



# The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

Written by Leslie Jamison

---

Published by kctv7

# Table of Contents

The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath .....	1
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Pdf .....	2
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Review .....	3
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Summary .....	4
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Sparknotes .....	5
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Audiobook .....	6
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Excerpt .....	7
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Epub .....	8
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Quotes .....	9
The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Vk .....	10

The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

# The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

By Leslie Jamison

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath

By the New York Times bestselling author of *The Empathy Exams*, an exploration of addiction, and the stories we tell about it, that reinvents the traditional recovery memoir.

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Pdf

With its deeply personal and seamless blend of memoir, cultural history, literary criticism, and journalistic reportage, *The Recovering* turns our understanding of the traditional addiction narrative on its head, demonstrating that the story of recovery can be every bit as electrifying as the train wreck itself. Leslie Jamison deftly excavates the stories we tell about addiction--both her own and others'--and examines what we want these stories to do, and what happens when they fail us.

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Review

All the while, she offers a fascinating look at the larger history of the recovery movement, and at the literary and artistic geniuses whose lives and works were shaped by alcoholism and substance dependence, including John Berryman, Jean Rhys, Raymond Carver, Billie Holiday, David Foster Wallace, and Denis Johnson, as well as brilliant figures lost to obscurity but newly illuminated here.

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Summary

For the power of her striking language and the sharpness of her piercing observations, Jamison has been compared to such iconic writers as Joan Didion and Susan Sontag. Yet her utterly singular voice also offers something new. With enormous empathy and wisdom, Jamison has given us nothing less than the story of addiction and recovery in America writ large, a definitive and revelatory account that will resonate for years to come.

This was an interesting book, and one I enjoyed. It is a memoir of the author's addiction and coming to sobriety alongside a cultural history of writers and addiction. The breath of Jamison's knowledge on this subject is impressive if, at times, overwhelming. She lovingly details several writers famous for their drinking, and the creative work that rose from that drinking or was stymied. She also looks at some of the sociopolitical implications of addiction, and there are some interesting ways in which she identifies her subject position/privilege and recognizes that her privilege allows her to have an addiction story that people with less privilege would never be granted. "My skin is the right color to permit my intoxication," she writes. And it's good that she does this because she writes about attending the Iowa Writers Workshop and Yale and traveling the world and a fully funded education and a loving relationships/family and writing successes paired with writing failures. Certainly, she is also grappling with the problems we all deal with, and with the challenges of addiction, but the suffering feels gilded. That's not a fair thing to say but I suspect many readers will have that reaction. The writing is beautiful. There are descriptive phrases that are simply breathtaking. The prose is dense but very readable. At times the book is kind of a hot mess but... I couldn't put the book down. The mess works. And more than that, I was genuinely moved by how accurately Jamison captures the experience of addiction, the hallows we all try to fill with one thing or another. Highly recommend. ...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Sparknotes

My full review, as well as my other thoughts on reading, can be found on my blog.

Astute and empathetic, Leslie Jamison reinvents the traditional recovery memoir in an attempt to challenge the dominant understanding of addiction as an apolitical and private experience. Jamison juxtaposes several genres against each other, without mixing them together; the book is a collage of memoir, biography, literary analysis, and cultural history. The author's wide-ranging scope affords her the chance to fles

My full review, as well as my other thoughts on reading, can be found on my blog.

Astute and empathetic, Leslie Jamison reinvents the traditional recovery memoir in an attempt to challenge the dominant understanding of addiction as an apolitical and private experience. Jamison juxtaposes several genres against each other, without mixing them together; the book is a collage of memoir, biography, literary analysis, and cultural history. The author's wide-ranging scope affords her the chance to flesh out her argument that addiction always is social, not just personal, by placing her experience of recovery as a wealthy white woman against the backdrop of American attitudes toward substance (ab)use in general. The critical move decenters Jamison's journey toward sobriety, and it not only saves the book from reading as ultra-privileged and tone deaf but also allows its author to make several fascinating claims. Especially of note is how Jamison frames the ways in which America has mythologized the figure of the intoxicated white male genius as inextricable from those in which it has criminalized and demonized Black and Latinx addiction.

