing the influential Cooperative Commission on the Study of Alcoholism report.⁵ Yet, Jellinek began his new career in alcohol science when he was pushing 50. Remarkably, however, very little – very, very little – has been known about his pre-alcohol-studies life and work. It is this pre-alcohol life experience that, happily, is the fertile and fresh field this Rutgers project has sought to cultivate.

Much has been accomplished by this Rutgers-based biography project so far -- and, of course, much still remains to be accomplished. High on my own remains-to-be-done list, incidentally, are: (a) collecting and exploring more of Jellinek's files and correspondence – especially any personal correspondence in the 1930 and, if luck favors the project, the dark and mysterious 1920s; (b) finding and making use of Ruth Surry's fugitive but allegedly rich biographical materials; (c) securing a copy of the broad report on how Worcester's schizophrenia research should be restructured, chiefly authored by Jellinek; and (d) (in the best of all possible worlds) traveling to all the important venues in Jellinek's life. Hence, should the project continue on its course, there is little prospect of rest for its investigators in the coming year. Obviously, enhanced support will be necessary to carry out further work too.

The Rutgers project has divided Jellinek's pre-alcohol life into three broad periods: the

"Hungarian Years" (25 years, from 1895 to 1920), the "Time Abroad" (the decade of the 1920s), and the "Worcester State Hospital" period (the 1930s). I will say just a few words about each. Respecting the first, the Hungarian, period, the project has enjoyed a number of very nice advantages. Judit Ward, herself a native Hungarian speaker, has made periodic visits to Hungary collecting primary source material on Jellinek's life and times. New scholarship on Jellinek has also recently emerged among addictionologists and librarians in Hungary as well. Thanks to these efforts – although much newly collected material is still being processed – our understanding of Jellinek's Hungarian period has already been greatly expanded and enriched. This period was by no means unconnected to Jellinek's later involvements at Worcester and with the new alcohol science movement. At Worcester State Hospital, as Karen Thomas's article in these pages reported, Jellinek's advocacy for greater emphasis on a psychoanalytic approach to schizophrenia appears to have been heeded. As Karen quoted: "If 'Bunky,' as he was without exception called, felt positive toward psychoanalysis," wrote David Shakow of Worcester, "then presumably psychoanalysis was indeed important and worth paying attention to."⁶ Skipping far, far ahead: Jellinek's final alcohol studies article, published posthumously in 1977, 14 years after his death, returned to the symbolic level of analysis he'd become fascinated with and developed while in the Ferenczi circle.⁷ Regarding Jellinek's currency trading caper in Hungary, it may be noted that only relatively recently have students of Jellinek's life come to understand the "E.M. Jellinek," who rose to

⁴ See Jay L. Rubin, "Shifting perspectives on the alcoholism treatment movement 1940-1955," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 40(5):376-386, esp. pp. 379-381.

⁵ Plaut, Thomas F.A., *Alcohol Problems: A Report to the Nation by the Cooperative Commission on the Study of Alcoholism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

⁶ David Shakow, "The Contributions of the Worcester State Hospital and Post-Hall Clark University of Psychoanalysis," pp. 29-62 in George E. Gifford, Jr. (ed.), *Psychoanalysis, Psychotherapy and the New England Medical Scene, 1894-1944*, New York: Science History Publications/USA, 1978, see pp. 44-45.

⁷ See E.M. Jellinek, "The Symbolism of Drinking: A Cultural-Historical Approach," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 38(5):849-866, 1977. This essay was assembled from lecture transcripts and notes and other sources by Robert E. Popham and Carole D. Yawney.

prominence as an alcohol science specialist in the U.S., was actually the same person as the “Jellinek Morton,” who made off with millions of crowns in Budapest in 1920. Judit Ward’s article, in these pages, draws upon a bounty of new information and sources on this notorious escapade.

