THE DESIRE TO FILL
Addiction and British Visual Culture, 1751-1919

By

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Abstract

In “The Desire to Fill” I examine British visual culture, including paintings, graphic art, photographs, advertisements and architecture, in relation to the lived experience of addiction. My study begins in 1751, the year that William Hogarth produced his engravings *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, and it ends in 1919, the year that Alfred Priest exhibited his painting *Cocaine* at the Royal Academy’s annual Summer Exhibition. There are four underlying arguments in this text. First, that addiction to drugs and alcohol is a manifestation of a desire to “fill a void.” Second, that addiction has long been thought to be legible from the body. Third, that addiction cannot be reliably read from the body, whether in life or an image. Fourth, any project that is concerned with addiction and visual culture is therefore a paradoxical one, and must, by necessity, be a speculative one.

My methodological approach in this text is influenced by feminist theory and queer theory, and I explore the history of addiction using a continuist framework. In other words, I suggest that, although the identities of the “addict” and “alcoholic” as we know them today were discursively constructed at the end of the nineteenth century, people experienced addiction before these identities came into being. In that vein, I suggest that the woman in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* is an alcoholic, and I show how anxieties about alcoholic mothers have remained remarkably consistent over the last three hundred years. I also discuss graphic artist George Cruikshank’s experiences as a temperance advocate after he stopped drinking, gin palaces and women’s desire for alcohol, the social and legal ramifications of addiction, and, finally, cocaine and tobacco addiction after the First World War. Ultimately, I examine the visual culture of addiction in order to destabilize stereotypes and myths about alcoholics and drug addicts that are still circulating today.
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Chapter 1: Introduction
Addiction and Visual Culture

“No, there is no comparison between a man in drink and the lower animals; he is simply a travesty of his higher self, an ignoble portrait of himself, a sad and terrible picture for the study of the seeker after truth.”

-Dr. Kate Mitchell, The Drink Question: Its Social and Medical Aspects (1889)

In the epigraph quoted above Kate Mitchell remarks that a man in drink is “an ignoble portrait of himself, a sad and terrible picture for the study of the seeker after truth.”¹ This statement encapsulates the way that vision and art have intersected with addiction in attempts to illuminate the “truth” about addicted persons. Similarly, Dr. Norman Kerr asserted in a lecture delivered to female members of the Christian Workers’ Temperance Union in 1880 that “When a woman began to succumb to the fascinations of alcohol, to the experienced eye there was speedily apparent an untidiness, slovenliness, and carelessness about her attire and her personal appearance – the very antipodes of her former neatness and activity.”² Kerr assumes that to recognize an alcoholic demanded a certain way of seeing, an experienced or expert way of looking, in order to perceive the tell-tale signs of addiction. That Kerr refers here to women specifically is of importance, because, although a similar belief about the legibility of the male alcoholic’s body also existed in the nineteenth century, female alcoholics and drug addicts received a particular kind of surveillance informed by beliefs about female responsibility and respectability.³ Issues related to gender, as well as sexuality, class and race, surface again and

again in the history of addiction, both in textual accounts and visual representations. As Susan Zieger has remarked, “addiction and its metaphors imposed horror on ‘other things’ – the consumption of print media; citizenship status; sexual desire; racial, gender, and sexual difference – to name a few.”

Mitchell describes a man in drink as a “portrait” and a “sad and terrible picture,” highlighting the fact that addiction has been perceived as a legible condition from both the body of the addicted individual and artistic representations. It makes sense, then, to examine the visual culture that was anxiously produced in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in order to make the alcoholic and addict body legible and therefore recognizable. Whereas there have been a plethora of studies on literature and addiction, of which Zieger’s is one of the best, no book has yet been published that focuses primarily on visual culture and addiction. If my reader will forgive the play on words, “The Desire to Fill” derives from my desire to fill this lacuna in art historical literature.

There was, however, a recent exhibition that addressed the visual and material culture of alcohol consumption, and addiction was briefly referred to in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibit. As Philippa Glanville notes in The Art of Drinking, the exhibition of which was on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London from 26 September 2007 to 26 April 2009,

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4 Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 13.
alcohol “has stimulated a rich material and visual culture.”6 The exhibition included manifold cups, glasses and bowls created for the single purpose of drinking from them. Although originally produced for practical purposes, on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum they acquired the aura of art objects. A project concerned with the art of drinking inevitably differs from one concerned with the visual culture of addiction, as drinking and addiction are not synonymous. I have attempted to be as mindful as possible of this fact, and not to automatically read representations of alcohol consumption as addiction. When I have felt that it is necessary, I clarify the reasons that I am discussing an image in relation to the issue of addiction. In this dissertation I examine visual and material culture such as paintings, engravings, advertisements, architecture and space, and I read each for the traces that perceptions about addiction or lived experiences of addiction have made upon them.

Throughout “The Desire to Fill” I continually return to two key arguments. First, that addiction is often, if not always, a manifestation of a desire to fill a void. This rather vague phrase simply means that the addicted person has been seeking a sense of wholeness (or relief from pain, discontentment, etc.), and believes that he or she has found it in drugs, alcohol or other consumable products (e.g. food) or behaviors (e.g. work or sex). Second, that addiction cannot simply be read from a body or an image. This latter argument makes a project concerned with the visual culture of addiction a necessarily paradoxical one, and although I will argue that certain images, such as William Hogarth’s Gin Lane (Fig. 2.1), represent addicted individuals, the identification of addicts and alcoholics from visual evidence is not my primary objective. Rather, my intention in this text is to problematize stereotypes and beliefs that have been

constructed around the bodies of addicted persons, and in order to do so I analyze images and
texts that paint pictures of addiction in a certain light. Many of these stereotypes and beliefs
have persisted for centuries, such as the immorality of alcoholics, their lack of will power, and
alcoholic mothers’ lack of love for their offspring.7 In each chapter I examine visual images that
either represent the addicted body or are in some way related to it, and I discuss the implications
that each image has for the lived experience of addiction during the period that the image was
produced. In other words, I contextualize the images, and acknowledge the specificity of certain
moments in the history of addiction.

It is important to note that in this text I am primarily concerned with addiction to alcohol,
but I also examine drug addiction in Chapters 5 and 6. As I discuss in the Conclusion, there are
certainly other kinds of addictions, but for this project I have chosen to focus on alcoholism and
drug addiction so that I can discuss the histories of these addictions in greater depth. As Jacques
Derrida has remarked, “‘Drugs’ is both a word and a concept, even before one adds quotation
marks to indicate that one is only mentioning and not using, that one is not buying, selling, or
ingesting the ‘stuff itself.’”8 Furthermore, “drugs” is a term that covers a range of substances. I
briefly refer to opium in Chapter 5, and I discuss cocaine and tobacco at length in Chapter 6. I
do not discuss coffee, or legal prescription drugs, although the latter have become an area of
concern in the recent past because of dramatic increases in addiction to prescription drugs in
North America. According to one source, there are more prescription drug addicts in Canada

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7 These stereotypes have also been applied to drug addicts.
8 Jacques Derrida, “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” in High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity, eds. Anna
today than heroin addicts. I also do not discuss at any length the issue of legal drugs versus illegal drugs, nor do I address the history of laws pertaining to drugs. As Janet Brodie and Marc Redfield have commented, today’s illegal drugs have only been illegal since the early twentieth century. I do discuss, however, the way that the criminalization of drunkenness had a material impact on the lived experience of addiction in the nineteenth century (Chapter 5). Indeed, the punishment and confinement of alcoholics foreshadowed the punishment and confinement of drug addicts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Addiction and Desire

In researching addiction I have found that there are many points of intersection between the history of addiction and the history of sexuality. My title, “The Desire to Fill,” hints at this intersection. The term “desire” is usually interpreted as signifying sexual desire; and yet the

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11 In The Use of Pleasure, volume 2 of The History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault observes: “…when I came to study the modes according to which individuals are given to recognize themselves as sexual subjects, the problems were much greater. At the time the notion of desire, or of the desiring subject, constituted if not a theory, then at least a generally accepted theoretical theme. This very acceptance was odd: it was this same theme, in fact, or variations thereof, that was found not only at the very center of the traditional theory, but also in the conceptions that sought to detach themselves from it. It was this theme, too, that appeared to have been inherited, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from a long Christian tradition. While the experience of sexuality, as a singular historical figure, is perhaps quite distinct from the Christian experience of the ‘flesh,’ both appear nonetheless to be dominated by the principle of ‘desiring man.’ In any case, it seemed to me that one could not very well analyze the formation and development of the experience of sexuality from the eighteenth century onward, without doing a historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject.” Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 5. Foucault adds that his field of investigation might be called “the history of desiring man” (6). In this text my field of investigation could be identified as the history of desiring men and women, only the individuals I am concerned with are desirous of drugs and alcohol rather than (or in addition to) sex.
word has often been used in textual accounts of addiction. According to Kate Mitchell, the “desire for alcohol” could sweep over a woman “like a storm, and if not battled with and conquered may result, as it has done in sadly too many cases, in her becoming a confirmed alcoholic.” In 1889 Dr. Thomas Clouston wrote in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*: “A desire, or in its stronger degree a craving, in a healthy organism represents a necessity or an advantage for the individual or the race. It is essentially independent of reasoning.” Similarly, Charles B. Towns asserted in 1915:

A man taking any powerful stimulant is sure to feel a corresponding depression when the effect of that stimulant has died away, and it then becomes necessary for him to take more of the drug in order to buoy himself up and restore himself to the point of normality. It is among cocaine-users, therefore, not a yearning for any abnormally pleasurable sensation which sends them back again and again to their dosage, but merely their desire to be measurably restored to the comfort which is natural to the normal state.

Town’s observation regarding cocaine users is important because it highlights the fact that continued use of a drug indicates not an “abnormal” desire for more pleasure – a belief that has led many observers both past and present to attribute a selfish, even narcissistic, desire for pleasure to drug addicts – but rather a desire to return to a so-called “normal” state somewhere between pain and pleasure, thus illuminating one reason why a drug addict would continually return to his or her drug of choice despite knowledge of various consequences.

In 1925 W.E. Dixon remarked: “Addiction is an expression of underlying causes which it should be possible to remove, since craving is mental, bound up with association of ideas, not

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14 Thomas Clouston, “Diseased Cravings and Paralysed Control: Dipsomania; Morphinomania; Choloralism; Cocainism,” *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, vol. 34 (Dec. 1889), 508.
physical. It is suggested that these may be replaced by substituting for them desires which will become more dominant.”\(^{16}\) The idea of substitution as a solution to addiction, even substituting one addiction for another, points to what I have called the desire to fill a void, a phrase that is sometimes used in recent writing on addiction.\(^{17}\) However, the idea that addiction signified a desire to fill a void was also apparent in nineteenth-century accounts, for example Clouston’s observation that “It is certain that the existence of a craving indicates a need of some sort, but it may not be the thing craved for that is needed. It is the very essential principle of the treatment and cure of cases of dipsomania, morphinomania, and cocainism that the cravings are sure signals of distress, that must be attended to.”\(^{18}\)

**Addiction and Disease**

According to Clouston, “A craving that leads to ill is a diseased craving.”\(^{19}\) Framing addiction as a disease enacted two diametrically opposed discursive projects in the nineteenth century. The first was related to anxieties about the degeneration of Britain, and employed negative images and metaphors of disease that painted drunkenness as communicable and alcoholics and drug addicts as tainted by stigma. The second began as early as the eighteenth century, but gained momentum after 1884 with the formation of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety. “Inebriety” was one of the many terms that were discarded for the more

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\(^{17}\) See, for instance, Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008). According to Jacques Derrida, “There are those who would say, and not without ‘common sense’ when the sky of transcendence comes to be emptied, and not just of Gods, but of any Other, a fatal rhetoric fills the void, and this is the fetishism of drug addiction. Not religion as the opiate of the people, but drugs as the religion of the atheist poets – and of some others, more or less atheists, more or less poets.” Derrida, “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” 29.

\(^{18}\) Clouston, “Diseased Cravings,” 512.

\(^{19}\) Clouston, “Diseased Cravings,” 509.
specific “alcoholism” at the end of the nineteenth century. Dr. Norman Kerr, the first president of the Society, was a vocal advocate of the belief that inebriety was a disease, thus removing – in theory – the taint of immorality and sin that had been attached to drunkenness for centuries:

The theologian denounces the intemperate one as willingly guilty of heinous sin. The judge punishes the riotous drunkard as a criminal offender…. Has this treatment of the inebriate been judicious? Is he but a fool? Is he but a wanton and wicked sinner? Is he but a headstrong and hardened criminal? Are all his outbreaks of intemperate drinking but the fruit of an evil and perverse disposition?

Emphatically does science answer ‘NO,’ and plainly does common sense echo the denial. Men and women of the highest culture, the purest life, the most exalted aims, have become reckless drunkards. The clearest minds, the keenest intellects, the most acute reasoners, have been subdued by alcohol. The warmest hearts, the kindest souls, the most unselfish spirits, have been transformed under the siren influence of ‘the tricksy spirit,’ into the coldest, most unkind, and most selfish votaries at the shrine of Bacchus.

According to Kerr, inebriety was “a disease of the nervous system with a morbid impulse” to “crave intoxication.” There are two aspects of Kerr’s statements about inebriety that I wish to underscore. First, his definition of the term refers to a person’s craving “for intoxication.” The craving is not specifically for alcohol, but rather for intoxication, suggesting that the substance (or behavior) that is used to achieve intoxication is secondary to the ultimate objective: intoxication. The term “inebriety” was used to refer to a range of addictions, including both alcoholism and drug addiction, and as addiction scholar Virginia Berridge has pointed out, “It seemed, in medical eyes, only natural to extend this disease formulation to other conditions with

20 In 1899 George Wilson wrote: “A great confusion has been created by the various meanings attached to the various names of alcoholic illness by different writers. They distinguish between drunkenness, inebriety, alcoholism, dipsomania, mania…delirium tremens, alcoholic insanity, alcoholic epilepsy, etc., as if each of these was a disease by itself….But it would be a great gain did it become customary to designate all of them under a generic name, so as to express the fact that they are but various manifestations of the same kind of disease which are described by titles so diverse.” He continued: “Were a new nomenclature under debate, I should suggest that the word ‘alcoholism’ should always be used, qualified by some distinguishing adjectives, or else that adjectival form, ‘alcoholic,’ should occur in the names given to varieties. And, on general grounds, it seems to me preferable to have English names for diseases of English people.” George R. Wilson, Clinical Studies in Vice and Insanity (Edinburgh: William F. Clay, 1899), 4-5.


22 Kerr, Inebriety, 35.
which they had dealings. Hence came the extension of disease prescriptions to areas such as homosexuality and insanity…” 23 The pathologizing of both addiction and homosexuality is just one of the intersections between the history of sexuality and the history of addiction that I explore in “The Desire to Fill.” This particular intersection became especially vivid in relation to ideas about degeneration and decadence. In Chapter 5 I argue that, just as homosexuality was largely closeted in the nineteenth century, so too was there a desire by addicts and alcoholics to remain closeted because of the legal and social ramifications of exhibiting behaviors associated with addiction. Furthermore, drawing on Maurizio Viano’s suggestion that twenty-first century drug addicts are the last group to need a “closet,” I address the morally infused stigma that still adheres to both the drug addict and alcoholic in western culture today. 24 In Chapter 6 and the Conclusion I discuss parallels between addiction, decadence and Aestheticism in terms of how they were perceived at the fin de siècle. For now I will note that Fraser Harrison has aligned addiction with homosexuality, identifying both as ways that men associated with the Yellow Book in the 1890s coped with a crisis of masculinity: “The threats and demands represented by the ever accelerating movement towards female emancipation on all fronts, seem to have unnerved and unbalanced this group of men and driven them to seek comfort and oblivion in homosexuality, prostitution, addiction to alcohol and opiates, sterile relationships with children, and, in some cases, forlorn celibacy.” 25

The second point to note in Kerr’s remarks about inebriety are his references to science and common sense as evidence that inebriety is not a sin but a disease, thus attempting to empty

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25 Quoted in Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle (New York: Viking, 1990), 170.
the condition of the stigmas of immorality and vice. He also refers to the legislation that positioned and punished alcoholics as criminals, a passage in the history of addiction that I discuss in Chapter 5. Kerr’s confidence that the Society’s identification of inebriety as a disease would result in more sympathy and understanding for alcoholics proved, of course, to be groundless, because, as scholars such Pamela Gilbert and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace have shown, certain beliefs about disease – namely, that disease was related to immorality, poverty and excess – were very strong indeed, and the taint of disease only added to the original taint attached to drunkenness.