At its best, *The Recovering* is highly engaging: Jamison's prose is eminently readable, her portrait of herself multifaceted, and her thesis provocative. But the brilliance isn't consistent. Even accounting for the author's sprawling focus, the book could have benefitted from tighter editing. The close readings of the literature of addiction become increasingly uninspired, the profiles of famous writers and artists tedious, the reportage sparse, the autobiography sloppily structured. The flaws aren't so egregious that they make *The Recovering* not worth reading, but the book would have been much more effective were the main text about 100 pages shorter. ...more

Audiobook....read by the author Leslie Jamison. ( I liked Leslie's voice & I'm guessing the physical book would be useful to own for some readers)

First off ... I'm not an alcoholic. I don't even drink. But.... maybe if I did I'd look as gorgeous as author Leslie Jamison? Can I just say - she is ~stunningly beautiful~....

Geee - GORGEOUS! Harvard Grad...Phd from Yale, writer, graduate from the Iowa's writing workshop....

and oh yeah - in her spare time .....alcoholic/with a history of an eat

Audiobook....read by the author Leslie Jamison. ( I liked Leslie's voice & I'm guessing the physical book would be useful to own for some readers)

The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

First off ... I'm not an alcoholic. I don't even drink. But... maybe if I did I'd look as gorgeous as author Leslie Jamison? Can I just say - she is ~stunningly beautiful~....

Gee - GORGEOUS! Harvard Grad...Phd from Yale, writer, graduate from the Iowa's writing workshop....

and oh yeah - in her spare time .....alcoholic/with a history of an eating disorder.

There were times I was bored ....( could be me ~" The Page-Turning Mystery Thriller book I was reading was fighting for my attention)....

But...this is an excellent - well written- well researched book - I WAS INTERESTED MORE OFTEN THAN BORED ....,but being honest - nothing about craving alcohol is on my radar- of- experience.

Candy? Yep....I used to love it more than life itself. But ....no longer ( I'm now a no fun reasonable sugar eater.....as in Less is better)....

.....but I could use AA meetings to get me to follow an autoimmune diet like little Ms. Perfect. I'm afraid I'm a Paleo-failure.

Is it sinful that I eat dairy and gluten.....but have ulcers in my mouth? Maybe there is a twelve step program for Paleo- no sugar- no dairy - no gluten- little grains - no fun diets for people like me? - people who are addicted to \*NO\* RULES about eating? EVEN IF WE WOULD BECOME MORE HEALTHY? Bone broth? Every day like my sister? Sounds awful ~" and who wants to spend time making it? Yep...I have a new type of addiction....( to eating and living in our modern world filled with everything bad for our health)

This book is not a normal memoir- ( Leslie's addiction, relapse, the sensation of being drunk, AA meetings, her love life, research, quotes from other Genius Addicts & history is the heart of the ~story~), but the context for this book is much bigger than ~her story~.....SHE IS UP TO SOMETHING IMPORTANT ~"-AA OFFICIALS might learn a few things useful!!! She's out to spill the beans that AA is not all- get-all!

She talks about ~meaningful~ healing ... and radically restructuring treatment. Alcoholic anonymous being too limiting. I AGREE!

In the Author's Notes she talks about the medical medications along with AA meetings that are proven more effective than AA alone. Plus ~other~ choices.

The book structure is appealing for this topic: works nicely. Each chapters is titled with a theme for that chapter:

Wonder: first time drinking buzz stories

Abandon: Freshman year at Harvard - lonely - starving herself - drinking

Blame: ONE OF MY FAVORITE CHAPTERS ... in this section she talks about whether or not alcoholism is an illness, or a crime. America can't seem to decide on the label... and it's constantly changing depending on the situation. Some people get pity! Other people get blamed. Male drunks are

The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

thrilling, white females are bad moms, blacks are punished, celebrities get fancy recovery resorts. Lots more in this section about the laws of drunk driving - drugs - etc.

Lack: Leslie was at Yale working on her PHD ..... but she began to have new rules about her drinking. Shame.... oh yes....cheating on your lover always contributes to a great night's sleep

THIS IS WHEN DRINKING FELT GOOD.....A very honest chapter about how drinking was way more fun than not.

Surrender....don't expect me to share everything ...surrender.....use your imagination

Thirst .... not for soda pop.

Return: Leslie went seven months of being sober. The man she was in love with believed she could drink differently this time because she convinced him. She was a mature adult - A dignified woman who could drink socially now! Ha....see how that works!

Confession: interesting karma & a car crash chapter

Humbling: I liked this section about WHY TELL OUR STORIES ( I love people's stories - makes me feel normal)

Chorus "writers will like this. A wonderful fairytale with 4 different endings in this section is so good - I listened twice. You can choose your favorite ending to the story.