The “Time Abroad” period, which Scott Goldstein’s article in these pages examines, represents a particularly difficult biographical challenge. Scott has done an excellent job conveying how very sketchy are the available source materials on Jellinek’s life and work in the 1920s – and therefore also how important was the discovery and collection of Hartman’s (i.e., Jellinek’s) “banana book” by this project. As recently as April, 2013, Judit Ward and I, were lamenting -- in a post to *Points: The Blog of the Alcohol and Drugs History Society*⁸ -- that the banana book was proving very difficult to find. Not finding the book would have left Ruth Surry’s mention of it and Thelma Anderson’s recollections about it unconfirmed and iffy. Finding it, therefore, provides a kind of solid rock anchoring a nice little verity that otherwise would have been left adrift in a sea of biographical uncertainty. Of course, and as Scott has noted, we still cannot say with certainty -- not yet, at least -- that the scientist and writer who signed himself A.N. Hartman was actually E.M. Jellinek. But, and with the discovery of a green-cover book matching Thelma’s description, the odds have now been shifted markedly in that direction. And that shift, in turn -- given the paucity of sources we have on the ‘20s -- is big news.

My own pursuit of Jellinek’s life in Honduras led me to an interest in the possibly parallel experience of O. Henry -- real name, William Sydney Porter -- the celebrated American novelist and short story writer. Porter ran into trouble with the law in Texas in the 1890s and fled, in July, 1896, to Honduras, which had no extradition treaty

with the U.S. He stayed there only about half a year, but managed to write a book of fiction, titled *Cabbages and Kings*, in which he drew broadly from his experience there. Porter was ashamed of this short period of his life and never talked about it. Hence Porter’s biographers, later on, faced much the same paucity of material the Rutgers project has faced regarding Jellinek’s Honduran stay. C. Alphonso Smith, Porter’s earliest biographer, titled his chapter on Porter’s Honduran period, “The Shadowed Years.” It was interesting to read this chapter with an eye to how Smith managed to finesse his shortage of source material to work with. I’ve also been pleased to find evocative passages in both biographies of Porter and Porter’s *Cabbages and Kings*. These sometimes struck me as words that might have been written by or about Jellinek’s experience in Honduras. Two wonderful examples of such passages were presented in one of my slides in my remarks to the SALIS conference in May at Rutgers.

Karen Thomas has provided a useful overview of Jellinek’s decade-long experience at Worcester State Hospital in the 1930s. The record of Jellinek’s Worcester years is still pretty scanty, but it is much, much better, at least, than what’s available for Jellinek in the 1920s in West Africa and Central America. Indeed, when contrasted with the 1920s, we have a bounty of material at Worcester in the 1930s. For example, we’re blessed (a) with a record of Jellinek’s many co-authored and singly authored publications; (b) with copies of papers offered in the biometric journal he launched while there;⁹ (c) with the prospect (at least) of collecting the important internal report on reform of the research process at Worcester, produced by a committee Jellinek chaired; (d) with David Shakow’s descriptions and assessments of Jellinek’s work and place in Worcester professional staff; and, finally, but no less significantly, (e) with Thelma Pierce Jellinek’s wonderfully

⁸ See Ron Roizen and Judit Ward, “On E.M. Jellinek’s Trail,” *Points: The Blog of the Alcohol and Drugs History Society*, <http://pointsadhsblog.wordpress.com/2013/04/25/on-e-m-jellineks-trail/>, posted April 25, 2013.

⁹ Jellinek’s first issue of the *Biometrics Bulletin* appeared in June, 1936; it subsequently ran for four issues (in Dec., 1936; Dec., 1937; and Sept., 1938), to which he and other investigators contributed articles.

revealing correspondence about this period. We know, in addition, that Jellinek certainly was not sitting on his hands during his Worcester period. He clearly rose to an important place in that institution's research enterprises, as evidenced by the bound volumes and glowing letter of thanks signed by staff and as well by Shakow's very favorable and even perhaps affectionate remarks in at least two historical accounts.¹⁰ ¹¹ Two additional indicators of the high value of Jellinek's contributions at Worcester may be noted. First, he was made a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences near his departure from Worcester in 1938. Second, Jellinek has, in the fullness of time, been recognized as a key player in the biometric movement and its impact of psychopathological research during the 1930s¹². Karen's article touched on potential links and influences that may have flowed from Jellinek's work at Worcester to his subsequent career and central role in the alcohol science movement. Let me add only that this area affords an inviting topic for further fruitful exploration. Jellinek's research contexts in relation to schizophrenia research at Worcester and alcoholism research later in life harbor some intriguing similarities and differences.