Kowaleski-Wallace has remarked upon the dual meaning of “consume,” observing: “To consume is either to take in what one needs to survive or to waste away in a fit of disease.” For addicts and alcoholics, to consume drugs and alcohol can become an act upon which survival seems to depend, but it is perhaps the latter definition that is more commonly associated with addiction, namely in terms of the wasted body and the wasted life. Pamela Gilbert has shown how discourses revolving around cholera and syphilis parallel certain negative beliefs that have attached to AIDS in more recent years. As she observes, “Earlier attitudes toward disease and the body have…remained remarkably current…”

According to Gilbert, “Desire is movement.” In Chapter 4, in which I discuss women’s desire for alcohol and how this desire impacted space, architecture and women’s mobility in Victorian London, I show that addiction exemplifies Gilbert’s observation about desire and movement. Addiction is desire and need knotted together into a physical and mental state of

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28 Gilbert, Disease, Desire, and the Body, 46.
craving that can motivate fevered, desperate movement. Ole Bjerg has commented that “The ordinary subject believes that he knows what he really desires,” but “[t]he craving drug user knows precisely what he really needs.” There are, I would argue, varying degrees of desperation induced by addiction, and various factors impact this sense of desperation: facility of mobility, class, money, race, gender. As Valerie Traub has remarked, “wherever there is desire, there is anxiety; wherever there is anxiety, there is desire.” It is my position in “The Desire to Fill” that the lived experience of addiction is effectively a mutation of the experience of desire, an intensified experience of need, an exaggerated experience of consumption. I therefore draw on studies of disease, sexuality, and consumption because these scholars address some of the fundamental issues that are at stake in the study of addiction.

**Constant Craving: A Continuist Approach to Addiction**

“Constant craving has always been.”
-k.d. lang

Throughout “The Desire to Fill” my discussion will be founded on my belief that addiction is not a recent phenomenon or merely a characteristic of modern society. Rather, I would suggest, addiction has “always been.” I maintain this position despite the possibility that I will be criticized for anachronism or ahistoricism, specifically in relation to using terms such as “addiction”, “alcoholic”, and “drug addict” in my discussions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-

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30 For a discussion of how race and space impact the experience of buying, selling and using crack cocaine in a specific geographical zone, see Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
32 This is the position of many scholars including, for example, Timothy A. Hickman, *The Secret Leprosy of Modern Days: Narcotic Addiction and Cultural Crisis in the United States, 1870-1920* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).
century visual culture, but also more generally in terms of my argument that people experienced addiction before the late nineteenth century when the identity of the “addict” (whether to alcohol or drugs) was discursively constructed. Janet Farrell Brodie and Marc Redfield have noted that the first entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in which “addiction” refers to drug use is from 1906, and its first entry using the term “addict” as a noun was written in 1909.33 I have deliberately chosen to write a study of addiction along the lines of “continuism” – that is, the approach to history that acknowledges that while things undoubtedly change over time, there are points of connection (or “cycles of salience” in Valerie Traub’s words) between the past and present. In an essay on lesbian historiography, Traub distinguishes between continuism, which has “tended to emphasize a similarity between past and present concepts of sexual understanding,” and the kind of approach to sexuality in history that highlights “difference or alterity,” emphasizing “problems of anachronism, changing terminologies and typologies, and resistance to teleology.”34 Traub makes a strong case for a “new methodological paradigm for lesbian history,” one that recognizes historical specificity, but that also recognizes “certain recurrent explanatory meta-logics that accord to the history of lesbianism over a vast temporal expanse a sense of consistency and, at times, uncanny familiarity.”35 My vision of addiction in history conforms to this kind of methodological approach, particularly Traub’s emphasis on a “sense of consistency” and “uncanny familiarity,” as I have experienced both in researching addiction from approximately 1751 to the present.

When I first set out to work on this project I envisioned a text concerned exclusively with representations of female alcoholics. However, primary research revealed that such a project would be limiting, and I widened my scope to consider both addiction and gender more broadly. The result is two chapters concerned with women, femininities and feminism (Chapters 2 and 4), two chapters that examine masculinities in relation to addiction, as well as different kinds of vulnerabilities and suffering (Chapters 3 and 6), and one chapter that discusses representations of men and women of different races (Chapter 4). I also broadened my scope in terms of the addictive substances that I would discuss. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are primarily concerned with alcohol, and in Chapter 5 I introduce the subject of drugs. In Chapter 6 I examine Alfred Priest’s painting *Cocaine* (1919), which of course made it necessary to discuss the history of cocaine and its users, and an advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes, which I analyze alongside textual accounts from the nineteenth century to the recent past regarding the pleasures and dangers of tobacco consumption.

My methodological approach in examining the visual culture of addiction is greatly indebted to both feminist and queer theory. There are a few reasons for this. First, I come to the study of addiction via an interest in feminist art history and the representation of women in art. Feminist art historians such as Rosemary Betterton, Griselda Pollock, Linda Nochlin, Lynda Nead, Lisa Tickner, Kristina Huneault and Janice Helland, among others, have all contributed to my thinking about the relationship between images of women and the material lives of women.36

Queer theory shares with feminist theory a concern with art and visual culture that represents oppressed subjects, and work by art historians using queer theory has been particularly significant for my own work in terms of both their exciting, speculative and innovative readings of visual culture, and the intersections between the history of sexuality and the history of addiction that I have already mentioned.

My attraction to queer theory is therefore not arbitrary.37 Timothy Melley has pointed out that the identities “addict and homosexual” have long been linked, “not only because they emerged at the same historical moment, but because they have historically been viewed as expressions of ‘unnaturalness.’”38 Art historians using queer theory to analyze Victorian visual culture include Jason Edwards, Michael Hatt, Jonathan Shirland, John Potvin, Andrew Stephenson, and Griselda Pollock.39 Their oeuvre as a whole functions as a model of responsible

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speculation. Hatt describes an essay on Aesthetic interiors as “necessarily speculative,”40 and Edwards refers to his “intuition” in a wonderful discussion of queer concerns in relation to visual culture.41 In his discussion of John Addington Symonds's art criticism, David Getsy ponders how he might “confirm archivally” his “homoerotic hunches.”42 Jane Rendell offers a possible answer to this question when she argues that theory and history – that is, primary research – can complement each other, noting that theory “told back” to her what she had already guessed about gender and space in the early nineteenth century, but in the language of objectivity rather than subjectivity.43 In “The Desire to Fill” I rely heavily on primary research I have culled from various libraries and archives in Britain in order to create an image of how addicted persons were perceived in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In turn, I use what I call “addiction theory” to examine both these textual representations and visual culture, and to tease out the subtexts of beliefs and anxieties about addiction. Addiction theory owes much to both feminist and queer theory in that all three are concerned with the material lives of marginalized subjects.44 I discuss this methodological approach further in the next chapter, and I suggest possible future paths for addiction theory in the Conclusion.

In Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama (1992), Traub observes that “by positing the presence of homoerotic desire and anxiety in early modern society and texts, I move against the social constructivist stance that locates the advent of

44 Colleen Denney, for example, has referred to her “desire to unearth each woman’s lived experience” in her book on portraits of scandalous women. Colleen Denney, Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered (Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 25.
‘homosexuality’ in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. I do not mean to dispute the
evidence that homosexuality in the modern sense (as a distinct mode of identity) came into being
under the auspices of sexological discourse.” 45 Throughout “The Desire to Fill” I have written
with the awareness that other scholars concerned with addiction have argued persuasively for the
discursive construction of the “addict” identity, which, they argue, paralleled the discursive
construction of the “homosexual.” 46 Therefore, similar to Traub and other scholars who have
investigated homosexuality and homoeroticism in historical moments prior to the present day, I
have been investigating addiction in the period from approximately 1751 to 1919 with full
knowledge that the identities of the “addict” and “alcoholic” as we know them today did not
exist prior to the end of the nineteenth century, and rather than coming into being under the
auspices of sexological discourse, they came into being under the auspices of primarily medical,
but also legal and socio-moral, discourses. However, as I have been arguing, certain
experiences, beliefs, perceptions, meanings and signs pertaining to addiction repeatedly surface
at various moments over the long expanse of time from 1751 up to and including the present day.

**Literature Review**

There have been very few studies published on addiction and art or visual culture. 47

However, art historians concerned with certain time periods or media have broached the issue of
addiction in their discussions of images such as Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* (both 1751;
British Museum, London). For example, in a discussion of *Gin Lane* Mark Hallett refers to “gin

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46 See, for example, Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 130-31. This point is the underlying premise of Zieger’s *Inventing the Addict*, as her title clearly indicates.
addiction” and “questions of alcoholism.”

*Gin Lane* is often alluded to in discussions of the eighteenth-century gin craze in Britain, and is sometimes used as an illustration of the state of things in this time period. My objective in the next chapter is to take a close look at this engraving to see what beliefs and perceptions about alcoholic mothers Hogarth drew on. I read the image alongside eighteenth- and nineteenth-century textual accounts of maternal drinking in order to theorize the alcoholic maternal body; that is, I attempt to illuminate what it is about the alcoholic mother that was and still is so threatening.

Although there has not yet been an extended (that is, book-length) study on addiction and art or visual culture, at least three scholars have written essays or articles on the subject. Elizabeth K. Menon’s article “Decadent Addictions: Tobacco, Alcohol, Popular Imagery, and Café Culture in France” (2004) examines advertisements and various other popular culture images related to tobacco and alcohol that represent sexualized, often semi-nude women, as well as artworks such as Edouard Manet’s *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1881-82, Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London) and Albert Maignan’s *La Muse Verte* (1895, Musée de Picardie, Amiens). As Menon remarks, “Artists who produced Salon paintings or satirical images for the popular press revealed the brutal realities of addictive substances, which, of necessity, were suppressed in advertisements.”

According to Menon, women appeared so often in alcohol advertisements because they were meant to further the seductive quality of the image and by extension the product being sold. Women were also included in artistic and popular

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culture images representing alcohol and alcohol consumption, but these women were usually \textit{femme fatale} figures who “symbolized not only the decadence of \textit{fin-de-siècle} France, but also the very nature of addiction and withdrawal. The \textit{femme fatale} functions on the same decadent dichotomy of danger/pleasure as do addictive substances such as tobacco and absinthe.”\textsuperscript{51}

David Hopkins discusses contemporary art by female British artists that addresses both the visibility and invisibility of alcoholics in “‘Out of It’: Drunkenness and Ethics in Martha Rosler and Gillian Wearing” (2004). Martha Rosler’s \textit{The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems} (1974) is comprised of two parts: first, photographs of spaces that would normally be occupied by a “tramp” or a “bum” (linked in Hopkins’s article with drunkenness), but who were “got rid of” by Rosler, “leaving only the context, the detail.”\textsuperscript{52} The second part of the artwork are lists of euphemisms for drunkenness, positioned above the photographs, including “squiffy,” “snozzled,” “soaked” and “sloshed.” Hopkins also discusses Gillian Wearing’s video work \textit{Drunk}, which was first shown in New York in 1999 and later at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Of the two artworks, I find Wearing’s the more problematic, and despite the fact that Hopkins includes “ethics” in his title, I do not believe he goes far enough in addressing the highly questionable strategy that Wearing used to get her subjects to “act” drunk. Indeed, as Hopkins points out, these are not actors stumbling around a white studio space, intermittently drinking, falling, laughing and fighting. Rather, they are “actual drunks.”\textsuperscript{53} To describe a person as a “drunk” (rather than an “alcoholic”) is to use a derogatory term that derives from the word “drunkard,” which had both legal and moral connotations in the

\textsuperscript{51} Menon, “Decadent Addictions” 101.
\textsuperscript{53} Hopkins, “Out of It,” 28.
nineteenth century. According to Hopkins, Wearing “openly admits to the unequal starting position from which she pursued her drunken quarry. She talks candidly of being attracted to people who have ‘very low defences.’ Yet presumably the low defences of her drunks were lowered further by the alcohol with which she rewarded them.”

My primary criticism of Wearing’s work is that it appears to exist solely for purposes of voyeurism, and it goes without saying that if an artist had rounded up a crew of any other marginalized group and set them loose, documenting them making fools of themselves because of some artificial intervention on the artist’s part, the work would be intensely criticized. But because of the stereotypes and beliefs about alcoholics that linger from previous centuries, Hopkins can express faint concern about the questionable (or absent) ethics of this work, excusing it because of “Wearing’s frank admission of a kind of amoral curiosity,” and because her “unapologetic voyeurism opens onto an issue which further extends this discussion: her vicarious identification with the drunks.”

Wearing’s project of turning a group of alcoholics into specimens, “like spiders struggling to extricate themselves from a blob of spittle,” in Hopkins’s words, is simply a continuation of the kind of visual practice undertaken by some artists in the period between 1751 and 1919, a practice that I attempt to deconstruct throughout “The Desire to Fill.”

Maurizio Viano’s “An Intoxicated Screen: Reflections on Film and Drugs” (2002) also discusses addiction, or at least drug use, in relation to visual culture. Viano is concerned with both the representation of drug use in films, and the “drug war” that has criminalized drug use. He offers insights about the absurdities inherent in the so-called War on Drugs, and the essay is
an example of how issues connected with addiction can be discussed in relation to visual culture while simultaneously acknowledging the lived reality of drug users and addicts. Viano’s dual project, then, is close to my own objectives in “The Desire to Fill.” He writes: “I think that we, academics in film studies, can make our small contribution (whatever its slant) to this most pressing sociocultural problem by bringing to the surface the layers of images that have sedimented in the collective imagination.” The “sociocultural problem” that Viano refers to is the counterproductive intervention by American politicians into the dilemma of drug addiction, which, according to Viano, is “so often linked with the maintenance of the drug problem.” He ultimately argues that the illegality of drugs does more harm than good, for both society and addicts themselves. Although I share Viano’s concern with both visual culture and the actual lives of addicts, I will not address current drug policy in my own text. This is not because I do not have an opinion on this extremely important matter, but because, frankly, I feel that my largely uninformed opinion has no place in this dissertation. I leave this debate to scholars whose research is specifically concerned with drug policy.

This brings me to what I call “pure” addiction studies. I have already mentioned the plethora of texts written on addiction and literature, or more broadly, addiction and “cultural studies.” In addition to these, I have drawn on many texts concerned with alcohol, drugs (including illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin and opium, as well as legal drugs such as tobacco), and addiction. In the field of alcohol and drug studies, addiction is not necessarily the

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primary focus. Mary Douglas has noted the tendency in social histories of alcohol to focus on the negative aspects of alcohol consumption, whereas in *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology* (1987) she and other scholars examine the positive, ritualistic, even transgressive possibilities of alcohol. Unlike Douglas’s edited volume and other books that discuss alcohol in terms of social history and the central role that alcohol has played in certain societies, for instance B. Ann Tlusty’s *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (2001), in which Tlusty argues that drinking and tavern life served a range of social purposes in Germany between 1500 and 1700, my own text will discuss both alcohol consumption and drug use specifically in relation to addiction. There is a danger here of vilifying all alcohol consumption and drug use, which is not my intention. Rather, while acknowledging the reasons that people drink and use drugs, I am concerned with the experience of addiction proper, which is not, of course, synonymous with individual instances of either alcohol consumption or drug use.

I am particularly indebted to scholars working on addiction who have written accessible texts on the neurological, as well as physical, mental and emotional, facets of addiction, and those scholars who illuminate the ways that addiction has intersected with issues of gender, sexuality, class and race. I have drawn from these scholars’ work often in my discussions of

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addiction and British visual culture. Although my objectives and methodologies may differ from
theirs, their contributions to the field of addiction studies have made my own text possible.

**Binge Britain**

In the eighteenth century concerns regarding gin consumption in Britain, and particularly
London, were just as crazed as the drinking of the lower classes was purported to be.67 In the
nineteenth century, alcohol consumption continued to be described as a “national question,”
because of the alleged effects of drunkenness, and to a lesser extent drug use, on British citizens,
and by extension on the British Empire.68 Indeed, as A.E. Dingle has noted, “Victorians were
obsessed with alcohol.”69 The Victorians Dingle refers to here were not so much alcoholic
Victorians, but the Victorians who were anxiously trying to control other Victorians’ alcohol
consumption. This anxiety was often framed as concern for the British nation, and both alcohol
and the people who consumed it to excess (according to those who had the power to decide what
“excess” meant in this context) were regarded as threats to the British social body. J. Johnson
asserted in 1889, “Among the social questions of the day there is none of greater importance than
that of drink, which is no longer regarded as the ‘fad’ of a few crack-brained enthusiasts, but as a
question which is worthy [of] the attention of the Imperial Parliament. It is a question in which
our national life is intimately bound up, and it is one which every thinking individual ought to

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study because it concerns their personal health.”70 Kate Mitchell resorted to insults in her frustration about the drink question, remarking: “The English are not a logical people. This fact, I think, has been admitted by all our great thinkers. It is the want of the power of drawing conclusions from ascertained and proved data that stands in the way of more rapid national development.”71 She made this statement based on her consternation that, despite evidence of the ill effects of alcohol, the vast majority of British citizens continued to drink.

Lynda Nead has shown how nineteenth-century London was often figured as a “Victorian Babylon.” “But,” Nead writes, “Babylon was a paradoxical image for the nineteenth-century city. It not only represented the most magnificent imperial city of the ancient world, but also conjured up images of the mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse. It was a place that symbolized material wonder and tumultuous destruction; a city whose splendor was its downfall.”72 Mitchell drew on this image when she wrote: “The very wealth of England may be the means of her ruin. Those who have it indulge in riotous living from idleness, ennui, and want of something to live for; those who have not got it will brood over their miseries, and will drown their troubles in the narcotic draught. Wealth breeds vice and discontent, misery breeds vice and discontent, and both seek the same means of relief from the weariness of life.”73 In other words, both the rich and the poor drink because they are trying to fill a void.