Salvage: 2nd chance. Nice!

Reckoning ok.....These later chapters are some of the best.

Homecoming .....A great story about a man and his two lives - sober and drunk

Authors Notes: EXCELLENT ....good information- useful for anyone who knows anyone who has struggled with addictions.

THERE ARE 100 ways to SKIN A CAT..... yikes .....but who would want to skin one?

THERE ARE MANY PATHS TO HEALING ..... yes! I believe that too!

THIS IS A \*SHORT\* REVIEW FOR A BOOK ALMOST 600 pages long ....  
It reads FAST!!!! Too long of a review? ...sorry!

Cheers - with Mango Juice to my friends! ...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Audiobook

This is the best description of alcoholism that I have ever read. I like to joke that I have "an addiction to addiction memoirs," but despite having read a lot of such works, Leslie Jamison managed to surprise me with her marvelous book *The Recovering*.

Part personal story and part research, I loved how Leslie blended her own tale of drunkenness with the stories of other writers and artists who struggled with alcohol and drug addiction. She discusses their lives, their books and poems and music, a This is the best description of alcoholism that I have ever read. I like to joke that I have "an addiction to addiction memoirs," but despite having read a lot of such works, Leslie Jamison managed to surprise me with her marvelous book *The Recovering*.

Part personal story and part research, I loved how Leslie blended her own tale of drunkenness with the stories of other writers and artists who struggled with alcohol and drug addiction. She discusses their lives, their books and poems and music, all woven together in way that becomes something both tragic and beautiful, the art of the struggle.

I listened to this book on audio, wonderfully narrated by Leslie herself, and it felt like having one long, great conversation with a close friend. Leslie is a gorgeous writer, with lovely phrasing and descriptions. She's the kind of character you root for, loving them in spite of their flaws and mistakes, hoping they will triumph in the end.

Highly recommended to anyone who likes addition memoirs or books about writers.

### Opening Passage

"The first time I ever felt it â€” the buzz â€” I was almost thirteen. I didn't vomit or black out or even embarrass myself. I just loved it. I loved the crackle of champagne, its hot pine needles down my throat. We were celebrating my brother's college graduation, and I wore a long muslin dress that made me feel like a child, until I felt something else: initiated, aglow. The whole world stood accused: You never told me it felt this good." ...more

### [4.5 stars]

This is such an important book and one that meant a lot to me for various reasons. I appreciate Jamison's candidnessâ€”she's very, very open in this book which can be difficult to read. But it's an admirable and accomplished analysis of addiction. It's so much more than a memoir. She looks at other people with addictions, whether artists and writers or just people she meets at AA or in her daily life, and explores different topics that come with coping from this illness: thirst, blame, [4.5 stars]

This is such an important book and one that meant a lot to me for various reasons. I appreciate Jamison's candidnessâ€”she's very, very open in this book which can be difficult to read. But it's an admirable and accomplished analysis of addiction. It's so much more than a memoir. She looks at other people with addictions, whether artists and writers or just people she meets at AA or in her daily life,

---

The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

and explores different topics that come with coping from this illness: thirst, blame, shame, surrender, confession, etc. It's very thorough and well-researched but never loses its humanity in exploring this extremely human topic. On a surface-level, too, Jamison is just a fantastic writer and I will read anything she writes. ...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Excerpt

When Leslie Jamison was nine and her father was forty-nine, she asked him why people drank. That day he told her that drinking was dangerous. It wasn't dangerous for everyone, he said, "but it was dangerous for us." Two close relatives were alcoholics—his father and his sister, Phyllis—and, as Jamison later points out, genetics do contribute to alcoholism. Her father was right to warn her. It's too bad she didn't heed his words.

As a child, Jamison was shy, self-conscious, and perpetually worried. When Leslie Jamison was nine and her father was forty-nine, she asked him why people drank. That day he told her that drinking was dangerous. It wasn't dangerous for everyone, he said, "but it was dangerous for us." Two close relatives were alcoholics—his father and his sister, Phyllis—and, as Jamison later points out, genetics do contribute to alcoholism. Her father was right to warn her. It's too bad she didn't heed his words.

As a child, Jamison was shy, self-conscious, and perpetually worried about saying the wrong thing, but she earned praise for her cleverness. Though her parents divorced when she was eleven, her family life was not particularly dysfunctional. She was, however, aware of love being based on certain conditions. Intelligence appeared to be one of them. Later, Jamison had an unusually difficult time when she went off to Harvard. Lonely, deeply distressed, and often tearful, she made frequent phone-calls home and eventually developed an eating disorder. Her father's response to her anorexia was to photocopy over a hundred pages of academic papers on the subject for her to read.

