To all this agreement it is necessary to add one major caveat. Sowell chooses his targets well, but he is so consumed with rooting out misguided forms of state regulation that he overlooks those complex situations where simple market solutions falter. The ordinary forces of supply and demand do not furnish obvious first-best solutions for public utilities, telecommunications, transportation, the Internet, and intellectual property. One key problem arises when different firms have to coordinate their efforts for the system as a whole to be effective, which means that voluntary transactions cannot be counted on to create a seamless network out of various competing firms. Finding second-best solutions is a perilous venture, as anyone who has watched the dizzying path of public regulation of railroads in the 19th century and telecommunications in the 20th can testify. Hard trade-offs arise between innovation on one hand and wide dissemination of goods on the other. Sowell himself misfires, for example, on pharmaceuticals; while he rightly understands the dangers of allowing cheap reimportation of drugs from Canada, he claims that pharmaceutical innovation does not take place in countries with weak intellectual-property protections. Not true, at least not for that reason: Research can take place anywhere so long as foreigners can obtain patent protection in the U.S. and other advanced countries—which they can.

It is to be hoped that Sowell will next turn his attention to the hard issues of applied economics—from patent and copyrights to antitrust and rate regulation. Sowell is right to preach the superiority of competitive markets to various forms of regulation that backfire with alarming regularity. But a complete picture of the economic landscape requires an understanding of how regulation and taxation should be structured as well. The economics and legal professions have made real strides in understanding these issues; it will take, however, someone with Sowell’s gifts for lucidity and common sense to make these insights accessible to the public at large.

To Bums, it’s not surprising that the first settlers, as strangers in a strange and not always hospitable land, should have turned to drink: to beer, to whisky, to brandy, to rum, and even to an alarming-sounding series of proto-cocktails. Rattle-skull, anyone? Reading his account, it’s easy to conclude that many of these early Americans spent most of the day drunk, proving once again (at least to this Brit) that they cannot have known what they were doing when, after a revolution fomented largely in those same taverns, they broke from the embrace of the mother country.

Needless to say, all this good cheer produced a reaction, and the greater (and most interesting) part of this book is devoted to prohibitionists and their long, far from fine, whine. It’s a painfully familiar tale to anyone who has watched the drug war, the excesses of the anti-tobacco movement, or even the gathering fast-food jihad.

The parallels are telling. There’s the junk science so shaky that, by comparison, “passive smoking” is as believable as gravity. Dr. Benjamin Rush, the Hippocrates of [18th-century] Pennsylvania,” linked drink to a wide range of health problems including scurvy, stomach rumbles, and, for the truly unlucky, spontaneous combustion. Around a hundred years later—and a century before the nonsense of DARE—the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was distributing an “education” program in schools that included the startling news that alcohol could lead “the coats of the blood vessels to grow thin [making them] liable at any time to cause death by bursting.” Boozehounds should also watch out. Children were taught that even a tiny amount of this “colorless liquid poison” would be enough to kill a dog.

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of teetotalitarianism as any genuine desire to improve society. From the Massachusetts law providing that alcohol could not be sold in units of less than fifteen gallons to the grotesque farce of Prohibition, *Spirits & America* is filled with tales of legislation as absurd as it was presumptuous.

Although he never holds back on a good anecdote (the story of Izzy Einstein, Prohibition Agent and master of disguise, is by itself worth the price of this book), when it comes to the Volstead years themselves, Bums gives a useful and, dare I say it, sober, account. Contrary to machine-gun-saturated myth, the mayhem (if not the corruption) was mostly confined to a few centers, and although Prohibition did clog up the justice system, enforcement, mercifully, usually tended to be less than Ness.

Even more surprisingly, while he doesn’t come close to endorsing Prohibition, Bums is able to point to data showing that, in certain respects at least, the killjoy carnival was a success: Per capita alcohol consumption fell sharply, and even these achievements may mean less than is thought. Other evidence (not cited by Burns) would suggest that, after an initial collapse, consumption started to rise again as new (illicit) suppliers got themselves organized, with often disastrous consequences for their customers. Winston Churchill, no stranger to the bottle himself, was told that “there is less drinking, but there is worse drinking,” a phrase, incidentally, that almost perfectly describes the impact on today’s young of the increase in the drinking age to 21. As for the alleged health benefits, the 1920s also saw notable reductions in, for example, deaths from alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver in Britain, a country that saw no need for prohibition.

What Bums underplays, however, is the fact that this debate should be about more than crudely utilitarian calculations. There’s a famous comment (cited by Bums, but, sadly, quite possibly a fake) widely attributed to Lincoln that sums this up nicely. Prohibition, "a species of temperance in itself... makes a crime out of things that are not crimes. [It] strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our Government was founded.”

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**EPHESUS**

_According as he hath chosen us..._

Walking the ruins of Ephesus
In the footsteps of St. Paul,
They gaze upon a sculpted foot
Pointed towards a fleshly stall.

The lately chosen of the Lord,
Prim presbyters of the Paraclete
Perambulate among worn stones
Undeterred by blazing heat.

Epistles scribbled on post cards
Substantiate their bible tour;
Omitting threat of holy war,
Blue believers to the core.

At the mosque they shed their shoes,
Wrap each foot in a plastic sack;
Envision heaven on the dome
Over cursive Arabic.

Step gingerly across plush rugs
Place for foreheads on rough stone;
Meek Crusaders of the lamb
Come to admire and to atone.

As Paul in sandals on these shores
Once preached and pagans proselytized,
Admitting to his church of Christ
The outcaste and uncircumcised.

—RICHARD O'CONNELL

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**Spirit World**

*Off the Sand Road: Ghost Stories, Volume One*, by Russell Kirk
(Ash-Tree, 206 pp., $45)

*What Shadows We Pursue: Ghost Stories, Volume Two*, by Russell Kirk
(Ash-Tree, 254 pp., $45)

R. ANDREW NEWMAN

For millions of moviegoers, it seems, _Freddy vs. Jason_ represents the summit of the horror genre; those looking for scary narratives of a more intellectually and spiritually stimulating kind would do well to seek out the tales of Russell Kirk. Of the intellectual founding fathers of the postwar conservative movement, Kirk was a versatile man of letters who penned some of the best uncanny tales of all time. Over three decades, his stories appeared in such periodicals as _Fantasy and Science Fiction_, _London Mystery Magazine_, and _Queen's Quarterly_. The tales were collected in three volumes, _The Surly Sullen Bell_ (1962), _The Princess of AN Lands_ (1979), and _Watchers at the Strait Gate_ (1984); unfortunately, these fell out of print and are hard to find. But now Kirk’s stories have returned, thanks to a small press in British Columbia that specializes in classic supernatural fiction.

For Kirk, who died in 1994, ghost stories were not mere exercises in gore or terror. A 20th century infested with gulags and gas chambers provided demoniac flight enough. Through the eerie fun of his scary tales, he was trying to reawaken a sense of a greater reality, a world that touches but is not bounded by the physical, in an age smothered by materialism and suffering from the decay of traditional religion. As for ghosts, he thought them very real and claimed

Mr. Newman’s work has appeared in _Modern Age_ and _Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity_.

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