Anxieties about alcohol consumption, drug use and addiction persist in Britain today, as the many books, articles and conferences on the subject indicate. For instance, in Binge Britain: Alcohol and the National Response (2006), Martin Plant and Moira Plant address recent concerns

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70 J. Johnston, Alcohol from a Medical Point of View (London: Barret, Sons and Co., 1889), 3.
73 Mitchell, The Drink Question, 27.
about binging, a behavior usually associated in the popular media with youth, but which is not limited to that demographic. The authors acknowledge the range of definitions for binging, observing: “The term ‘binge drinking’ (sometimes called ‘bout drinking’) has been used to denote ‘excessive,’ immoderate, or heavy drinking. In fact this term has been used in two distinct ways. The first has been used by psychiatrists and other health professionals to describe a ‘bender,’ a prolonged drinking spree during which an individual drinks in a sustained manner and gives up other activities for at least two or three days.”74 The second definition of binge drinking, which is currently the more popular of the two, “relates to a single drinking session intended to or actually leading to intoxication. This session need not be prolonged but is assumed to be at least potentially risky.”75 The authors also address the “moral panics,” a phrase originally used by sociologist Stanley Cohen, associated with drinking in recent years,76 thus highlighting the fact that, just as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alcohol consumption is largely still regarded as both a moral issue and a cause for panic.

Philip Jenkins makes a similar point regarding drug use in Synthetic Panics: The Symbolic Politics of Designer Drugs (1999). According to Jenkins, “On average over the last quarter-century, a new nightmare over synthetics has erupted every three or four years.”77 He advocates a constructionist approach to perceptions and policies regarding substance abuse, noting that attitudes toward drugs are socially constructed.78 The fear of drugs and addicts, Jenkins argues, is dependant on framing the addict as less than human: “Through chemical

75 Plant and Plant, Binge Britain, ix.
76 Plant and Plant, Binge Britain, 27.
78 Jenkins, Synthetic Panics, 3.
technologies, drug users abandon full humanity in a quest for a superior state, often losing their human selves in the process.”

In “The Desire to Fill” I examine examples of visual culture produced in previous centuries that represents alcohol and drug consumption, or the (possibly) addicted body, in order to demonstrate the ways that alcoholics and drug addicts have been stigmatized. Without a doubt, my intentions in this text are guided by an awareness that many, if not all, of these stigmas remain in circulation in our own time, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly; sometimes uncannily familiar, and sometimes in altered forms. Just as stereotypes, beliefs and perceptions about gender, sexuality, class and race have long histories, so too do stereotypes, beliefs, and perceptions about addiction. And just as academics concerned with gender, sexuality, class and race have been working diligently for decades to illuminate these beliefs and stereotypes in order to destabilize them, my primary objective in this text is to illuminate beliefs and stereotypes about addiction that remain entrenched in the popular imagination in order to destabilize them.

The following chapters are, I hope, steps toward that end.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2 I take William Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* (Fig. 2.1) as my jumping off point for a discussion of how alcoholic mothers were perceived in the eighteenth century. However, although I contextualize Hogarth’s engraving within the historical moment it was produced, I

also draw on nineteenth-century writers who commented on mothers who drank alcoholicly. I argue that beliefs about alcoholic mothers have remained remarkably consistent since the eighteenth century, and that these beliefs persist today in relation to both maternal alcoholics and drug addicts. The primary belief or myth that I address is the assumption that these women did not care about their children. I suggest that the alcoholic mother was perceived as a triple threat in the eighteenth century: a threat to herself, to her children, and to the nation. In order to destabilize the long-held belief that alcoholic mothers do not care, I use addiction theory to unveil the fearful, punitive constructions of these women in art, texts, and the popular imagination, just as feminist scholars such as Rosemary Betterton have theorized the consuming woman in order to illuminate the “fear and loathing of the female body” that has a “long and well founded tradition within European culture.”

In Chapter 3 I turn my focus from the female body to the male body, and rather than the lived experience of alcoholism, I examine the experience of an artist after he decided to stop drinking. George Cruikshank was known as a heavy drinker until around 1847 or 1848 when he became a vehement temperance advocate. I argue that Cruikshank was more commercially and artistically successful when he was actively drinking than after his decision to stop drinking, because as a sober man he became associated with a fanatical brand of temperance, thus causing his many biographers and art critics to lament his intemperate temperance. I propose, furthermore, that Cruikshank’s words and actions were so infused with histrionics that his identity as a temperance advocate may have been perceived as sharing certain characteristics with women identified as hysterical.

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81 Betterton, *An Intimate Distance*, 130.
The first half of Chapter 4 examines the intersecting discourses revolving around the “new Crystal Palace” – the structure originally built for the Great Exhibition in 1851 and subsequently rebuilt at Sydenham in 1853 – and gin palaces. Both the Crystal Palace and gin palaces were described in terms of visual seduction, and both activated anxieties about women’s consumption. In the second half of the chapter I focus more specifically on women’s mobility when it was motivated by desire for, or addiction to, alcohol. I suggest that because of the visceral need activated by addiction, alcoholic women would have ignored ideological boundaries between public and private spaces in order to procure alcohol. Within this framework, I offer a reading of a primary source that describes a “ladies’ pub,” which, I argue, points to the fact that women’s desire for alcohol had a material impact on architecture and space in Victorian London. I draw heavily on feminist theories of space and mobility in this chapter in order to theorize the embodied experience of seeking out alcohol when addiction is the motivating force.

Chapter 5 is indebted to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s book The Epistemology of the Closet (1990), which examines manifestations of the desire to closet homosexuality in nineteenth-century literature. I argue that there was also a desire to closet addiction in the nineteenth century, and I analyze images that represent confinement and punishment in relation to excessive alcohol consumption. Although Sedgwick’s study is concerned with nineteenth-century literature, she also addresses the material lives of gay men and lesbian women in the 1980s. Like Sedgwick, I draw a connection between my objects of analysis – nineteenth-century visual culture – and the material lives of alcoholics and drug addicts in the present day. Building on Maurizio Viano’s argument that drug addicts are the last marginalized group in need of a closet, I both qualify his assertion and agree with his suggestion that drug addicts today wish to remain
closed, primarily because certain drugs are illegal, but also because we have inherited beliefs about the fundamental immorality and degeneracy of drug addicts. I add to Viano’s discussion, however, by suggesting that alcoholics also remain largely closeted because of similar beliefs about immorality, weak will power and the innate shamefulness of addiction.

In Chapter 6 I examine Royal Academician Alfred Priest’s painting *Cocaine*, which I compare to an advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes that appeared in *The Graphic* a month before *Cocaine* was reproduced in the same magazine. Both images represent a man and a woman in a domestic interior. In Priest’s painting the woman is shown sitting upright and staring assertively at the viewer, while the man lies unconscious with his head in her lap. In the Kenilworth advertisement, on the other hand, it is the man who is shown sitting upright with his wife leaning into his body, thus conforming to more traditional Victorian representations of gender. The year that both images were produced, 1919, is highly significant. I argue that both the painting and the advertisement represent men who are attempting to suppress memories of the First World War with the use of addictive substances. Further to this, I suggest that while Priest portrayed the man in his painting as vulnerable due to his drug use, the creator of the Kenilworth advertisement was invested in reasserting traditional masculinity in relation to the product being sold. However, I read both images as representations of masculine vulnerability.

In the Conclusion I discuss possible future uses of addiction theory in visual culture studies, and I engage in a speculative reading of Oscar Wilde’s long letter, known as *De Profundis* (1897), for evidence of an addictive love relationship with Alfred Douglas. I conclude “The Desire to Fill” with a comparison between a text from the early twentieth century and a more recent text from 2008, showing how the reasons for seeking to fill a void with alcohol and drugs have not changed in the last one hundred years. Furthermore, I argue, along the lines of a
continuist approach to the history of addiction, that the reasons for seeking intoxication have not changed dramatically in the last three hundred years, nor have perceptions about those who seek intoxication. My main argument in this study is that visual culture has often been used as a tool to entrench beliefs about alcoholics and drug addicts, and in doing so the assumed legibility of alcoholic and addict bodies has also been promulgated. In this project I employ visual analysis and theory in order to disturb the relationship between visuality and addiction.
Chapter 2
Theory, Mothers and Hogarth’s Gin Lane

In mapping the intersections between art and alcohol in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, the maternal body is the perfect symbolic landmark from which to embark, precisely because mothers’ bodies have been so central in both western art and theories of alcohol and addiction. As long as there has been writing on alcohol, the maternal body has been linked with the ill effects of alcohol consumption. Aristotle, for instance, wrote that “drunken women bring forth children like unto themselves.”82 The belief that drunkenness, and later alcoholism, was hereditary continued to be accepted in subsequent centuries, and is still regarded by some as a plausible reason for addiction to alcohol.83 In fact, although some of the language changed, views on drunken mothers in particular remained consistent throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For this reason I cite both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources in this chapter, although the primary focus will be eighteenth-century graphic art.84 Many scholars have published texts on alcohol consumption in eighteenth-century Britain, and the literature in this field tends to repeat much of the same primary source material, such as Henry Fielding’s pamphlet An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc. with some

82 Quoted in William B. Carpenter, On the Use and Abuse of Alcoholic Liquors, in Health and Disease (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850), 44.
83 “It is now a thoroughly established fact that the alcoholic habit can be thus transmitted [i.e. from mother to child]. [...] This does not imply that every child of an alcoholic will or must become one, but it does mean that such children are more likely to become victims than those whose blood is free from the taint.” J. Johnston, Alcohol from a Medical Point of View (London: Barret, Sons and Co, 1889), 11. Johnston’s reference to blood and the “taint” of alcoholism recalls nineteenth-century discourses regarding miscegenation and degrees of blackness. See Michael D. Harris, Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 71.
Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil (1751). By contrast, because of the expansion of the medical profession during the nineteenth century, there is a far greater pool of primary sources concerning alcohol, drunkenness and addiction from this period, and much of this research has not yet been published in secondary literature.

In this chapter I use what I call “addiction theory” in order to theorize the drinking mother, or more specifically, the alcoholic mother, in lived and visual culture. By addiction theory I mean the methodological approach I take in my examinations of visual or textual evidence for manifestations of addictive behavior. I interpret this evidence in order to intuit what the impact of addiction has been on a subject or subjects, its impact on those circulating in the subject’s sphere or environment, and the social significance and/or meanings attached to the alcoholic and her addiction. Addiction theory is to addiction studies what feminist theory and queer theory are to women’s and gender studies. Theory allows me to speculate and to activate queries that access meanings and lived experiences through interpretation of visual material.

Furthermore, in my discussion of the history of addiction there will sometimes be parallels drawn between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century issues and present concerns related to addiction; between historical addict bodies and twenty-first-century addict bodies; between historical images and current ideas, beliefs and hopes about addiction.

In order to theorize the alcoholic mother, I read William Hogarth’s (1697-1764) Gin Lane (Fig. 2.1) for openings through which to view how the drinking mother was positioned in

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85 Fielding writes: “What must become of the Infant who is conceived in Gin? With the poisonous Distillations of which it is nourished in the Womb and at the Breast. Are these wretched Infants (if such can be supposed capable of arriving at the Age of Maturity) to become our future sailors, and our future Grenadiers?” Henry Fielding, An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc. with some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil (London: A. Millar, 1751), 19-20.

eighteenth-century thought (and action) on gin and drunkenness. Most historians and scholars of addiction refer, with varying degrees of analysis, to *Gin Lane* in discussions of gin consumption in the eighteenth century. Fiona Haslam, for example, has recognized that *Gin Lane* lends itself to analysis alongside medical texts on the dangers of alcohol consumption. Jonathan White has

Figure 2.1. William Hogarth, *Gin Lane*, 1751, etching and engraving, 380 x 320 mm, British Museum, London.

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observed that it might seem like Hogarth’s famous print “says all that would ever need to be said about the ‘gin craze’ of the early eighteenth century. The engraving has come to be virtually identified with its subject, revealing and circumscribing possible histories.”

Indeed, *Gin Lane* has become so recognizable in the field of addiction studies that its visual content is usually not subjected to close readings, and it is left to stand alone, without analysis, as an illustration of whatever alcohol-related topic is being addressed.

It would be foolhardy to argue that *Gin Lane* contains everything we need to critically discuss eighteenth-century alcoholic mothers, but as the central figure in the image is a woman, as well as (we assume) a mother, Hogarth’s engraving does offer a seductive point of entry for an examination of maternal addiction. There is a tendency to overlook, even while looking directly at, the mother in *Gin Lane*. A recent example of this trend is Christine Riding’s speculation in the catalogue for Tate Britain’s 2007 Hogarth exhibition that the woman on the stairs is meant to be read as Mother Gin, the symbolic female figure who was conceived of in the eighteenth century as the embodiment of the feminized beverage.

Thus, according to Riding, the central figure in Hogarth’s engraving is more icon than flesh and blood. Several prints were produced in the eighteenth century that referred to Mother Gin (also called Madam Geneva), such as *The

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89 Mark Hallett makes a similar point when he observes that “The print has served as the ubiquitous adjunct to social histories of the period, and is usually deployed to provide a seemingly authentic snapshot of the less salubrious aspects of metropolitan society in Georgian Britain.” Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Art in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 200.
90 See Iain Gately, *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol* (New York: Gotham Books, 2008), 163. Gately points out that there is much gin drinking in John Gay’s play *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), and the consumption of gin is characterized as a feminine act.
Funeral Procession of Madam Geneva (1736, re-published 1751, British Museum), To the Mortal Memory of Madam Geneva (1736, British Museum), and The Lamentable Fall of Madam Geneva (1736, British Museum). Significantly, the body of “Mother Gin” is always absent in this type of elegiac, tongue-in-cheek representation. I propose that the woman in Hogarth’s print is meant to be seen as a “real” woman constructed from stereotypes and ideologies that had been circulating for many years. If we read the woman in Gin Lane as an emblematic, iconic figure who was spoken of and imagined as the embodiment of the feminized alcoholic beverage known variously as gin, geneva and Ladies’ Delight, then the image says less about the violence done to the female alcoholic in the popular imagination of cultures that denigrate women and mothers addicted to alcohol.

The body is central in my discussion of Hogarth’s Gin Lane and alcoholic mothers. After all, alcohol enters the body, is processed in the body, exits the body as waste – more on this later – and can cause serious harm to the body. One writer commented in the 1820s: “If you would destroy your body, be a Drunkard; as drunkenness is the mother of disease.”

92 The Craftsman announced the publication of the print in July 1736. It was re-published and advertised on September 29th, 1751 with the text: “To those Melancholy Sufferers (by a late Severe Act) the DISTILLERS this Plate is most humbly Inscrib’d by a lover of Trade.” Quoted in Haslam, From Hogarth to Rowlandson, 123, 129.

93 In 1737 an anonymous author wrote that “Mother Gin” was “held in the highest Esteem by those of her own Sex, even of the first Quality, being admitted into their most private Apartments, ever at hand to administer Relief under the many Disappointments and Afflictions, so unfortunately incident to that tender Part of Creation.” Quoted in Jessica Warner and Frank Ivis, “Gin and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century London,” Eighteenth-Century Life, vol. 24, no. 2 (Spring 2000), 85. See also Peter Clark, “The ‘Mother Gin’ Controversy in the Early Eighteenth Century,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, vol. 38 (1988), 70.

94 Warner notes that the word geneva “itself derived from the Dutch genever, was already in use by 1706, but it was not until the early 1720s that it became a byword for spirits distilled from English materials and compounded or rectified with one or more flavorings.” Jessica Warner, Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason (New York: Random House, 2002), 29.

Janet Farrell Brodie and Marc Redfield remark that the body “that returns, stubbornly and excessively, in addiction discourse, does not return us to a stable human identity or natural being, but rather testifies to a materiality that resists these categories.”

I argue here not only that the woman in Hogarth’s engraving is a “real” woman rather than a symbolic figure, but also that she is a dangerous woman according to eighteenth-century ideologies about femininity, domesticity, family, society and nation. Furthermore, I attempt to illuminate how Gin Lane does in fact say much, if not all, about anxieties revolving around alcoholic mothers during this period. The woman in Hogarth’s famous engraving is represented as performing her addiction in a way that reveals why alcoholic mothers were, and still are, so vilified.

Theory and Alcoholic Mothers

In The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (1993), Barbara Creed examines the motif of the devouring mother. She argues that the violent way that male filmmakers have represented this figure speaks more to a fear of women than to female subjectivity. Citing Creed, among others, Rosemary Betterton discusses the intersections between food and sex in contemporary art by women, illuminating how feminist artists have responded to western society’s fear of the woman who consumes – whether her choice of pleasure is chocolate or sex. While the consuming woman has received much attention from

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feminist scholars, the alcoholic mother has remained largely untheorized, both in scholarly work on addiction and in fields related to visual culture. This may be because it has seemed obvious to scholars what mothers who drank to the detriment of themselves and their children “meant” in the eighteenth century, and what they “mean” today. Nonetheless, I offer here three meanings that can be read from the woman in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*.