Jamison had her first drink of alcohol at 13 at the party held to celebrate her brother's college graduation. Her first alcoholic blackout occurred at Harvard. But the real problems began when, at the age of 21, she moved to Iowa City to attend the famous Iowa Writers' Workshop for her MFA where the myths about drinking "are like subterranean rivers beneath the drinking we were doing." The list of famous alcoholic writers who'd lived, taught, and had storied misadventures in the city included Raymond Carver, John Cheever, Dennis Johnson, and Richard Yates.

Jamison got more than a master's degree in Iowa, and she imbibed more than liquor. She succumbed to an entire mythology fetishizing the relationship between "drunken dysfunction" and genius—supposedly embodied in legendary writer-addicts. While attending the Writers' Workshop, Jamison began to drink on a daily basis. The drinking escalated when the second poet boyfriend she had met there left her. Demanding intensity from everything in her life, she subsequently engaged in frequent drunk sex with many men as a way of "purging", "siphoning off" excess feeling, and "putting it somewhere else." Jamison would travel to many locations over the next few years: California, Nicaragua, New Haven, and Bolivia. She would have a second stay in both Iowa and New Haven and live with two different men. Her most significant relationship, the one that took precedence over all others, was always the one she had with the bottle. For me, the many details the author provides about her experiences felt repetitive: a blurry cycle of drinking, regretting, and

repeating. Eventually, she would turn to AA, where the rituals, the fellowship, and the stories of others would begin to challenge her self-absorption, the alcoholic constriction of her life, and her sense of her suffering as being somehow exceptional.

Overall, Jamison's book is rather a mixed bag. Literary critique and memoir components make up the greater part of it. However, there are also sections of cultural, sociological, historical, and political analysis. These sections include strands of interviews, thumbnail sketches of a few former alcoholics and addicts, reportage on two facilities (one a prison for addicts; the other, a volunteer-run, now defunct rehab centre), and, finally, an examination of AA's founders, meetings, tenets and clichés.

At one point, Jamison mentions that this book is her doctoral dissertation. There is no discussion about how, or, indeed, if the original manuscript was revised and modified for wider readership. While the rambling, graphic, and sometimes sordid personal memoir segments certainly don't seem like the stuff of a conventional dissertation, the sections devoted to the often tedious critical analysis of the literature of addiction certainly do. I admit to being confused about two things: (1) how the book in its current form could have passed muster as an academic paper, and (2) the intended audience for the book. I am uncertain about the interest or value of the literary material to a more general readership. I have some familiarity with academia and graduate-school seminars (which I don't remember with fondness); Jamison's literary "close analysis" reminded me of them. A sort of sinking feeling would come upon me every time I saw Jean Rhys's, John Berryman's, or Charles' *The Long Weekend* Jackson's name ahead. This isn't only because I had read none of the novels, poems, and short stories Jamison considered in her doctoral research, but also because I can't ever imagine wanting to.

For me, the most valuable chapter of Jamison's book is the one entitled "Blame", in which the author confronts the cognitive dissonance in America's perception of the addict as both victim and criminal. She cites a number of experts in the fields of sociology, criminology, and neuroscience in her examination of the ways in which racism fuelled what was first Richard Nixon's (1971) and later Ronald Reagan's (1982) War on Drugs. It is an illuminating discussion, and the endnotes are also very worthwhile. Jamison also discusses the quite arbitrary assignment of some drugs to the legal, socially acceptable category and others to the illicit pile. Readers may be interested to learn, as I was, that the illicit drugs aren't always the most problematic. After heroin and cocaine, tobacco (nicotine) is the most addictive. It is followed (in order of greatest likelihood to produce dependency) by barbiturates, alcohol, benzodiazepines, amphetamines, cannabis, and ecstasy.