I will be brief in my comments on the three remaining articles on the Jellinek project in this issue: namely, Christine Bariahtaris article on Jellinek's family history; Molly Steward's, on his relationship to Mark Keller; and, finally, William Bejarano's, on Jellinek's not entirely unproblematic formal education and c.v. and the positioning of this project's inquiry. All three have offered

valuable starting places for further digging and thought. Christine's genealogical investigation, with its harvest of a great deal of new information on Jellinek's immediate family and in-laws, is a very welcome addition to the project's knowledge base. What might be emphasized about Jellinek's family and family history, it seems to me, is that Jellinek came from a distinguished background of great wealth, great achievement, great learning, and even no little fame (in the case of his mother, the famous soprano, Marcella Lindh). He seems to have been regarded as something of a black sheep with respect to this family legacy, perhaps especially so by his mother. That Jellinek's paternal grandmother's, Johanna Fuchs Jellinek, "...read four newspapers each day, each in a different language," and that Jellinek's mother was friends with Guiseppe Verdi – biographical items gleaned from one of Thelma's wonderful letters – speak volumes about Jellinek's cultural and educational experience that cannot of course be captured in his c.v.¹³ Christine cited, in passing, Klaus Kempter's German language volume on the Jellinek family's illustrious European history in her article's first paragraph.¹⁴ I would like to point out merely that there is a great deal still to be mined for our project on Jellinek's distinguished ancestry, drawing on Kempter's work and other sources as well.

Bill Bejarano deserves our thanks for his article's overall framing of the Jellinek project's fairminded and balanced intentions and orientation to its subject. Bill noted that Jellinek's best remembered scientific contribution was arguably his phases of alcoholism papers^{15, 16}. These caused no little

¹⁰ David Shakow, "The Worcester State Hospital Research on Schizophrenia (1927-1046)," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology Monograph* 80(1):67-110, (August) 1972.

¹¹ David Shakow, "The Contributions of the Worcester State Hospital and Post-Hall Clark University of Psychoanalysis," pp. 29-62 in George E. Gifford, Jr. (ed.), *Psychoanalysis, Psychotherapy and the New England Medical Scene, 1894-1944*, New York: Science History Publications/USA, 1978.

¹² Joseph Zubin, typescript, "Confessions of a Biometric Psychopathologist," 1986 – accessed at <http://www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/biometrics/Publications/Biometrics%20Archives%20PDF/793Zubin19860001.pdf>.

¹³ Thelma Anderson to Mark Keller, letter, April 16, 1988, p. 3 and p. 2.

¹⁴ Kempter, K. (1998). *Die Jellineks 1820 – 1955*. Dusseldorf: Droste Verlag.

¹⁵ Jellinek, E.M., "Phases in the Drinking History of Alcoholics: Analysis of a Survey Conducted by the Official Organ of Alcoholics Anonymous," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 7:1-88, 1946.

¹⁶ Jellinek, E.M., "Phases of Alcohol Addiction," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 13:673-684, 1952.

controversy in succeeding decades, often being subjected to criticisms regarding their faulty sampling approach, the biased sample subjected to analysis, and other weaknesses. I would merely point out that a careful reading of Jellinek's 1946 paper, the longer and more detailed of the two, will reveal that Jellinek was entirely conscious of his analysis's weaknesses and fully cautioned readers to keep them in mind in evaluating his results. In this sense, Jellinek has received something of a "bum rap" for many of his analyses' shortcomings – although, I hasten to add, that Jellinek's suggested phases of addiction and natural history cannot be said to have fully stood the test of time as a scientific schematic. Beyond this aside, I would suggest that Bill's recounting of Jellinek's educational experience and past attempts at biographies for him well succeeded in showing, as Bill surmised, "...just how maddening and difficult it has been to track Jellinek's life over the years."

Finally, I would simply add a closing comment to Molly Stewart's useful and illuminating account of Jellinek's relationship to Mark Keller, longtime editor of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. The preservation of an historical legacy, and debt, requires agents

who remember, who carry memory forward, and who, indeed, cherish the memory of the founders and inspirational figures in an historical story. Keller's appreciation of Jellinek's significant place in the launching and shaping of the new scientific approach to alcohol was nicely captured, I thought, in the quotation I presented in my final slide to the SALIS meeting. This Rutgers project is of course another expression of the importance of institutional memory. It has, under Judit's direction and encouragement, given us a promising start and a revealing look at lots of new information about the man, his work, and his times. I'm quite certain Bunky himself would have been pleased with how far the project has come!

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