First, she is transgressing gendered social expectations by making a spectacle of herself and appearing visibly intoxicated in public, although because of her lower-class status this is not as shocking as it would be if she were of a higher class. Regardless, her alcohol consumption is a crime against her own body because of this apparently shameless act. Second, her intoxication has made her ignorant of, or indifferent to, the fact that her son has fallen out of her lap and is plummeting to his death. Thus the woman’s drinking is a crime against her child’s body. Lastly, the woman’s drinking is represented as a crime against the social body of Britain because she is not engaged in labour, she is not contributing to the economy by purchasing any commodity other than gin (and apparently snuff), and her inevitable death will deprive the nation of a labouring, baby-making body. Her body in its alcoholic state, therefore, is nothing but a burden on the nation. The drunken woman could not be considered a “fit citizen,” which Pamela Gilbert defines as one who “acts as an individual,” but who ultimately acts in the interest of the state. This conception of the alcoholic appears to have been central to the thinking of those who wrote the Gin Act of 1736, which reads in part: “Drinking is rendering people unfit

100 For discussions regarding the visibility of drunken women, see Clark, “The ‘Mother Gin’ Controversy,” 71; Warner, *Craze*, 63; Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 87; White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 56. See also Bernard Capp, “Gender and the Culture of the English Alehouse in Late Stuart England,” *COLLeGIUM: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2 (2007), 112, 114.


for useful labour or business, debauching their morals, and inciting them to perpetuate all manner of vices; and the ill consequences of the excessive use of such liquors are not confined to the present generation, but extend to future ages and tend to the devastation and ruin of this kingdom.”

A wasted life is, of course, tragic, but Hogarth does not play up the tragic element of this narrative in order to garner the viewer’s sympathy. Whereas some writers, beginning in the nineteenth century, attempted to reframe alcoholism in a way that would allow people to feel sympathy, rather than antipathy, for alcoholics, Hogarth’s satire is not part of this movement. We know this because of the way he represents his central figure. The woman is patently ugly. Her body is thick, her neck is unnaturally extended, and her physiognomy is rendered grotesque by its asymmetry, broken-looking nose and macabre smile. Ralf Remshardt has asserted that “If there is a single place in and upon which the grotesque sensually manifests its contradictions and to which it returns even in its most sophisticated form, it is the body – not the body of mythical beasts, but the human body.” In her discussion of the abject, which she links with the Bakhtinian notion of the grotesque, Betterton argues that visual representations of women by male artists have often been part of an ideological project that attempts to “maintain

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103 Quoted in E.D. Daly, The Struggle between the State and the Drunkard: A Forgotten Aspect of the Drink Question (London: Simpkin, Marshal and Co., Limited, 1897). I will not discuss all of the eight Gin Acts (1729, 1733, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1743, 1747, 1751) in this chapter because other historians have already done so at length. See especially Warner, Craze, 221-24. See also Clark, “The ‘Mother Gin’ Controversy,” 6.

104 See Mary Cowling, The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially 170, regarding the representation of the “virtuous poor” being allowed to have “good features.” Cowling writes that “Among lower-class women, refinement was allowed them in proportion to their respectability and the amount of sympathy which the artist wished to arouse on their behalf.”


the symbolic order by expelling that which threatens to destabilize it.”107 Although Betterton does not refer specifically to Hogarth, nor to alcoholic women and mothers, her feminist reading of the grotesque is relevant for Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* because his engraving uses a female body to activate an ideological project. Hogarth’s mission with *Gin Lane*, according to one eighteenth-century writer, was “to reform some reigning Vices peculiar to the lower Class of People.”108 Hogarth’s moral agenda intersected with a collective belief that women who drank gin to excess, and more specifically, drunken mothers, were to be curbed, and if not curbed – by law or by other means – then rendered monstrous, and thus symbolically banished or expelled from society.109

The woman’s smile is noteworthy because it signals one of the emotional affects of alcohol consumption, namely, temporary happiness. Some would call this false cheer.110 Thomas Trotter, one of the first medical doctors to identify alcoholism as a “disease of the mind” – that is, a mental obsession that results in the desire to consume alcohol – wrote in 1804: “The

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107 Betterton, “Body Horror?,” 133.
108 Quoted in Fiona Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson: Medicine in Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 119. Although this quotation is often attributed to Hogarth himself, according to Mark Hallett it appeared in an article about *Gin Lane* (not written by Hogarth) in the *London Evening Post* in February 1751. Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference*, 216.
109 Bakhtin linked the grotesque with the carnivalesque, a kind of social order where roles are reversed and the world is turned upside down for a short period of time. White has pointed out the “carnivalesque sociability that informed laborers’ drink culture,” and observed that in eighteenth-century satire “The carnivalesque imagery and comic inversions are deeply melancholic; they enact a dark and humorless laughter fueled by a commodity that made substantial profits for the landed and trading classes.” White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 52. See also Keith Sandiford, “Envisioning the Colonial Body: The Fair, the Carnivalesque and the Grotesque,” in *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, eds. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 15-30.
110 In 1891 Rev. George Duncan wrote a series of columns about different types of laughter. Of hysterical female laughter he wrote: “It springs not from health, as it should, but from weakness; not from gladness, but from a wounded spirit; and a laugh which otherwise would have been meaningful and beautiful is meaningless and unsightly.” Although Duncan does not mention alcohol in this passage, the description could be that of a drunken woman, and indeed, female drunkenness and hysteria are often linked in nineteenth-century medical texts. I discuss this further in the next chapter. George Duncan, “How they Laugh,” *Health and Happiness*, vol. 1, no. 1 (27 Nov. 1891), 7.
vigour of the circulation of the blood, being thus augmented [by alcohol consumption], a sparkling of the eyes may be observed; a flush or redness is spread over the face, and the whole appearance of the countenance is brightened into a smile.”¹¹¹ This passage is a description of the effects of the first few drinks. He goes on to remark that in some cases of extreme intoxication, spontaneous combustion takes place, and that “It needs…excite no astonishment that old women who in general are more corpulent and more addicted to drinking, and who are often motionless like inanimate masses, during the moment of intoxication, should experience the effects of combustion.”¹¹² (It is important to note that Trotter uses the term “addicted” to refer to the act of drinking, as many scholars have argued that the term only came into use in relation to alcohol in the late nineteenth century.)¹¹³ Trotter’s essay on drunkenness, then, while establishing an early foundation for the disease model of addiction,¹¹⁴ is still steeped in mythology about women’s alcohol consumption. Also significant for my purposes here, is the fact that he offers evidence that he conceived of drunkenness in visual, even artistic, terms: “A painter, such as Hogarth, would find fine exercise for his talents in delineating the shades and gradations of feature that take place in particular persons from perfect sobriety to the last stage of intoxication.”¹¹⁵ Perhaps Trotter was not aware of Hogarth’s Gin Lane, but surely it is a representation of one of the latter stages of intoxication. Even without colour, but with ample “shades,” Hogarth illustrates one of the emotional consequences of alcohol consumption.

¹¹² Trotter, An Essay, 84-85. Warner and Ivis have discussed the prejudice towards elderly women in the context of the gin craze. See Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 98.
¹¹³ See, for instance, Susan Zieger, Inventing the Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature (Amherst: University of Massachusetts University, 2008).
¹¹⁵ Trotter, An Essay, 15.
What is so monstrous about the woman in Hogarth’s engraving? The drunken mother was so threatening in the popular imagination of eighteenth-century Britain because she was a woman who, apparently, did not care, and perhaps, even more horrifying, appeared to have no desire to care – about her looks, about her country, about her lot in life, about her children. We see this perception of alcoholic mothers in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*. The central narrative is the woman’s lack of concern for her tumbling child. The woman who does not seem to care about her own flesh and blood is certainly still framed as monstrous in our own culture.\(^\text{116}\) It is crucial to note, however, that the belief that addicted women do not care about their children or themselves is based on subjective perceptions of external evidence. From the outside looking in it would certainly have appeared to Hogarth and his contemporaries that mothers who drank gin had ceased to care about their children, which was regarded as fundamentally threatening to the social order. Thus lines were drawn in the sand between the temperate and the intemperate. As Betterton has observed, “the most significant borderline is that which separates the inside from the outside of the body, self from Other,”\(^\text{117}\) making it absolutely necessary that the woman in *Gin Lane* be made visually distinguishable from both the “deserving poor,” and the ostensibly sober citizens of the respectable middle classes who would have purchased and looked at Hogarth’s engraving. While gin was entrenched over and over again as a lower-class beverage in the popular imagination, other classes also drank to excess, but images such as Hogarth’s served to separate the “problem drinkers” from the social drinkers.\(^\text{118}\)

\(^{116}\) Warner and Ivis quote an article by Douglas Besharov on the “ultra-conservative” American Enterprise Institute, in which he cites an addiction expert who said that mothers who are addicted to crack cocaine “don’t care about their babies and they don’t care about themselves.” Quoted in Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 105, n. 81.

\(^{117}\) Betterton, “Body Horror?,”133.

Alcohol and the Body

One of the physical symptoms associated with problem drinkers, then as now, is vomiting. Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical writers pointed to this ailment as a punishment for drinking to excess. For example, regarding the popular belief that alcohol was medicinal in some contexts, Dr. T.K. Chambers observed that “A very small quantity [of alcohol] is an emetic, in certain cases of pregnancy. Foolish women sometimes take an additional quantity of wine or beer at this time, and are punished by troublesome vomiting.”

In her discussion of the abject, Betterton emphasizes the slippery boundaries between self and other, interiority and exteriority, and the fear of bodily wastes. The drunken body that vomits due to over-indulgence is an abject body because the boundary between inside and outside is transgressed via the mouth, orifices being central to Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection. It is perhaps surprising that none of the figures in Gin Lane are shown purging their excess gin, but Hogarth did represent the abject vomiting body in his curious portrait of Frances Matthew Schutz, in which Schutz is shown vomiting into a chamber pot (Fig. 2.2). The portrait was apparently commissioned by the subject’s wife, who was tired of her husband’s intemperate lifestyle.

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119 Zieger argues that nausea induced by excessive drinking was a “form of intimate, institutional violence” towards plantation slaves in nineteenth-century America. Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 79. For more on drunkenness and slavery see Chapter 5 in “The Desire to Fill.”
120 Quoted in Elisha Chenery, Alcohol Inside Out (Philadelphia: Records, McMullin and Co., Limited: 1889), 282. The belief that alcohol could be taken for medicinal purposes during pregnancy had been in circulation for centuries before Chambers wrote this passage. It was only in the nineteenth century that doctors began to question the validity of this belief.
Figure 2.2. William Hogarth, *Francis Matthew Schutz in His Bed*, late 1750s, oil on canvas, 630 x 755 mm, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery.

Figure 2.3. After Egbert van Heemskerck, *A Satire on Gin Drinking*, c. 1730-79, etching and engraving, 26 x 24 mm, British Museum, London.
Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists often used the trope of vomiting to indicate a subject’s intemperance. Another strange image that includes the representation of this kind of abjection is Egbert van Heemskerck’s *A Satire on Gin Drinking* (Fig. 2.3), which is part of a series of prints that represent anthropomorphized animals in scenes that satirize various popular activities, such as going to an auction, enacted in British society. *A Satire on Gin Drinking* shows a group of animals congregating around a giant gin barrel, which is positioned in the centre of a gin shop. At least two version of the print were published with different poems inscribed below the image. The first criticizes gin retailers who abuse their licenses in order to “get a penny,” likely referring to the failed legislation of the early eighteenth century.\(^{123}\) The second poem refers to the “Rabble-Rout” who are “poor in purse, yet full of Glee,” “Till Drunk and Mad, their common Case./ They spew upon each others Face….” To illustrate this poetical description three of the figures are shown projectile vomiting. Hogarth does not need to use this device in *Gin Lane*, as he communicates the belief that excessive alcohol consumption is harmful to both the individual and society by other means.

There is waste aplenty in *Gin Lane*, however, if only wasted potential. The word “wasted” is now a colloquial term for intoxicated, but it also holds significance for how the female alcoholic’s body was, and is, conceptualized. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, excessive alcohol consumption was thought of as a waste of money, a waste of potential labour, and a waste of the maternal gifts that a woman “naturally” possessed. As one physician commented in 1855 regarding women who drank alcoholically: the “most pitiable change of all” in mothers who drink is “motherly love deadened or perverted; it is no wonder if society has

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\(^{123}\) See Clark on the failure of the 1729 Gin Act. Clark, “The ‘Mother Gin’ Controversy,” 66
attached to her debasement the stamp of the deeper degradation…"124 The body of the alcoholic mother was, then, in theory and in art, wasted.

Both physical and mental consequences of drinking to excess were discussed *ad nauseam* during this period. Many medical professionals strongly believed that drunkenness was akin to temporary insanity. Although this belief has since been problematized,125 Hogarth represents his central figure as out of her mind.126 To achieve this state was one of the motivations behind drinking gin in the eighteenth century. That is to say, people drank to change their internal realities, because they could not alter external reality. Significantly, the definition of a drunkard, according to one author in 1658, was based on motivation, rather than physical or mental states: “Briefly, he that drinks for lust, or pride, or covetousness, or fear, or good fellowship, or to drive away time, or to still conscience, is a DRUNKARD.”127 Thus, according to this writer, if the woman represented in *Gin Lane* is consuming gin in order to alter or escape reality, then she is, by definition, a drunkard. Although the definition of a drunkard changed over time, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators on the subject often argued that people drank because of the miserable conditions in which they lived. Considering the quality of life of the labouring classes in eighteenth-century Britain, it seems quite possible that men and

126 In her discussion of drunkenness as “mental excuse,” Dana Rabin observes that women were more visible in the insanity-drunkenness cases. “This is consistent with ideas about insanity in the early modern period: the high consumption of alcohol by a woman would have been considered one more sign of the outlandish, antisocial behavior of the insane.” Dana Rabin, “Drunkenness and Responsibility for Crime in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3 (July 2005), 470, n. 86.
women both drank for one primary reason – to achieve oblivion. As Mary Douglas has remarked, drinking “constructs an ideal world.”

**Mothers in Art**

The most ubiquitous mother in western art is, of course, the Virgin Mary. If we compare this figure with the figure of the alcoholic mother, it becomes apparent that the woman in *Gin Lane* is the antithesis of the mother of Christ, both artistically and ideologically. The most obvious distinction is the women’s sexuality. Whereas Mary is the inviolate body untainted by original sin and impregnated through Immaculate Conception, a mother’s body cannot but be read as a sexual body, and in *Gin Lane* the proof of the woman’s sexual past is falling from her lap. Furthermore, the drunken maternal body has been doubly penetrated: by the phallus, and orally, by some alcoholic liquid. Writers in the eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth century, were convinced that women’s alcohol consumption inevitably led to sexual deviancy. However, A. Lynn Martin has claimed that there is no physiological connection between alcohol and sex. He argues that both men and women expect alcohol to affect their sexual behavior because of long-standing cultural beliefs, stories and images.

Consider a painting such as Leonardo da Vinci’s *Madonna Litta* (Fig. 2.4). While there are thousands of paintings that represent the Virgin with the Christ child, this painting is particularly significant in relation to *Gin Lane* for two reasons. First, Mary is gazing down at Christ with rapt attention, whereas the woman in *Gin Lane* appears to be so unconscious of her

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child that she does not notice that he is falling from her lap. Second, the Virgin is shown nursing her son, and her right breast peeps modestly through her dress. The mother in *Gin Lane* may have been nursing her son before he fell out of her lap, since both her breasts are bared, but this seems unlikely, as both of her hands are occupied with her box of snuff. By contrast, in da Vinci’s painting Mary’s hands are cupped firmly under the child’s body. Furthermore, whereas Mary is dressed modestly (an opening in the material allows Christ to access her breast without forcing her to disrobe entirely), the mother in Hogarth’s engraving wears a garment that lies wide open, thus exposing both of her breasts with no apparent concern or shame.

In *Madonna Litta*, the view through the windows reveals an unspecified landscape; visual references that might indicate a specific time or place are emitted. In *Gin Lane*, on the other hand, Hogarth took pains to specify the geographical location, and made it abundantly clear that he was representing the period within which he himself was living. As many scholars have
pointed out, the setting is St. Giles’s Parish, Westminster, indicated by topographical evidence such as the statue of George I on the steeple of St. George’s Church, Bloomsbury. Hogarth chose St. Giles’s because of its reputation for both poverty and deviancy, including rampant gin consumption. In a song quoted by George Wilson M’Cree in 1862, St. Giles’s is unfavourably compared to St. James’s:

In St. James’s there’s one Palace I swear;  
In St. Giles’s, Gin Palaces everywhere;  
In St. James’s, Pall Mall is considered polite;  
In St. Giles’s Pell Mell in the gutter they fight;  
In St. James’s they lie down on pillows by score;  
In St. Giles’s the same, but it’s down on the floor.

Gin palaces were a nineteenth-century phenomenon; in the eighteenth century gin shops were the spaces where men, women and children went to buy their gin. Yet the song serves to show that, like views on mothers who drank to excess, the conception of St. Giles’s changed but little from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Pamela Gilbert asserts that “The story of the paired places St. James’s and St. Giles is always a kinship narrative. The parishes are figured as twins, and when they are so invoked, their meaning is different from the symbolism evoked by each singly. St. Giles alone meant poverty, squalor, and the Irish slums, just as Whitechapel meant poverty, squalor, and Jewish slums, whereas St. James’s alone still meant the pomp and splendor of court.”