Early in *The Recovering*, the author proposes that she is going to write a different kind of memoir, focusing not on herself as a special or "interesting" individual, but on the individual as a member of a larger community in which all share a common story. Does she succeed in this project of writing a new kind of "symphonic" memoir? To some extent. Many voices are certainly heard, but they are not generally skillfully or harmoniously woven together. The book feels quite disjointed overall. Did I "enjoy" *The Recovering*? (Can such a word even be used about a confessional work that documents extreme chemical dependency?) No. I wish I could have felt more moved by the material or

that I had gained greater insight into the psychological and other factors that predispose a person to use substances repeatedly and uncontrollably. As well, I quickly grew weary of the endless descriptions of Jamison's drinking and felt distanced by the author's decision to use profanity in her descriptions of drunken sexual encounters and intimate relations with boyfriends. I understand and can accept swearing as an expression of strong emotion, especially anger or frustration, but strong emotion doesn't seem to be present here. My chief reservation about Jamison's book is related to its length. The book absolutely needed to be shorter—by a third at least, and perhaps by as much as a half. There is a lot of fine material here, but it gets lost in the excess: too many sentences embroidered with figurative language, too many descriptions of meals, and too many similar episodes of drinking and arguments. I wish a good editor had worked with Jamison to cut the text down to a reasonable size. A leaner book would have been a more powerful one.

Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for providing me with an advance review copy of this book.

Rating: 2.5 stars ...more

3.5 stars

Let me start by sharing that I consider Leslie Jamison a brilliant, brilliant writer. The Recovering is an intelligent, thorough book about addiction that includes cultural history, literary criticism, journalistic reportage, and memoir. Jamison asks thought-provoking questions and explores complex topics with a fresh, sharp eye for nuance, such as: whether our stories need to be unique for them to matter, the extent we all go to fill our lives with some meaning or comfort, and the role

3.5 stars

Let me start by sharing that I consider Leslie Jamison a brilliant, brilliant writer. The Recovering is an intelligent, thorough book about addiction that includes cultural history, literary criticism, journalistic reportage, and memoir. Jamison asks thought-provoking questions and explores complex topics with a fresh, sharp eye for nuance, such as: whether our stories need to be unique for them to matter, the extent we all go to fill our lives with some meaning or comfort, and the role of addiction in creative people's artistic process. She integrates her intellectual insight with an empathy and kindness so important for someone writing about addiction. I also appreciated how she acknowledged her privilege, recognizing that as a white woman, she has a platform to share her journey and the color of her skin will protect her from a lot of judgement, whereas more marginalized people do not have that same armor or access to resources.

The back and forth between memoir and literary analysis just did not work for me. Again, I consider Jamison such a literary star, and I hope others enjoy this book. But the transitions from other's stories to her own felt jarring to me. I wanted to stay more within her narrative and feel connected to her story without interruptions, or, at least more connections between these writers' stories and her own. I feel like the literary analysis distanced us from Jamison, especially for people who may already find it hard to connect with her based on her elite academic credentials. I wanted more of the integration of memoir

and analysis and reportage I read in *The Empathy Exams*, her stunning first essay collection.

Overall, I liked *The Recovering* and would recommend it to those who know what they're getting themselves into and want to try it anyway. I applaud Jamison for her author's note - which shows how she takes the topic of addiction very seriously - as well as her courage and compassion in sharing her own story in a society that still highly stigmatizes addiction. I'd be curious to read and think more about her addiction to romance, a topic I wrote about on my own blog, as her journey with Dave paralleled her addiction to alcohol in such a consistent way. I look forward to reading her next book. ...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Epub

Mommas, don't let your dissertations grow up to be memoirs.

---

I just spent most of the afternoon writing a review of this that Goodreads did not save, so please excuse me while I go rip up some trees by their roots.

I'm a recovering addict who was looking forward to this book, but found it infuriating, exploitative, narcissistic, and bougie. While Jamison's writing is lyrical, descriptive, and beautiful; her story lacks credibility. She insists that she wants to write a different kind of recovery story and has the audacity to compare her life to real addicts like Billie Holiday and Charles Jackson. Jamison amplifies normal college binge drinking experiences for dramatic purposes. She carefully catalogues her I'm a recovering addict who was looking forward to this book, but found it infuriating, exploitative, narcissistic, and bougie. While Jamison's writing is lyrical, descriptive, and beautiful; her story lacks credibility. She insists that she wants to write a different kind of recovery story and has the audacity to compare her life to real addicts like Billie Holiday and Charles Jackson. Jamison amplifies normal college binge drinking experiences for dramatic purposes. She carefully catalogues her fancy drinking and cheese trays in Italy and Chile and at Yale, Harvard, Iowa. She makes her typical college girl drinking more dramatic to try to relate to drunken heroes. Jamison writes, "Cliches were one of the hardest parts of my early days in recovery. I cringed their singing cadences." What?! Most really addicts and alcoholics are having physical withdrawals, DTs, puking their brains out, in prison, detox, or rehab. Jamison practiced writing her recovery "speech" on note cards before AA meetings because she wanted to have 'the best story.'

She says she is an alcoholic and elevates herself above working class people at meetings and people who actually have real addictions unlike her. Treating meetings like some sort of writing workshop or experiment. A Slate Review echoed my very same sentiments. "Recovery demands humility, but how can a 500 page book be anything but an assertion of ego?"

As Slate said: "Nevertheless, through the scrim of this litany of ordeals, the alert reader can detect another possible and very different index, one made of features that Jamison chooses not to emphasize: "had a cool, accomplished, loving mom," "Harvard undergrad," "Iowa Writers' Workshop at age 21," "summer in Italy," "Ph.D. from Yale," "published first novel at age 27." And even though the time period recounted in *The Recovering* does not include them, an informed reader could add a few more highlights: "New York Times best-seller at age 31" (2014's *The Empathy Exams*) and "director of the nonfiction program at Columbia University's School of the Arts."

Overall, I guess the book just made me angry because I felt that Jamison is not an alcoholic or addict, saw that the topic was "hot" or "popular," and she exploited others just to get stories for her book. She

---

The Recovering: Intoxication and Its Aftermath

practically admits that is why she went to her first meeting. I don't even like to go to meetings because people like her ruin it. Us rock bottom people that actually lost things to drinking and don't have 4 elite college degrees or best sellers don't need people like her eavesdropping and swooping in to try to fit in because she's bored with her life. Don't read this book. Read Lidia Yuknavitch. Read Mary Karr. Read Melissa Febos or Nick flynn. They are real addicts.

...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Quotes

One night I told Jack that I sometimes drove out to the truck stop in the middle of the night and worked in the vinyl booths by the supply shop, overlooking all those chrome hubcaps in the aisles. "You just got a hundred times more interesting," he said, and I tried to divide myself by a hundred, right there in front of him, to figure out what I'd been before.

Whyâ€™d I even want to read this? I couldnâ€™t stand Jamisonâ€™s much-lauded *The Empathy Exams*, and that feeling hasnâ€™t changedâ€”if anything, I like it even less in retrospect than I did at the time. I guess I was curious about *The Recovering*, but curiosity is a pretty meager fuel to power a reader through 450+ pages. Fortunately, it turned out *The Recovering* had a lot of fuel of its own.

In recovery, I found a community that resisted what Iâ€™d always been told about storiesâ€”that they had to be uniqueâ€”suggesting instead that a story was most useful when it wasnâ€™t unique at all, when it understood itself as something that had been lived before and would be lived again.

When Jamison said this right up front, I knew that she was attempting to disarm the reader who might be skeptical of yet another addiction memoir. But the fact that I knew what she was doing didnâ€™t make me resist; just the opposite, in fact. â€œOkay, Leslie Jamison,â€• I thought, â€œyouâ€™ve done me the courtesy of acknowledging what Iâ€™m thinking, and I will do you the courtesy of trying to keep my mind open.â€• But again, even if Iâ€™d gone in with a mind firmly closed, the book itself would have forced it open. Simply put, I was stunned by *The Recovering*.

A 1976 AA pamphlet called â€œDo You Think Youâ€™re Different?â€• opens with an admission of delusion: â€œMany of us thought we were special.â€• The plural subject already holds the argument: Even the belief in singularity is common.

*The Recovering* is a highly personal memoir of Jamisonâ€™s battle with alcoholism, and also an exploration of the ways creativity and alcoholism feed each other and sabotage each other. It begins in Iowa City, where Jamison is attending the graduate writerâ€™s workshop and where she reckons with the ghosts of past addicts: Raymond Carver, Denis Johnson, and John Berryman, among others. Some of these stories, of writers afraid they will actually lose their creative genius if they lose their pain; of writers attempting to convince themselves that they have much in common with other addicts regardless of background, and sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing spectacularly, are poignant

The Recovering is a highly personal memoir of Jamisonâ€™s battle with alcoholism, and also an exploration of the ways creativity and alcoholism feed each other and sabotage each other. It begins in Iowa City, where Jamison is attending the graduate writerâ€™s workshop and where she reckons with the ghosts of past addicts: Raymond Carver, Denis Johnson, and John Berryman, among others. Some of these stories, of writers afraid they will actually lose their creative genius if they lose their pain; of writers attempting to convince themselves that they have much in common with other addicts regardless of background, and sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing spectacularly, are poignant

and often heartbreaking. These stories also serve as an entry point for Jamison to talk about the larger issues of alcoholism and recovery: blame and shame; mental illness; race, class, and gender differences; the use of punishment for addictive behaviors; the various types of help available, particularly AA; the many ways that moving out of your isolation can help you.