Performing Addiction

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130 See, for instance, Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson*, 126.
132 As Warner has pointed out, “Hidden from view and known only to local customers, these shops have all but vanished from the historical record.” Warner, *Craze*, 55.
133 Gilbert, *Mapping*, 85. Gilbert clarifies her method in naming “St. James’s” and “St. Giles” by noting that she has followed common mid-Victorian usage.
I noted earlier that the woman in Hogarth’s engraving is performing her addiction. This point requires fleshing out. My use of the term “performing” is not directly related to Judith Butler’s concept of “performativity,” which refers to a putting on of arbitrary visual signs and behaviors in order to construct specific gender identities.\textsuperscript{134} Although gender is important in my discussion of \textit{Gin Lane}, my ultimate argument about the woman in Hogarth’s engraving is that because of her intense state of intoxication she is not performing her expected roles of dutiful mother and wife; rather, she is trapped in a new role: that of an alcoholic woman.

I argue that the role of alcoholic woman and mother is represented in Hogarth’s engraving as the performance of predictable actions. The woman in \textit{Gin Lane}, positioned within a scene that recalls a stage set, is represented as performing the \textit{expected} actions that were believed to go along with the role of alcoholic mother in the eighteenth century. We can think of the woman as Hogarth’s puppet, as he has control over what she does within the image. As a represented body, she has no agency, so she performs the expected actions of an alcoholic woman: she lolls drunkenly in public, she neglects her child, she exposes her breasts. I draw attention to the represented woman’s lack of agency, because this artistic fact – that artists control their represented subjects – reveals a parallel between representation and addiction. Although the word performance implies agency, free choice and free will, I suggest that one characteristic of addiction is a lack of agency and choice. Thus, like the woman who is posed and positioned by Hogarth in \textit{Gin Lane}, a woman addicted to gin in the eighteenth century would have been controlled by her addiction to a certain extent, performing actions as a result of her intoxication, and in order to achieve intoxication again and again. The expected actions that

Hogarth represents in *Gin Lane* are not arbitrary. He represented them because they had been observed or described in textual accounts of drunkenness, and had morphed and mutated over many years. Through his eyes and in his image the actions are performed by choice. According to a reading guided by addiction theory, which is informed by the acceptance that an alcoholic may do what she does not wish to do in order to feed her craving, the woman in *Gin Lane* is performing her addiction, because her addiction has usurped her power to choose to act in more salubrious ways, and thus she goes through the motions associated with addiction.

In the same year that *Gin Lane* was published, alongside its companion engraving *Beer Street*, a poem entitled *Strip Me Naked, or Royal Gin Forever* by an anonymous author was circulated. The female narrator describes her craving for gin, her state of undress, her act of drinking, and the emotional affects of her alcohol consumption. She becomes happy, brave, and most importantly, indifferent. These are the final lines:

> Now I’m a queen and trample all my woes.  
> Inspired by gin I’m ready for the road.  
> Could shoot my man, or fire the King’s abode.  
> Ha! my brain’s cracked. – The room turns round and round;  
> Down drop the platters, pans: I’m on the ground.  
> My tattered gown slips from me. – what care I?  
> I was born naked and I’ll naked die.

The narrator’s reference to her brain cracking indicates the author’s awareness of the popular belief that excessive gin-drinking caused insanity. Medical writers continued to support this belief throughout the nineteenth century. According to Charles Wilson in 1855, “where the

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136 The poem was originally published in *The General Advertiser* on 1 March 1751, three weeks after the first printing of Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*. See Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 98.

137 In 1889 J. Johnston wrote of the “drink question”: “Among the social questions of the day there is none of greater importance than that of a drink, which is no longer regarded as the ‘fad’ of a few crack-brained enthusiasts, but as a
individual has been previously prone to melancholy, habits of drinking, designed to alleviate it, tend rather to darken it into the deepest form of mental disorder.” Although in this chapter I am concerned with examining Gin Lane for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century beliefs related to drunkenness in order to illuminate the way these beliefs were concretized to the detriment of female alcoholics, in my research on addiction it has become clear that deconstruction can only go so far. As Zieger remarks, “showing that something is ‘socially constructed’ is not the same as claiming that it is illusory. Addiction is therefore both a contingent social idea and a lived reality, neither a mass nor a personal delusion.” While some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century views on addiction can now be dismissed as antiquated, others still have resonance in the twenty-first century, and unfortunately one of these is the relationship between excessive alcohol consumption and mental illness, as well as other physical and emotional ramifications. I wish to emphasize that while many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century beliefs about alcoholic women in general, and alcoholic mothers in particular, are problematic, my objective in this chapter is not to colour each one as a socially constructed myth.

The narrator’s rhetorical question (“what care I?”) suggests a temporary bravado activated by drunkenness. Charles Wilson described intoxication as “temporary exaltation,” which, “as it rests upon nothing real, either within [the drinker] or beyond him, can have no other than a fleeting existence.” Wilson therefore identified those who drank alcohol as engaged “in pursuit of a shadow.” The woman’s nonchalant “what care I?” can also be read as the

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139 Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 17.

140 Wilson, The Pathology of Drunkenness, 17.
whistling in the dark of an alcoholic who has grown weary of shadows, and, like Tennyson’s Lady of Shallot, is ready for death. The last line – “I was born naked and I’ll naked die” – alludes to birth, a time of innocence, before her experience of addiction, but nakedness also suggests a lack of costume and a lack of masks. As Marion Woodman has noted in a Jungian reading of addiction to perfection, “mask” can refer to more than just an object that covers the face. Roles, personas, even lifestyles can function as masks, because they conceal certain psychic or emotional states experienced by an individual.\(^{141}\) Oscar Wilde once wrote that if you give a man a mask he will tell you the truth.\(^{142}\) This poem, and Hogarth’s engraving, say “give a woman enough gin and her masks will fall.” Significantly, in Wilde’s infamous play *Salome*, Herod says of Salome:

…She is like a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman… I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not?\(^{143}\)

Throughout the eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth, women’s drunkenness was linked with madness, and madness with nakedness, suggesting child-like vulnerability contained in a degraded and degenerate adult body.\(^{144}\) The trope of drunken nudity is, of course, apparent in Hogarth’s decision to represent the woman with a bared breast, which is not shown nourishing her son, but rather as a fragmented part of a monstrous female body.

**Drunkenness as Resistance**

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Jonathan White observes that in Thomas Wilson’s 1736 pamphlet Distilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation, the author associates luxury in the form of gin-drinking with social decay. Likewise, in Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robberies (1751), Fielding identifies gin as a “luxury of the vulgar.” White observes that this dubious luxury “removed fear and shame, which were especially useful in securing labor.” Fear and shame have also been especially useful in keeping women in their traditional, heteronormative roles of wife and mother. Might drunkenness have been a strategy chosen by women to articulate non-verbally their suffocation in these roles during the eighteenth century?

Any argument that alcohol consumption is a strategy for resistance must take into account the thin line between power and powerlessness inherent in this potential, and questionable, mode of agency. While A. Lynn Martin has attempted to link “unruly” women’s alcohol consumption with resistance, he seems to ignore the slippery slope that leads from repeated drunkenness to addiction. The woman in Hogarth’s engraving can be read as a figure of resistance in that she is not labouring for the nation, nor is she slaving at home for a family that depends on her home-making. She is what Warner calls a “failed woman,” meaning that she is represented as one of the women who appeared to choose “the pleasures of gin over the

145 White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 45.
146 White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 58.
147 Ellen Ross describes a woman during the World War II period who “gave up trying to be a good wife. Mrs. Lane had ten children and worked as a charwoman, sometimes for well-off women with few children and large beautiful houses. [...] ‘Then without warning, she turned lazy. She went out no more a-cleaning, nor did she bother about her own children. She stayd in bed all day and it was rumored that Mr. Lane poured cold water over her, but it made no difference; still she wouldn’t get up.’ Mrs. Lane exercised one of the few forms of rebellion she had available. But their powerful ties to dependent children or aged parents made it unlikely that many mothers would, like Mrs. Lane, simply quit.” Ellen Ross, Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 72.
148 Martin, Alcohol, Sex, and Gender, 11.
travails of motherhood.”149 Warner also notes of these women that “Wittingly or not, they mocked middle-class notions of femininity: they worked; they got drunk when they could; and when they had children they often neglected them, if only because they had neither the time nor the resources to devote to their care.”150

To care was, and is, expected of mothers. Warner highlights the fact that societal factors contributed to women’s inability to care properly for their children, but her statement also hints at deliberate neglect because women sometimes chose alcohol over their children. We can easily read the woman in Hogarth’s engraving as a “failed woman” in the sense that she is putting her child at risk because of her intoxication. It is more difficult to read her as an “unruly woman” in Martin’s sense of the phrase, that is, as a disorderly wife challenging her husband’s authority, because there is no husband evident in Gin Lane. To my knowledge, no eighteenth-century commentator noted the absence of a husband or father figure in Hogarth’s engraving, and this is surprising given the centrality of families, even labouring-class families, in British self-perception at this time. As White has observed, “Familial affect was…perverted by the gin-drinking woman.”151 A number of scholars have pointed to the sores on the woman’s legs as evidence that she has some kind of disease, possibly syphilis, which was often coupled with prostitution.152 Prostitution, however, did not necessarily preclude the existence of a husband. It is likely that Hogarth intended his viewers to recognize the woman as sexually promiscuous, thus making the child tumbling from her lap legible as illegitimate.153

149 Warner, Craze, 215.
150 Warner, Craze, 66.
151 White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 60.
152 See, for example, Hallatt, The Spectacle of Difference, 222; Haslam, From Hogarth to Rowlandson, 126.
While the drunken mother in *Gin Lane* is clearly represented as defying patriarchal culture in general with her intoxication and inactivity, it is more difficult to argue that she is resisting a specific man’s authority. *A Man Loaded with Mischief, or Matrimony* (Fig. 2.5) can be read very clearly as a text about a woman’s resistance to, and mastery over, her husband. Significantly, although this woman is not obviously intoxicated, there is reference to her use of alcohol, and the image itself exists as one of the many sites where the worlds of art and alcohol intersected in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. In *A Man Loaded with Mischief*, a woman is shown riding on her husband’s back. There is a monkey on his shoulder, and the woman holds a wine glass in her hand. The etching is directly related to *Gin Lane* in that the scene on the extreme right of a woman taking a tea kettle to the pawn shop is a quotation from Hogarth’s engraving. In *Gin Lane*, the scene, which also includes two men, is not clearly linked with the central figure, but functions as an isolated incident that refers to the eighteenth-century belief that women who drank excessively would pawn whatever they had in order to get money for gin.

Like the woman in *Gin Lane*, the woman in *Mischief* is smiling broadly. This, again, could be read as “false cheer,” that is, she could be exhibiting the emotional affects of alcohol. As Cindy McCreery argues, “The image suggests that bad wives dominate their husbands, and that all wives have the potential, even the predisposition, to become domestic tyrants.”

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154 The etching’s subtitle is *A Monkey, a Magpie, and Wife; Is the true Emblem of Strife*.

155 This narrative continued to be circulated throughout the nineteenth century as well. In 1897 E.D. Daly referred to the “common story” of drunken wives pawning their children’s clothes for alcohol money. E.D. Daly, *The Struggle between the State and the Drunkard*, 12.

156 A significant difference between the two prints is, of course, that the woman in *Mischief* is not obviously a mother. The absence of a child could signify her selfishness on the one hand, or her lack of contribution to the nation of future laborers on the other.

Hogarth is warning women against excessive gin consumption, the anonymous artist behind *Mischief* cautions husbands against “bad” wives. Both chose to represent their women as smiling. This choice is interesting because, ultimately, both images are warning the eighteenth-century viewer about women who drink, and in doing so, they could have chosen to represent fierce, angry women, the archetypal angry woman being one of the most threatening in western culture. On the other hand, Hogarth, in particular, could have chosen to represent the woman in *Gin Lane* as miserable due to her alcohol consumption, which was usually the strategy employed.
by temperance artists in the nineteenth century. The women’s smiles in *Gin Lane* and *A Man Loaded with Mischief* are, therefore, remarkable, and require further analysis.

Jonathan White asserts that in *Gin Lane* “desire has run insane, having become a form of ersatz pleasure,” and he reads the central figure as “the embodiment of the transient pleasures of drunkenness triumphing over the capacity for rational pleasure.”\(^{158}\) The women in *Gin Lane* and *A Man Loaded with Mischief* are smiling because they have consumed what they have been longing for. In the former, the mother is happy to the detriment of her child, and in the latter, the woman is happy, perhaps because of the alcohol she is drinking, and perhaps because of her position of power. In these images, the consuming women, regardless of what is in store for them down the road, have fulfilled their desires without fear or shame, and this is represented as threatening to the family unit, which is, of course, a microcosm of the nation.

A final note on *A Man Loaded with Mischief* reveals the extent to which graphic art circulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and how an image could have different functions in different contexts. According to McCreery, *Mischief* is part of a long tradition of prints satirizing the battle of the sexes that were displayed in masculine communal spaces, such as taverns.\(^{159}\) She adds that the designs were sometimes used for tavern signs, and indeed, in the nineteenth century, graphic artist George Cruikshank painted a sign for a tavern called *A Man Loaded with Mischief*, many years before he became a temperance advocate.\(^{160}\) The use of this particular image, which represents a woman usurping her husband’s authority, is a noteworthy choice for a tavern sign, which was primarily, though not exclusively, a masculine space during

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\(^{158}\) White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 61.


this period. It would seem, then, the choice was a consciously ironic one, perhaps even a cruelly ironic one, considering the fact that nineteenth-century commentators concerned with intemperance described starving wives standing outside taverns waiting for their drunken husbands, who had already spent all their wages on alcohol. The eighteenth-century happy drunk woman was ultimately replaced in nineteenth-century temperance art by the woman loaded with grief.

“Mother’s Folly”: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Infanticide

Several scholars have pointed to the visual evidence in Gin Lane that reveals the consequences of the mother’s drinking written on the infant’s body. Alvin Rodin, Fiona Haslam and Jessica Warner have all suggested that the baby in Gin Lane shows signs of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, based on physical characteristics such as small palpebral fissures, small cheek-bones, an under-sized head and low birth weight. Haslam clarifies that Hogarth and his contemporaries would not have known or used the term Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, but notes that eighteenth-century writers recognized a direct link between a mother’s alcohol consumption and a child’s physical appearance. For instance, in the pamphlet A Dissertation on Mr Hogarth’s Six Prints lately Publish’d there is an account of “the horrible Deeds perpetrated by the fiery Dragon, Gin,” which includes this passage:

Look on her Children, and you will see such a Parcel of poor little diminutive Creatures, that you will fancy yourself in the Country of the Pigmies…either they were begot with

163 Dorothy George noted that in the first state of Hogarth’s print the baby’s face was smooth, but in a second version Hogarth engraved copper so as to illustrate the fact that the baby looked shriveled and old, signifying ill-health due to his mother’s drinking. M. Dorothy George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century (London: Penguin, 1966), 42. See also Morbid Cravings: The Emergence of Addiction (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1985), 11.
very ill Will, or that there was some Defect in the generative Powers of their Parents; one is bandy-legged, another hump-back’d, another goggle-eyed, another with a Monkey’s Face, scarce one in its proper shape, and all of them wearing some visible mark of their Mother’s Folly.\textsuperscript{164}

The ideology of “mother’s folly” continued in social commentary and medical writing throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The view that excessive drinking during pregnancy was harmful has it roots in ancient Greek mythology and customs.\textsuperscript{165} A. Lynn Martin has noted that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, women were encouraged to make alcohol part of their diet during pregnancy.\textsuperscript{166} However, women constantly received mixed messages about alcohol and pregnancy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dr. William Carpenter wrote in 1850 regarding the irritability of the stomach caused by pregnancy: “More relief is obtainable from small quantities of wine, frequently repeated, than from anything else.”\textsuperscript{167}

Another writer observed that “During the nursing period” the use of alcohol “is dangerous and often disastrous,” and “Even if she [the mother] believe that it is doing her good, which is very doubtful, she is no true mother if she will not make this small sacrifice for her child’s sake.”\textsuperscript{168}

Non-medical voices were also raised. In an elegy for Madam Geneva, published in 1736, the author wrote that

\begin{quote}
In pregnant Dames gin cou’d Abortion cause, \\
And supersed prolific Nature’s Laws: \\
Mothers cou’d make the genial Womb a Grave,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{164} A Dissertation on Mr Hogarth’s Six Prints Lately Publish’d, Viz. Gin-lane, Beer-street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty (London: Printed for B. Dickinson, 1751). Quoted in Haslam, From Hogarth to Rowlandson, 126. See also Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 93, and White, “Slow but Sure Poysion,” 59. There is some contention about the author’s identity. Haslam says the pamphlet was written by the Bishop of Worcester, Warner and Ivis believe it was by Fielding, and White refers to its “anonymous author.”

\textsuperscript{165} A. Lynn Martin, “Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in Europe, 1300-1700: A Review of Data on Alcohol Consumption and a Hypothesis,” Food and Foodways, vol. 11, no. 1 (Jan.-March 2003), 16.