All of this was interesting and illuminating, but Jamison's own story, one of raw vulnerability and brave honesty, is the captivating thread that holds it all together. So many addiction memoirs strive to be melodramatic and miss the day-to-day grind that makes alcoholism not a wild embrace of life but a deadening retreat from it. When Jamison presents her dissertation topic, on creativity and recovery, a professor mentions the (by now cliched) idea that creativity and addiction are undeniably linked: "What about the relationship between addiction and creativity? Don't certain obsessions also produce experiment and variation?" Jamison dutifully notes this down, but thinks to herself:

Addiction is just the same fucking thing over and over again. Thinking of addiction in terms of generative variation is the luxury of someone who hasn't spent years telling the same lies to liquor-store clerks.

Jamison, with her family of academics, MFA from Iowa and (eventually) PhD from Yale, is a highly privileged individual, something she acknowledges. But oddly, this didn't detract from my sympathy for her. If anything, it made me admire more how willing she was to break down the walls she'd erected between herself and others, how she embraced the ethos of not being special in order to truly get better.

As others have noted, the recovery aspect of the book is at least as profound and moving as the addiction aspect. I rooted for Jamison every step of the way, and with the level of insight and ruthless self-examination she presents here, she made that aspect of the book easy. I looked through *The Recovering* yesterday and found pages and pages with quotes I wanted to include in this review "more than I could ever really use here. I had goosebumps when I closed it. So I would suggest you give this book a try. The difference between this book and her previous one is that in *The Empathy Exams*, it's exasperatingly obvious that Jamison is writing about things she doesn't really know anything about. I can see now how she was circling around her real topic, not yet ready to dive in. In *The Recovering* she dives in, saying what she's really meant to say all along, and the willing reader is rewarded for diving in with her. I'm so happy this all worked out, for us as readers, and for Jamison as a person who has learned to live in the world without destroying herself. If anyone needs proof that artists can do their best work sober, *The Recovering* is its own best evidence. ...more

This here is 500+ pages of the incredible Leslie Jamison "reinventing the recovery memoir."

I have the unbelievably luxurious privilege of not being an addict, never really having even brushed up against addiction, so I can't fully account for how deeply moving I find recovery stories. But I do, I do, I

am so incredibly in awe of them -- their urgency, their base devastation, the way they cut through all the clutter to thrum around one. single. need. that is stronger than anything, and then somehow break free and soar above it.... Just incredible.

I have the unbelievably luxurious privilege of not being an addict, never really having even brushed up against addiction, so I can't fully account for how deeply moving I find recovery stories. But I do, I do, I am so incredibly in awe of them -- their urgency, their base devastation, the way they cut through all the clutter to thrum around one. single. need. that is stronger than anything, and then somehow break free and soar above it.... Just incredible.

This book could vaguely be classified as one part recovery memoir, one part master's thesis, one part historical / cultural analysis of the addict as victim vs. the addict as criminal, and one part survey of addiction throughout the entirety of popular culture. Leslie slides seamlessly between 1920s political strategy, obscure 1950s novels, and pop songs of yesterday, never missing a beat or dropping a logistical stitch. She is as deeply knowledgeable about David Foster Wallace as Amy Winehouse as Richard Nixon's drug czar as the parasitic worm that burrowed into her heel in South America.

And I loved it so much it's hard to believe. I couldn't read it fast enough and I couldn't read it slowly enough -- its churn and thrall, its deft switches and spins, Leslie's nimble weaving together of so many disparate yet somehow perfectly connected threads, my despair and astonishment equally keening. It's kind of embarrassing how many phrases I underlined, how many sentences and even entire paragraphs, the pages littered with brackets and margin stars. It was surreal reading it on the subway, in parks, in line at the deli, tearing up, closing my eyes to savor, her words so thunderous, louder in my head than the music in my headphones, so loud I often didn't even notice I was listening to my favorite song until it was nearly over.

I gasped audibly when I turned to the last page before the authors note -- partly out of real surprise, since there were so many pages left (hundreds upon hundreds of notes) but also partly from legitimate dismay, because I couldn't believe it was done and I wouldn't somehow be able to just keep reading it forever. ...more

## The Recovering Intoxication And Its Aftermath Vk

whatever beauty comes from pain can't usually be traded back for happiness. leslie jamison's new book, the recovering: intoxication and its aftermath, straddles several genres at once, coalescing to form a candid, incisive, empathetic, and magnificently composed work about addiction and recovery. with her own personal tale of alcoholism, relapse, and ultimate recovery as narrative anchor, jamison explores the lives of fellow writers for whom addiction was a constant battle (carver, berryman, rh whatever beauty comes from pain can't usually be traded back for happiness. leslie jamison's new book, the recovering: intoxication and its aftermath, straddles several genres at once, coalescing to form a candid, incisive, empathetic, and magnificently composed work about addiction and recovery. with her own personal tale of alcoholism, relapse, and ultimate recovery as narrative anchor, jamison explores the lives of fellow writers for whom addiction was a constant battle (carver, berryman, rhys, etc.), reports on the long history of addiction treatment (especially alcoholics anonymous), and considers a culture increasingly encumbered by addiction (and its pervasive, devastating consequences).

as evidenced in her wonderful essay collection, the empathy exams, jamison's writing is frequently breathtaking to behold. her gifted prose coupled with curiosity, reflection, and a deep humanity lend the recovering an emotionality both resonant and affecting. jamison's personal struggles are often difficult (and sad) to read about from a remove, though she lays bare head and heart alike in contending with her alcoholism and all it had wrought. wrenching at times, the recovering is a sobering account of addiction " and jamison's bravery in so eloquently, so disarmingly relating her tale within the context of so many other battles (whether won or lost) renders her memoir humbling and unforgettable.

but this was something that kept happening in sobriety, understanding that everyone"your boss, your bank teller, your baker, even your partner"was waking up every fucking day and dealing with shit you couldn't even imagine. ...more

Leslie Jamison's captivating and exceptionally written book, *The Recovering*, is part addiction memoir and part rumination on the impact addiction plays on creating art. It's a hybrid like a Cockapoo, or Taco Bell's French Toast Chalupa. In between retellings of sneaking drinks and sad drunken debacles, Jamison worries that her recovery may signal the end of her creativity and artistic talent.

I was struck by how much *The Recovering* was like the 14th most populous city in America: Columbus, Ohio. Leslie Jamison's captivating and exceptionally written book, *The Recovering*, is part addiction memoir and part rumination on the impact addiction plays on creating art. It's a hybrid like a Cockapoo, or Taco Bell's French Toast Chalupa. In between retellings of sneaking drinks and sad drunken debacles, Jamison worries that her recovery may signal the end of her creativity and artistic talent.

I was struck by how much *The Recovering* was like the 14th most populous city in America: Columbus,

Ohio. Both are sprawling, Jamison's book finishing at over 530 pages while the capital of Ohio sits on over 223 square miles (encompassing 10 counties). The pages of *The Recovery* flow by quicker than the reflecting waters of the Olentangy River. There are moments in this book that delighted me more than a Bacon Deluxe Double hamburger with Frosty from Wendy's (founded by Dave Thomas in you-know-where). And there are moments that made me contemplate established societal attitudes, not unlike the eye-opening lessons on wildlife taught by famed Columbus zoo director Jack Hanna during his live animal demonstrations on *Good Morning America*. Jamison dissects the stance that drunken male authors seem brilliant and wild, full of the pain of the world, while drunk women writers are seen mainly as sloppy and undisciplined. She writes of the general views our country has historically held of addiction "some say it is a disease while others feel it is a weakness and blame the addicted. And she goes into the systemic racial bias of addictions"white cocaine addicts are to be treated as unwell patients while crack addicts (like the crack mothers of the 1980s, seen mainly as dangerously irresponsible black women) are to be treated with disdain and extensive jail sentences.

Jamison deftly leaps from her own story of addiction to these weightier themes with the dexterity of Olympic gymnast Simone Biles (yes, another daughter of Columbus). Her tales move the reader to experience emotions not felt since watching old *Miami Vice* television episodes back in the late '80s, encountering the massive acting chops of Columbus's own Phillip Michael Thomas.

Underlying everything is Jamison's very real fear that her recovery from alcohol will somehow halt her creativity and she will not be able to write anymore. However, if *The Recovery* is any indication, she has nothing to worry about. Her book is as stirring as the Midwestern music of Rascal Flatts, and she has cooked up a dish that even Columbusite Guy Fieri would exclaim belongs in Flavortown.

...more