\textsuperscript{166} Martin, “Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in Europe,” 15.

\textsuperscript{167} Carpenter, On the Use and Abuse of Alcoholic Liquors, 235.

\textsuperscript{168} Johnston, Alcohol from a Medical Point of View, 11.
And anxious Charge of Education save….

Nineteenth-century doctors who frowned upon drinking during pregnancy pointed out that people blamed them for rampant alcohol addiction, because so many medical professionals were prescribing alcohol for medicinal purposes. Dr. Norman Kerr’s discussion of maternal drinking recalls the eighteenth-century discourse of “mother’s folly”:

The mother probably is the more potent factor in the transmission of alcohol. She exerts an influence, not only with the father in the conception, but, in addition, during the whole utero-gestation, wields a special influence on the unborn child. Exact records are wanting, but I have remarked a preponderance of the maternal influence in the causation of alcoholic heredity in many cases in family practice.

Kate Mitchell wrote in 1889 that “Alcoholism, or any disease traceable to over-indulgence in Alcohol by the parents, may be as surely transmitted from one generation to another as any hereditary disease like consumption, cancer, gout, rheumatism, heart disease, or scrofula, etc.” Mitchell also identified mothers as the “principal sinners” in nearly all cases of juvenile alcoholism, thus bringing religious and moral language into her medical treatise.

In an article on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in pre-industrial Europe, Martin concludes with an admission that the material he has collected “only scratches the surface,” and that further research is needed. “One promising area of research,” he observes, “is portraiture; some of Peter Bruegel’s pictures, notably his Head of an Old Woman at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich,

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170 Norman Kerr, Inebriety, its Etiology, Pathology, Treatment and Jurisprudence (London: H.K. Lewis, 1888), 144.
171 Kate Mitchell, The Drink Question: Its Social and Medical Aspects (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. and British Women’s Temperance Association, 1889), 132. McCandless has pointed out that, regarding the hereditary nature of alcoholism, “neither side in this debate could prove their case, given the limited amount of data at their disposal. Even today, despite increasingly sophisticated epidemiological studies, the difficulties of separating the effects of environment and heredity have proved beyond the skills of researchers.” McCandless, “Curses of Civilization,” 56.
demonstrate the undeveloped lip that is characteristic of fetal alcohol syndrome. Do portraits by other artists reveal other examples?”  

Martin’s suggestion that portraits are a “promising area of research” in relation to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome signals the belief that the consequences of excessive alcohol consumption can be read from both art and the body. As I show throughout “The Desire to Fill,” this belief has a long history.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers consistently expressed concerns about the relationship between infant mortality and maternal intemperance. There are three scenes of actual or potential infant mortality in Gin Lane. The first is the child falling from his mother’s lap. This death belongs to the category of exogenous infant mortality, that is, death caused by the external environment (infections, diseases, accidents, poor nutrition, etc.). Endogenous infant mortality refers to deaths caused by premature delivery, low birth weight, birth trauma or congenital defects. The central incident in Gin Lane can be read as an accidental death, unless the viewer believes that the woman pushed her child from her lap, whether due to temporary insanity, emotional desperation, or economic objective. In 1736, Thomas Wilson reported the story, still “Fresh in every body’s Memory, of a Woman who murdered her own Child, threw it in a Ditch, and strip’d it of the Clothes given that Day by a Charitable Person, to pawn for nine Penny-worth of Gin.”

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175 Thomas Wilson, The Trial of the Spirits; or, Some Considerations upon the Pernicious Consequences of the Gin Trade to Great Britain (London, 1736), 9. Quoted in Warner and Ivis, “Gin and Gender,” 98. See also White, “Slow but Sure Poyson,” 43.
Jennifer Thorn has noted the “notorious unwillingness of juries to convict” in eighteenth-century infanticide trials.\textsuperscript{176} Thorn observes that infanticide was viewed during this period as “a crime definitive of barbarity for which many juries and observing writers urged sympathy.”\textsuperscript{177} The Old Bailey records support this. Lucy Drake, who was charged with choking her male child to death with a swath of linen, was acquitted.\textsuperscript{178} No reason is given in the record, but most often women were acquitted of infanticide if they could prove that either the baby was born dead or that they had purchased clothing and other necessities for the child before its birth. In the eighteenth century drunkenness was often regarded as temporary insanity, and in legal matters, drunkenness was sometimes used as a “mental excuse.” Dana Rabin remarks that “Some defendants elided drunkenness and insanity more explicitly, perhaps with the hope that they would receive an automatic acquittal or pardon rather than the mitigated sentences typical for most of those who brought a plea of simple drunkenness.”\textsuperscript{179} However, the insanity-drunkenness plea was not fool-proof because of the ostensibly voluntary nature of drunkenness. For example, in 1682 Elizabeth Scot was caught with silver plate; she said that she had been drinking and “knew not what she did.” She was found guilty nonetheless.\textsuperscript{180} \textit{Gin Lane} is not about infanticide, as such, and therefore the mother on the stairs is not shown explicitly murdering her child. But the fact remains that Hogarth depicts an obvious instance of child mortality, tying it to the mother’s intoxication and neglect, and positioning the woman as responsible for the child’s death.

\textsuperscript{177} Thorn, “Stories of Child-Murder,” 33.
\textsuperscript{178} \textit{OBP}, (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 13 January 2009), 17 January 1751, trial of Lucy Drake (t17500117-53).
\textsuperscript{179} Rabin, “Drunkenness and Responsibility,” 473.
\textsuperscript{180} See Rabin, “Drunkenness and Responsibility,” 467.
Another scene in *Gin Lane* that represents potential infant mortality is to the right of the central figure, immediately above the brick barrier that separates the drunken mother from the chaos behind her. A woman is shown pouring gin down a baby’s throat. In *Domestic Medicine* (1769), William Buchan estimated that, of the children who died in London, half expired due to laudanum, distilled alcoholic beverages or sedatives.\(^{181}\) This statement implicitly points the finger at mothers as the perpetrators of these deaths, a view which carried over into the following century in both textual and visual forms. Doctors observed that infants consumed alcohol either from the breasts of their mothers or nurse-maids, or directly from a glass, again offered by either mothers or nurse-maids. Kate Mitchell observed at the end of the nineteenth century that “Infant mortality from intemperance is often due to the direct administration of Alcohol, it sometimes being added by ignorant mothers and nurses to the milk of hand-fed infants in order to still their cries and procure sleep.”\(^{182}\) The third incident of child mortality in *Gin Lane* is the baby on a spike portrayed in the middle background, an instance of extreme morbid satire on Hogarth’s part.

**Conclusion**

In my reading of *Gin Lane*, the central woman is not only drunk, but addicted to alcohol. This brings me to a crucial point that I will return to again and again in “The Desire to Fill.” Although my discussion in this chapter is dependent on my assumption that the woman in *Gin Lane* is an alcoholic, this argument will inevitably draw ire from some readers, particularly those well-versed in the history of addiction. One issue is related to terminology. At the risk of being charged with the crime of anachronism, namely using the term “alcoholic” in relation to a

\(^{181}\) Quoted in Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson*, 128.
woman who Hogarth would have been labeled as a “drunkard” but never an “alcoholic,” I am setting the tone for the rest of my text. As I discussed in my Introduction, I will use the terms “alcoholic” and “alcoholism” throughout my discussion of nineteenth-century visual culture, although I am aware that these terms did not come into popular usage until the late nineteenth century, and even then the term “alcoholic” was not used regularly or even frequently until the early twentieth century. “Uncontrollable drunkard” or “confirmed drunkard” were the most popular phrases used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to signify what we would think of as alcoholism today. In the late nineteenth century, Dr. Norman Kerr and his colleagues popularized the terms “inebriate” and “inebriety,” but there was never any real consensus among medical professionals about what terms to use.\textsuperscript{183} Therefore, I use the terms “alcoholic” and “alcoholism” for purposes of clarity, but also to underscore my argument that addiction to alcohol existed prior to the end of the nineteenth century.

Mariana Valverde has argued that “The centrality of feeling is remarkable historically: it is only in the twentieth century that we have come to regard drinking or other behaviors as problematic insofar as they are linked to unhealthy or otherwise questionable feelings.”\textsuperscript{184} If this were so, an anonymous author could not have written around 1800:

\begin{quote}
Intemperance (we observe with pain) is not confined to \textit{men}; there are \textit{women}, who, ‘by adding drunkenness to thirst,’ supply a spectacle still more hideous and mortifying. We have beheld \textit{mothers} staggering with infants in their arms; and we have heard that in situations of comfort, and of affluence too, this degrading practice obtains a wide extent…. We entreat them [women], by every thing that is important in reputation and delicate in sentiment, by the loveliness which they would sacrifice, and \textit{by the horrors}
\end{quote}


which they would feel and inspire – we entreat them to beware, to start from the rising purpose, and thus to preserve a…character unsullied.\textsuperscript{185}

Loss of “appropriate” feminine emotions was also often noted in fictional literature about women and alcohol. For instance, in a short story published in a tiny book that easily fits into the palm of a hand, the author laments: “Oh, mothers, see what this sin [drinking alcohol] can do! It can destroy the overflowing of maternal love.”\textsuperscript{186} According to eighteenth-century modes of viewing, *Gin Lane* is a picture of absent maternal love. The woman’s smile does not signify motherly devotion and adoration as in da Vinci’s *Madonna Litta*, but rather the emotional affects of alcohol. Her false cheer does not prevent her child from falling from her lap, and her intoxication does not change the chaotic reality surrounding her. The wasted life that Hogarth represents is tied to concurrent anxieties about national decline, laying the blame for this state of affairs at the feet of men and women, but especially women, who would rather drink than act as responsible citizens and parents. Wasted bodies fill the engraving, either wasting time, wasting energy, or wasting away (the skeletal ballad singer is an example of the latter). While I have argued that the central woman is not Mother Gin, the figure is still symbolic in that she represents all of the women who apparently did not care, embodying this terrifying ethos, so incomprehensible to viewers who did not experience abject poverty every day of their lives or the transient relief provided by alcohol. *Gin Lane* is by far the most iconic representation of an alcoholic mother in British visual culture.


Chapter 3
George Cruikshank’s Addiction to Sobriety

Imagine, if you will, this scenario, in which art and commerce intersect with addiction and recovery. A respected and prolific artist is known to be a heavy drinker. Despite his drinking he is commercially successful, and ironically, many of his artworks are concerned with the dangers of alcohol. His friends and individuals connected with the art world know that when he drinks he will disappear for a day or more. He will say outrageous things at dinner parties, and pull crazy, drunken stunts, such as attempting to climb a lamp-post, but his reputation remains intact as a respected artist, and his art continues to do well on the market. Because of his drinking, however, he is always just scraping by financially. Now imagine that this artist “hits bottom,” and goes to Alcoholics Anonymous to “get sober.” His life changes, apparently for the better, and in his gratitude and desire to share the key to his sobriety, he transgresses the primary principle of Alcoholics Anonymous – that is, anonymity – and becomes a vocal and public advocate of the Twelve-Step program. Not only does he announce his affiliation with AA, he tries to coerce friends, acquaintances and strangers to join AA, even if they do not have a problem with alcohol.

As a result of this fanatical behavior, and because he begins to produce art almost exclusively concerned with AA and the evils of alcohol, his sales begin to plummet. His old patrons no longer return his calls, and people begin to avoid him. His close friends continue to speak highly of him, but behind closed doors, and later, after his death, they make cynical comments about his waste of talent and erratic behavior. His last major work is intended to be an epic piece about the evils of drink. The artist believes that it will convince many people to stop drinking altogether. No one comes to see it in the gallery. It is praised as a great success by
his benefactors, gently critiqued by some, but pronounced a dismal failure by most. The artist donates it, in grand style, to an important gallery in London. It is subsequently passed from museum to museum, until it arrives at another significant art institution. It languishes in various storage rooms for almost one hundred years, never seeing the light of day.

Alcoholics Anonymous was formed in 1935. The temperance movement, on the other hand, began to have influence in the 1830s, and it was in the nineteenth century that this story of art, alcohol and commerce actually unfolded. The protagonist, George Cruikshank (1792-1878), lived all of the events that I have mentioned (if you substitute the temperance movement for Alcoholics Anonymous), including the climbing of a lamp-post. My objective in this chapter is not simply to argue that Cruikshank was an alcoholic, although I would suggest, based on certain significant details in his biographies, that he did, at the very least, have trouble getting and staying sober when he first decided to stop drinking. Cruikshank was widely recognized as a heavy drinker until he was in his fifties, but heavy drinking, I must be careful to note, is not necessarily indicative of alcoholism. There is one statement in particular that stands out in one of his biographies as a flag for the reader who is concerned with the lived experience of addiction. In The Life of George Cruikshank in Two Epochs (1882), Blanchard Jerrold recounts how the death of graphic artist James Gillray (1756-1815) from chronic alcoholism affected

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Cruikshank’s perception of his own alcohol consumption, but he was only in his early twenties at the time. As well shall see, Cruikshank and his many biographers gave other reasons for his decision to stop drinking, but according to Jerrold, Gillray’s death was at least one possible contributing factor. However, as is apparent from more recent literature on addiction, Cruikshank’s experience of ceasing to drink was not as simple as just stopping. Indeed, Jerrold writes that after Cruikshank decided to quit drinking, he continued to “fall, at intervals, into wild excesses. These were followed by dark passages of remorse, and by resolutions which were again and again broken.”

Remorse is one of the sign-posts for the addicted experience that appears repeatedly in both nineteenth-century literature and more recent studies of addiction. For this reason, I think it significant that Jerrold would note Cruikshank’s remorse following what he calls broken resolutions and I would call relapses.

Again, however, it is not my sole intention to argue that Cruikshank was an alcoholic. Rather, I will elaborate on the narrative I sketched at the outset of this chapter in order to illuminate why, when he was actively drinking Cruikshank was commercially successful, and why, as an abstainer, he became, ultimately, a commercial failure. I argue that the temperance movement filled the void left by alcohol (I would even go so far as to characterize it as a substitute addiction), and that his identity as a temperance advocate was perceived as hysterical, hysteria being a mental disorder that was largely regarded as a female malady in the nineteenth century, as well as a possible consequence of excessive alcohol consumption. Cruikshank’s “hysteria” as a sober man not only cut him off from nineteenth-century ideals and spaces of

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masculinity, but even worse, tied him to feminine mental illness.\textsuperscript{192} Furthermore, although there were certainly male temperance leaders, Carol Mattingly has shown that women made up a significant part – in terms of both numbers and image – of the temperance movement.\textsuperscript{193} I will argue that gender stereotypes played a role in the critical reception (and perception) of both Cruikshank’s art and his temperance advocacy.

\textbf{Biographies and Narratives}

George Cruikshank was born at the end of the eighteenth century, a period identified by many as the golden age of graphic satire in Britain.\textsuperscript{194} Cruikshank’s father, Isaac Cruikshank, was also a graphic artist, as well as a man who drank copious amounts of alcohol, and he was said to have died in 1811 as a result of a drinking contest in which he consumed so much whiskey that he entered a coma and never woke up.\textsuperscript{195} Many biographies of George Cruikshank include the anecdote about young George coming downstairs one morning and finding his father and his father’s drinking companions rolled up in rugs on the floor, having fallen asleep where they fell.\textsuperscript{196} I will make many references to biographies in this chapter, because Cruikshank inspired several of them, both during his life and after his death. Some literary scholars have read biographies as narratives that construct their subjects.\textsuperscript{197} Cruikshank’s biographies, as

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\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{192} Showalter has shown how the diagnosis of hysteria in men was regarded as an insult to their masculinity in the nineteenth century, and notes that in more recent years the term “hysterical” has been applied with all its negative connotations to gay men dealing with AIDS. Showalter, \textit{Hystories}, 63, 76-77.
\textsuperscript{195} Jerrold, \textit{Life of George Cruikshank}, vol. 1, 77.
\textsuperscript{196} See, for example, Jerrold, \textit{Life of George Cruikshank}, vol. 2, 76.
\textsuperscript{197} For a discussion on drug autobiographies, see Susan Zieger, \textit{Inventing the Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 33-60.
\end{flushright}
narratives, could be said to construct the artist as a victim, not so much of his drinking, but rather of his temperance, the latter of which had a more negative impact on his financial and commercial circumstances.

Robyn Warhol has compared the rhetorical trajectories of Victorian novels that portray alcohol addiction with the self-representation of recovering alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous literature. She notes that “as a literary critic who focuses on narrative structure, I do not approach the stories of alcoholics in novels or in AA’s books as if they were the biographies of ‘real people’: I try to remain actively aware that the ‘alcoholics’ I am writing about are figures created in and by texts.”

This kind of critical approach to biography is a useful one, as it forces the reader to acknowledge that in texts, as in art, representation is not necessarily a direct access to empirical Truth. However, my discussion on Cruikshank and his biographies differs from Warhol’s discussion of nineteenth-century novels and stories, such as “Janet’s Repentance” (1857) by George Eliot (a story, significantly, that is soaked through with the eponymous character’s remorse about her own drinking), in that I am not a narratologist, and I am therefore not invested to the same degree in questioning the “realness” of people who appear in narratives related to addiction. Indeed, my approach in this chapter is to draw from biographies about Cruikshank, as well as from Cruikshank’s own words about both his drinking and his temperance, in order to create a picture of what Cruikshank’s experience of sobriety looked like, which I use to support my arguments about the artist’s resulting commercial failures.

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My objectives in this chapter are very different than Warhol’s in her article. I am interested in identifying the narrative path that Cruikshank walked according to his biographies, as well as his biographers’ prejudices towards the temperance fanaticism that they blamed for Cruikshank’s diminished artistic powers. In Warhol’s terms, Cruikshank’s life story, which he told both orally – for instance, at temperance meetings – and in the written texts that accompanied some of his later artworks, was “euphoric”: “The master narrative operating in AA allows for the two modes of closure that narratologists would call ‘euphoric’ – the happy ending, where in this case the addicted drinker ‘gets sober,’ to drink no more – and ‘dysphoric’ – the tragic ending, where the story’s protagonist fails to reach the desired goal and ultimately dies.”

Ironically, the biographies written after Cruikshank’s death in 1878 have a dysphoric element to them because of the commercial – and artistic, depending on who you read – failures that followed Cruikshank’s success in “getting sober.”

There were at least six biographies written about Cruikshank in the nineteenth century. They are all sympathetic to the man and artist, but most of them barely hide the authors’ disdain for the influence that the temperance movement had on Cruikshank’s life and work. The first part of this chapter will discuss Cruikshank’s life in roughly chronological order, pieced together from the biographies written about him. This piecing together means that inevitably I have had to be selective about what I include and what I ignore, so it is important that I make my objective very clear at the outset: I am interested in showing why Cruikshank was regarded as an artistic

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200 Warhol, “Rhetoric of Addiction,” 98.
failure, and as a result suffered financially, after becoming a temperance advocate, a shift that coincided with abstinence from alcohol (“getting sober” in modern addiction parlance).

Therefore, while in my last chapter I used addiction theory to discuss Hogarth’s representation of a woman I identified as alcoholic, in this chapter I am using addiction theory to query the lived experience of sobriety in order to illuminate how the decision to stop drinking negatively impacted Cruikshank’s career as an artist. In the second part of the chapter I discuss why Cruikshank’s sobriety may have had more of an adverse effect on his commercial and artistic success than his heavy drinking did. This paradox manifested because of prejudices towards the temperance movement, beliefs about alcohol consumption in relation to British masculinity, and, I suggest, anxieties about “feminine” emotionality and madness.

**Drinking and Engraving**

In 1840 William Makepeace Thackeray wrote, “Gin has furnished many subjects to Mr. Cruikshank, who labours in his sound and hearty way to teach his country-men the dangers of that drink.”202 It is important to note that Cruikshank was definitely still drinking in 1840, and had been doing so for many years. One of Cruikshank’s earliest representations that criticized drunkenness, *The Gin Shop* (Fig. 3.1), portrays the interior of a gin shop in which three adults – two women with worn-down faces and one man – and two children stand around and drink. One woman pours gin into a baby’s mouth, thus drawing on the iconography of drunken women solidified by Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* (Fig. 2.1). They are all shown within the jaws of a massive animal trap. Death, a figure frequently present in this kind of image, says: “I shall have them all

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drunk presently! They have nearly had their last glass.” The barmaid behind the counter is well-dressed with a bonnet, and her face is pretty and unlined, unlike her female customers. Her face, however, is only a mask. This barmaid, a “cultural type” that Peter Bailey has associated with parasexuality, that is, “sexuality that is deployed but contained, carefully channeled rather than fully discharged; in vulgar terms it might be represented as ‘everything but,’”203 is, then, enacting a masquerade of “safe” womanliness. What appears on the surface to be warm and welcoming – like the ideal wife or the ideal drink – is cold and threatening underneath. This is the femme fatale who offers pleasure but will eventually kill those who consume what she offers.204

The sexual threat of the barmaid-cum-prostitute, namely syphilis, is here intertwined

Figure 3.1. George Cruikshank, The Gin Shop, from Scraps and Sketches, 1829, etching, 278 x 375 mm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

with ideology about death by drink. The words in the open book on the counter – “Open a gin shop, the way to wealth” – would continue to haunt Cruikshank throughout his career, especially when his obsession with temperance began to negatively impact his finances.


*The Gin-Juggarnath. Or, The Worship of the Great Spirit of the Age!!* (Fig. 3.2) was published in Cruikshank’s *My Sketchbook* in 1834. It portrays a giant gin drop – Thackeray

205 Both barmaids and prostitutes were identified as potential alcoholics in nineteenth-century Britain. In 1889 Dr. Kate Mitchell wrote that “Barmmaids are particularly open to contract habits of intemperance, and there is, unfortunately, a large amount of drinking amongst these girls, which ruins their health and brings them to a premature grave, unless they change their calling in time.” Kate Mitchell, *The Drink Question: Its Social and Medical Aspects* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. and British Women’s Temperance Association, 1889), 251-252. Judith Walkowitz describes alcoholism as an “occupational hazard” for prostitutes, writing that “As a temporary occupation, streetwalking did…have severe drawbacks: it did not free women from a life of poverty and insecurity, and further subjected them to physical danger, alcoholism, venereal disease, and police harassment.” Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 31.

called it a “gin monster”\textsuperscript{207} – which sits enthroned on the top of a moving gin palace, a structure identifiable by its wrought iron lamps, gas lighting, and barmaids with gaudy headdresses. Along the bottom of the engraving run the lines: “Its devotees destroy themselves – Its progress is Marked with desolation, Misery, and Crime.”\textsuperscript{208} Cruikshank produced this visual tirade against drunkenness while he was still getting drunk regularly. According to Blanchard Jerrold, Cruikshank had such a proclivity for alcohol as a young man that in an article published in July 1823, John Wilson encouraged the artist to decrease his alcohol consumption to a bottle of wine at dinner, and to “moderate his amusements” in Jerrold’s words.\textsuperscript{209} Significantly, Wilson aligned Cruikshank with another famous Victorian addict, Thomas De Quincy, when he wrote: “I am of the opinion that George Cruikshank is one of the many young gentlemen whose education (like that of the English opium-eater) has been neglected. But there is no time lost; he has, I hope, a long life and a merry one before him yet; and he may depend upon it, his life will be neither the shorter nor the duller for his making it something of a studious one.”\textsuperscript{210}

Another gin-related image in Cruikshank’s Sketchbook is The Pillars of a Gin Shop (Fig. 3.3), which depicts a man and woman leaning drunkenly against columns with Corinthian pilasters. Their children stand at their feet, looking hardened and angry. Robert Patten has noted that in The Gin Shop the focus is where money – that is, capital – is transferred to: the gin shop.

\textsuperscript{207} See Stephens, \textit{A Memoir}, 91.


\textsuperscript{209} Jerrold, \textit{The Life of George Cruikshank}, vol. 1, 131. The article was originally published in \textit{Blackwood’s Magazine}. John Wilson (1785-1854) was one of Thomas De Quincey’s closest friends, and was the most important contributor to \textit{Blackwood’s} in the magazine’s early years. My thanks to Robert Morrison for bringing these facts to my attention.

The focus in *Pillars*, as Patten points out, is where money is transferred from: the drinkers who consume the gin.\textsuperscript{211} The anthropomorphized gin drop again appears, this time with limbs. Cruikshank often personified alcohol in his early engravings, giving bottles arms and legs, suggesting that alcohol itself was a foe that could and would stalk its victims. He gave different types of alcohol different personalities, and although these images were intended to be humorous, the humanoid gin drop in *The Gin-Juggarnath* and *The Pillars of a Gin Shop* is more threatening, foreshadowing Cruikshank’s more earnest later work concerned with drunkenness.\textsuperscript{212}

![Figure 3.3. George Cruikshank, *The Pillars of a Gin Shop*, from *My Sketchbook*, vol. 1, 1834, etching, National Art Library, London.](image)

Money and alcohol were inextricably bound together in both Cruikshank’s art and life. In a speech delivered at a temperance meeting after he quit drinking, Cruikshank offered his

\textsuperscript{211} Patten, *George Cruikshank’s Life*, vol. 1, 364.

\textsuperscript{212} See Cruikshank, *My Sketchbook*, vol. 1, for examples of anthropomorphized bottles.
audience what Warhol would call a “euphoric” narrative, focusing on the financial reasons for ceasing to drink, and characterizing his recovery from frequent drunkenness as recovery from financial distress as well.

I am ashamed to say that for many years I went on following the ordinary custom of drinking, till I fell into pecuniary difficulties. I had some money at a bankers; he fell into difficulties, took to drinking brandy-and-water, and ended by blowing out his brains. I lost my money, and in my distress applied to friends who aided me for a time, but they themselves fell into difficulties, and I was forced to extricate myself by the most extraordinary exertions. In this strait I thought, The best thing I can do is to take to water; but still I went on for some time before I quite weaned myself from my own drinking habits.213

As Christopher Herbert has remarked, a “powerful force field of attractions and revulsions…surrounded the idea of money in the nineteenth century.”214 While Cruikshank can share his story of recovery with the temperance members because he is alive and sober, his banker did not fare as well, committing suicide due to his addiction and money troubles thus locking alcohol and finances together as life-threatening agents.

Cruikshank’s biographies often focus on the artist’s relationship with money.215 George Augustus Sala wrote, “I have heard that for an illustrative etching on a plate octavo size [Cruikshank] never received more than twenty-five pounds, and had been paid as low as ten pounds, and that he had often drawn a charming little vignette on wood for a guinea. By the ‘Bottle’ he must have realized a large sum of money; still, I very much question whether, even when he was at his noontide of capacity and celebrity, his average income, taking the bad years

215 Julie Codell has noted the significant role the art press played in the construction of an artist’s identity in Victorian Britain, observing that “social and economic activities were necessary components of professional knowledge and production.” Julie Codell, The Victorian Artist: Artists’ Lifewritings in Britain, ca. 1870-1910 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.
with the good, exceeded six hundred pounds a year.”\textsuperscript{216} In a similar vein, Thackeray observed: “Of late years, Mr. Cruikshank has busied himself very much with steel engraving, and the consequences of that lucky invention have been, that his plates are now sold by thousands, where they could only be produced by hundreds before. He has made many a bookseller’s and author’s fortune (we trust that in so doing he may not have neglected his own).”\textsuperscript{217}

This focus on Cruikshank’s finances is remarkable, particularly because the artist himself identified money as a primary motivation for getting sober. Jerrold reports that one day after he had stopped drinking, Cruikshank rode past his old wine merchant’s establishment and called out “Give me back my thousand pounds!”\textsuperscript{218} Whether this incident was apocryphal or not, it underscores the fact that Cruikshank’s drinking, sobriety and art were inextricably linked with money in his biographies. The biographers’ preoccupation with Cruikshank’s money matters is complicated by the fact that in the nineteenth century, as Christopher Herbert has shown, money was often regarded as a “source of pollution,”\textsuperscript{219} because material wealth was often conceived of as spiritual poverty in Protestant British culture.\textsuperscript{220} This conception of money as “filthy” thus has parallels with nineteenth-century ideas about alcoholics. These ideas were influenced by Biblical passages, such as the one that states: “all drunkards and all unclean persons, if they die without repentance, must be shut out of heaven.”\textsuperscript{221} Cruikshank himself reinforced the image of drunkenness as related to filth, for example when describing women who drink “to such excess

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\textsuperscript{216} George Augustus Sala, “George Cruikshank: A Life Memory,” \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine} (May 1878), 562.
\textsuperscript{217} Stephens, \textit{A Memoir}, 113-114.
\textsuperscript{218} Jerrold, \textit{The Life of George Cruikshank}, vol. 2, 106-7.
\textsuperscript{219} Herbert, “Filthy Lucre,” 190.
\textsuperscript{220} Herbert, “Filthy Lucre,” 193.
\textsuperscript{221} Quoted in “Against Drunkenness and Lewdness, extracted from Dr. Watts’s \textit{Miscellaneous Thoughts}, Nos. 35 and 36, with a few Reflections Subjoined,” in \textit{The Servant’s Friend, and Profitable Companion} (London: Religious Tract Society, c.1799), 3.
\end{flushleft}
that they place themselves on a level with the swine.”\textsuperscript{222} Herbert refers to the “morbid craving for money” that was “figured as a disgusting perversion, often with overtones of sexual depravity” in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{223} Significantly, “morbid craving” was a phrase Dr. Norman Kerr, the first president of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety, used to describe an alcoholic’s physiological desire to drink alcohol.\textsuperscript{224} In Cruikshank’s biographies the discourses of art, alcohol and money intersect again and again.\textsuperscript{225}

\textit{The Bottle and The Drunkard’s Children}

Cruikshank produced and published his most commercially successful venture, \textit{The Bottle} series, in 1847. The series, which I discuss further in Chapter 5, portrays the dire consequences of alcohol consumption by both the mother and father of three children. The first plate shows the family sitting down to dinner; all is sweetness and light, even the apparently innocent offer of a drink by the man to his wife (Fig. 3.4). Over the course of the next seven plates, one of the children dies, the contents of the house are removed to pay bills, and finally the husband kills his wife in a drunken rage. The final image shows the man huddled in a cell at Bethlem Royal Hospital (Figs. 3.5).

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{222} George Cruikshank, “Descriptive Lecture,” in \textit{Worship of Bacchus, a critique of the above painting by John Stewart; a descriptive lecture by George Cruikshank, and opinions of the press}, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed. (London: William Tweedie, 1865), 3.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Herbert, “Filthy Lucre,” 190.
\item \textsuperscript{224} See \textit{Morbid Cravings: The Emergence of Addiction} (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1985), 12.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Cruikshank also contributed engravings to Pierce Egan’s \textit{Life in London} (1821) before he stopped drinking. According to William Bates, Cruikshank, “who was even then a moralist, either had misconceived the object of the author, or saw that his designs were used for a purpose he had not contemplated; and finding that the book, which created a perfect \textit{furore}, was a guide to, rather than a dissuasive from, the vicious haunts and amusements of the metropolis, retired from the firm, in which, from relative age, he figured as junior partner.” William Bates, \textit{George Cruikshank: The Artist, the Humourist, and the Man} (London: Houlston and Sons, 1878), 22. For an excellent feminist reading of space using \textit{Life in London} as primary source material, see Jane Rendell, \textit{The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London} (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
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According to William Bates, who wrote his biography of Cruikshank the year the artist died, *The Bottle* “was a huge success; sold in immense numbers (100,000 are said to have been disposed of in a day or two at a shilling each); was dramatized and represented at eight London theatres simultaneously. The artist no doubt made hay during the brief sunshine; though on
exporting a large edition to America, he found that a printed issue had already taken possession of the market.”

The sequel series, *The Drunkard’s Children* (Fig 5.9), followed in 1848. Despite Cruikshank’s commercial, and apparently financial, success, Bates was critical of the artworks’ artistic merits: “With much of Hogarth’s narrative talent, no small dramatic power, and the artist’s skill in composition and the exhibition of character, the series is still somewhat unsatisfactory, whether as a work of art, or as a moral lesson.”

He blames this, in part, on the medium that Cruikshank chose, glyphography, “a process by which engraved lines lose their definition, distance its gradation, and the whole effect is rendered flat and lifeless.”

“Moreover,” Bates remarks, “as works of art the designs have a certain coarseness and vulgarity, much of which is inevitable; there is too much sensationalism throughout; and the eventuation, as Mr. Sala has ably shewn [sic], is melodramatic rather than tragic.” Bates blames the medium, but his text reveals that, consciously or unconsciously, he regarded the temperance movement as the cause of Cruikshank’s diminished artistic prowess. He notes that in 1848 Cruikshank had already “embraced the Temperance cause, though I hardly think that he had finally cast in his lot with the total abstainers…..,” sounding for all intents and purposes like one who wistfully regrets his subject’s actions. Bates comes even closer to revealing his true feelings about the matter when he remarks: “A temperate man is apt to become intemperate when he attacks intemperance. George Cruikshank gave himself up, heart and soul, to the cause; and was ready with gratuitous help – or what amounted to this – to anyone that sought it.”

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Frederic G. Stephens voiced a similar sentiment in his 1891 memoir of Cruikshank: “In respect to that passion for ‘Total Abstinence’ which marked the artist’s later years, he was neither more nor less than a fierce partisan, a man of one idea, earnest and eager in all he did, inspired by a generous fury, and, although nearly always on the right side, seldom a wise, and never a temperate advocate.” 232 He also had a similar view on The Bottle, which he called “a fierce satire, but nevertheless, and despite its inevitable coarseness and vulgarity, full of pitiful elements and sardonic wit.” 233 Like Bates, Stephens identifies the vulgarity of The Bottle as “inevitable.” What bearing does this criticism of the series have on the view of Cruikshank as an “intemperate” advocate of temperance? I will return to this question later in my discussion, as it is crucial to understanding why Cruikshank’s temperance had a more negative impact on his career than did his heavy drinking. One wonders: what must Cruikshank have felt all those years that he was drinking to the point of intoxication while simultaneously producing images that criticized other people’s drunkenness? Did he feel like a hypocrite? As if he was living a double life? Cruikshank’s biographies do not answer these questions.

“Getting Sober”

According to Jerrold, Cruikshank, “wanting the widest possible publicity,” took The Bottle to show William Nash, the chairman of the National Temperance Society, in 1847. Nash apparently admired the eight prints, but asked Cruikshank how he could drink with this visual “lesson” before him. 234 Cruikshank reported that he was “completely staggered” by this, and thereafter he decided to stop drinking. This conflicts with a number of statements regarding  

232 Stephens, A Memoir, 15.
Cruikshank’s decision to abstain from alcohol, including Bates’s observation that in 1848 Cruikshank had yet to “throw his lot” in with the total abstainers, those temperance advocates who did not tolerate any alcohol consumption whatsoever. However, according to most of the biographers, the approximate moment of Cruikshank’s decision to quit drinking seems to have been the publication of *The Bottle* and *The Drunkard’s Children*. (Jerrold, as I have already noted, suggested that Cruikshank began having doubts about his own alcohol consumption as early as 1815 when James Gillray died.) Both series are mixing pots of nineteenth-century stereotypes and beliefs about dangerous alcohol consumption: poverty, violence, death, insanity, prostitution, suicide, crime, and even the hereditary nature of drunkenness. Whether or not Cruikshank read medical treatises on alcohol consumption, he was aware of discourses regarding drunkenness that were circulating contemporaneously with his own work, as became abundantly clear when he began including text in his temperance-minded images.

According to Stephens, Cruikshank stopped drinking in 1842, five years before the artist apparently met with Nash. Stephens asserts that, “With the super-abundant zeal of a convert, he denounced everybody who either drank or smoked; he lectured on ‘total abstinence,’ and with undeviating courage and persistency urged the cause of ‘Temperance’ both in and out of season. His passion for ‘Temperance’ was of course intemperate.” As a result of this intemperate temperance, Stephens writes, Cruikshank “lost much employment because of his fanaticism, but this neither mitigated his ardour nor moderated his speech. He – having been a boon companion of a very uproarious and entirely reckless kind, devoted to the ‘glass,’ or rather the tumbler –

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suddenly, and with characteristic energy, became an entire teetotaler and violent opponent of practices which he had till then been devoted to.”236

Cruikshank indeed became an “entire teetotaler,” rather than a moderate drinker. As Brian Harrison has shown, when it was conceived in 1828, the temperance movement promoted only abstaining from spirits, but he notes that “Teetotal societies soon grew out of this movement in the early 1830s, and at the end of the decade some teetotalers even adopted the ‘long pledge’ which banned the offering, as well as the consuming, of intoxicants.”237 There was a misconception held by some in the nineteenth century that the term was “tea-totalers,” because they believed that people who did not drink alcohol were “always drinking tea.”238 In Cruikshank’s The Glass and the New Crystal Palace (1853), which I discuss in more depth in the next chapter, the artist wages battle against all those who are unsympathetic towards the temperance movement. He recounts, constructing a legend of temperance advocates as martyrs, that in the early days of teetotalling, those who promoted the cause of “universal temperance and sobriety did so at the risk of their lives; they were hooted at, and spat upon wherever they were seen; pelted with brickbats and stones; an many of them would no doubt have been murdered had they not made their escape, and concealed themselves from the half drunken and infuriated mob.”239 Cruikshank’s intention here is to frame drinkers as fanatics and abstainers as the victims of drunken violence. His definition of the teetotaler is therefore drawn according to this objective: “His philosophy of living – which will, no doubt, startle many – is simply to eat when he is hungry, and drink when he is dry, and never take, if he be aware of it, anything that can

236 Stephens, A Memoir, 63.
237 Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, 19.
239 Cruikshank, The Glass, 5.
possibly do him harm.”240 As far as we know, Cruikshank was never pelted with stones because of his temperance, but his own words, actions and artworks positioned him as the fanatic, rather than a sober-minded citizen concerned for his fellow man, and the result was that critics and friends began to doubt his artistic abilities as well as his grip on reality.

In Cruikshank’s temperance speech that I quoted from above, the artist recited the following anecdote regarding his journey to sobriety: “I went to take luncheon with my friend [Charles] Dickens (who, I am sorry to say, is not a teetotaler); he asked me to take wine, but I told him I had taken to water, for, in my opinion, a man had better take a glass of prussic acid than fall into the other habit of taking brandy-and-water; and I am happy to say that Dickens quite agreed with me, that a man had better wipe himself out at once, than extinguish himself by degrees by the soul-degrading and body-destroying enemy.”241 Cruikshank and Dickens had been friends and drinking companions for many years before the former found temperance, and their eventual falling out resulted from conflicts of interest related to both art and alcohol.

According to Harry Stone, Cruikshank’s “public controversy with Dickens had erupted at the moment of his decisive fall and subsequent decline.”242 The public controversy that Stone refers to revolved around Cruikshank’s decision to re-write selected fairy tales with temperance undertones that were as subtle as a jack hammer.243 Dickens responded with hostility to these stories with an article entitled “Frauds on the Fairies,” which was published in Household Words.

240 Cruikshank, The Glass, 7.
243 The third story, Cinderella, included a passage at the end in which Cinderella’s fairy godmother says that as long as the King takes half a glass of wine a day, his subjects will be “constantly falling by excess into vice, wretchedness, and crime....” George Cruikshank, George Cruikshank’s Fairy Library, Cinderella and the Glass Slipper (London: D. Bogue, 1853), 26.
in October 1853.\footnote{Morbid Cravings, 24.} He also wrote an acerbic essay called “Whole Hogs” regarding the fanaticism of the temperance movement. Cruikshank in turn responded to this text in George Cruikshank’s Magazine, again alluding to the trope of filthiness, which Dickens had raised in relation to temperance advocates who went “whole hog” by abstaining completely from all intoxicating drinks. The artist wrote: “As to any allusion to the ‘unclean animal,’ in connexion [sic] with total abstinence, the term would more properly attach to those who wallow in the mire, and destroy their intellects by the use of intoxicating liquors, until they debase themselves to the level of the porcine quadruped!”\footnote{George Cruikshank, “Letter from Hop-o'-my-thumb to Charles Dickens, Esq. Upon ‘Fraud on the Fairies,’ ‘Whole Hogs,’ etc.,” George Cruikshank’s Magazine (London: D. Brogue, 1854), 80.} Dickens’s hostility was enflamed by what he regarded as his old friend’s intemperate temperance. The author apparently endured with good humour Cruikshank’s antics when he was actively drinking, suggested by Jerrold’s anecdote about the morning that Cruikshank arrived at Dickens’s house, “unwashed and ‘smelling of tobacco, beer, and sawdust,’ as Dickens described him. […] He said he had been up all night; was afraid to go home, and begged for some breakfast.” According to Jerrold, Dickens tried to persuade his friend to go home, but Cruikshank would only agree to walk as far from Islington as possible. The two men walked for hours.\footnote{Jerrold, The Life of George Cruikshank, vol. 2, 49.} Although Dickens had displayed patience on this occasion, his patience had apparently run out by the time Cruikshank was actively promoting temperance, even to those who did not drink to excess. He was a total abstainer, meaning that he did not tolerate anyone drinking in moderation, and made that abundantly clear in various embarrassing
and inappropriate ways, such as knocking a glass of wine out of an elderly host’s hand and lecturing him on the benefits of temperance.247

Peter McCandless has referred to the “militant fanaticism of the Temperance Movement,” observing that “its devotees often adopted irrational positions and went to absurd lengths to rid the world of the scourge of alcohol.”248 Even in the nineteenth century, physicians sympathetic to the temperance cause felt the need to distance themselves from this apparent fanaticism. For instance, Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson, who was well-known for his writings on alcohol, remarked in 1893 that he had never prescribed alcohol in any of his cases at the London Temperance Hospital. “In making this statement,” he wrote, “that in the treatment of the cases under my care no alcohol has been administered, I relate a simple fact, without prejudice and without any shade of what is called fanaticism. I am no fanatic for or against alcohol.”249

Cruikshank, on the other hand, both engraved and spoke in many shades of fanaticism, as the next part of my discussion will reveal.

The Masterpiece that was Not One

The critiques of The Bottle and The Drunkard’s Children were positively rapturous in comparison to the often vitriolic reactions inspired by Cruikshank’s last intended, and ultimately ill-fated, pseudo-masterpiece, The Worship of Bacchus (Fig. 3.6), also known as The Triumph of

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247 See Morbid Cravings, 24. For more on Dickens’s and Cruikshank’s friendship and eventual falling out, see Stone, “Dickens, Cruikshank, and Fairy Tales,” 213-47.
Bacchus. The painting portrays a series of vignettes in the foreground representing apparently innocent social rituals that involve alcohol consumption, such as a wedding and a funeral. The individuals in these scenes are all of the respectable classes, and there is no evidence of vice or crime. As the viewer’s eyes move deeper into the painting, however, Cruikshank’s message becomes apparent. People from different classes, races and religions are shown in various groups drinking, except for a man wearing a turban and standing on the Koran (in order to indicate his religious affiliation) who refuses the offer of alcohol from a group of Christian clergymen. Instances of violence and debauchery begin to stand out, and soon we realize that in the centre of the painting a great mass of British citizens are shown mad with drink cavorting

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250 For a description of every inch of the painting, see A Key to the Worship of Bacchus, Painted and Etched by George Cruikshank, as described by himself (London: William Tweedie, 1863), which is held in the Tate Britain archives.
around a statue of Bacchus. In the background is a series of buildings that include a brewery, distillery, reformatory, ragged school, hospital, union workhouse, canteen, prison and lunatic asylum. A structure in the top left-hand corner is on fire, emitting smoke that combines with the smoke pumping out of the factories. Dark, angry clouds loom, and this pathetic fallacy foreshadows the eventual destruction of the British Empire that will result, according to Cruikshank’s vision, from the ostensibly innocent drinking depicted in the foreground.

Stephens called the painting “that terribly unpicturesque picture,” and wrote that it was “villainously executed as a whole and outrageously ridiculous in parts.”\textsuperscript{251} According to another biographer, “This picture, with much dramatic, skilful grouping and clever drawing is yet too sketchy, too grotesque, too amorphous, to stand the test of criticism from a rigid art-point of view.” Bates continues: “But it is manifestly unjust so to judge it, and ignore its other claims to interest and admiration. Still, it must be admitted that it has much to offend; and it is probable that in a later day, as now, it will be regarded as a gigantic failure, the outcome of an enormous amount of misapplied and anfractuous labour.”\textsuperscript{252}

The use of the word “labour” is ambiguous in this statement. Is Bates referring to Cruikshank’s “misapplied and anfractuous” artistic labours, or those labours he so intensely enacted on behalf of the temperance movement? Again, Bates reveals his position, and his antagonism towards temperance’s seemingly addictive hold on Cruikshank, if not toward the temperance movement itself:

A few words seem opportune here of Cruikshank’s labours in the cause of temperance…. For he…had been a hardy warrior…against our national vice, which he rightly esteemed to be the cause of nine-twentieths of the poverty, misery, and crime we see around us. \textit{It cannot be a matter of doubt that by his devotion to this cause, art and his fortunes}

\textsuperscript{251} Stephens, \textit{A Memoir}, 52.
\textsuperscript{252} Bates, \textit{George Cruikshank}, 56-57.
A man of his simplicity and thoroughness of character could hardly embrace a cause like this, – and there is none nobler – without devotedness which the world is apt to term fanaticism. He was a man of single eye, and could not serve two masters. Moreover his style suffered by the contraction of his ideas and sympathies, and his art became associated with that vulgarity and want of aestheticism which, perhaps necessarily, characterises the movement. More than this, some of his earliest friends were alienated, and remunerative work that might have been his was diverted, from sheer prejudice, into other hands.  

Here, again, is the belief that the temperance movement was characterized by vulgarity, and was somehow intrinsically, or “necessarily,” unaesthetic. Cruikshank’s temperance art, then, was deemed to have failed artistically, and by extension, commercially, not because of its medium or its style, although, according to Bates, that was certainly part of it. Temperance art in general, and that by Cruikshank in particular, was doomed to fail inevitably, because the rhetoric behind it subsumed the aesthetic components. Furthermore, labour is, of course, inextricably linked with financial remuneration, which we have seen was central to biographical narratives written about Cruikshank. It is significant that both his art and temperance advocacy are described as labours in his biographies, as it underscores the paradox that, although Cruikshank laboured artistically throughout his life, once these labours intersected with temperance in a way that some viewers found offensive, even fanatical, the result was a negative impact on his financial circumstances.

Unlike Stephens and Bates, John Stewart called *The Worship of Bacchus* “great,” but even so, he made some qualification about how it could be judged.

We are now able to compare the gigantic effort with the success achieved. There is no other standard; for, throughout the vast domain of art, there is almost nothing by which this creation of Cruikshank’s can be measured. It is not a picture in the common-place use of that term, but a work through which the artist speaks in lines as Milton or Dante spoke through words. […] It is not, therefore, to be tried by the usual standards of art.

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criticism so much as by the sublime daring which prompted the artist to risk all things – art, artistic canons, and professional reputation…. 254

According to Stewart, because of the intended purpose of the painting, it could not be judged as art per se, which recalls Bates’s argument that it could not be judged from a “rigid art-point of view.” Both men are ultimately saying that Cruikshank’s painting repelled traditional art criticism because it was more message than art. However, Stewart’s comments veil a conflict of interest. Stewart was an art critic, but he was also a member of the committee made up of temperance leaders that funded the production of The Worship of Bacchus.255 Cruikshank reported that the idea for the painting came to him in a “flash” some time in 1859.256 The plans for The Worship of Bacchus reveal concerns both for commercial success and for the intended impact on British society’s drinking habits. Cruikshank planned first to produce a watercolour, which would then be engraved and sold as a print. The sales of the engraved prints would reimburse the committee’s members, and also provide funds for the production of the oil painting, which would be toured as temperance propaganda. However, as Robert Upstone has noted, Cruikshank was a notoriously poor financier, and had trouble estimating and controlling the income from his artistic production.257 Furthermore, Cruikshank effectively skipped the engraving stage when he began work on the oil painting before the engraving plate was completed. Cruikshank apparently told people that Stewart asked him on behalf of the


255 Bacchus was often referred to in writing on alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century. Dr. T.P. Lucas wrote, for instance, that after drinking “the brain hemispheres and other portions ordinarily under the power of the will become simply furious, as they passively and helplessly sway hither and thither impelled by the restless God, Bacchus.” Cruikshank was therefore contributing to one of the many tropes that had developed around views on alcohol consumption. T.P. Lucas, The Laws of Life and Alcohol (London: William Tweedie and Co., 1877), 63.


committee to start the oil, but according to Upstone, when Stewart visited Cruikshank’s studio in November 1860, four months after critics and temperance leaders went to the studio to view the finished watercolour, he was surprised to find Cruikshank working on the oil. Because of Cruikshank’s decision to neglect the print, although he had engaged Charles Mottram to begin the engraving plate in September of that year, the Bacchus project entered dangerous financial waters. The artist clearly loved the project not wisely, but too well. The print did not appear until 1864, and unlike The Bottle, it sold slowly because it was too expensive for its target audience.\textsuperscript{258} It is also massive and unwieldy, as anyone who attempts to handle one of the engravings at the British Museum will soon discover.

The painting was eventually exhibited in a small gallery next to the Lyceum Theatre on Wellington Street in 1862. Five hundred people attended the private viewing on 4 August, but after that foot traffic was minimal. The Worship of Bacchus was moved to Exeter Hall, and exhibited in the so-called “George Cruikshank Gallery” alongside over one thousand of Cruikshank’s others works.\textsuperscript{259} The exhibition smelled of desperation, and still no one came. A tour through England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales also failed to result in financial success for the painting, making it both an artistic and commercial failure, contrasting dramatically with Cruikshank’s expectations for his epic work. The Worship of Bacchus was presented to the National Gallery of London in 1869, following a public subscription organized by Cruikshank and sympathetic members of the temperance movement. From the National Gallery it passed

\textsuperscript{258} Upstone, “Demon Drink,” 25, 27.
\textsuperscript{259} “The George Cruikshank Gallery, new on view, in the Picture Gallery of Exeter Hall,” The Weekly Record (29 Nov. 1862), 492. See also The Art Journal, vol. III (1 Jan. 1863), 18. On 1 June The Art Journal reported that The Worship of Bacchus, which the author calls The Triumph of Bacchus, had been submitted for inspection by Queen Victoria at Windsor. She “was graciously pleased to express approval of the design and execution of the picture, and to compliment the artist in warm terms.” The Art Journal, vol. III (1 June 1863), 128. The Queen’s approval, however, did not increase public interest in the painting.
quickly to the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), the Bradford
Art Gallery, the Dundee Art Gallery and finally to the Temperance Memorial Hall in Newcastle,
where it remained until 1909. In 1959 it was transferred by the National Gallery to the Tate
Gallery, where it was kept in storage until, following the opening of the Tate Britain in 2000, the
painting was restored and exhibited for a brief period between May and December 2001.260

**Wasted Talent and Gutter Children**

John Ruskin, like Stephens and other biographers, regarded Cruikshank’s turn to
temperance as a waste of talent:

> Among the foremost men whose power has had to assert itself, though with contest, yet
> with countless loss, through peculiarly English disadvantages of circumstances, are
> assuredly to be ranked together, both for honour and mourning, Thomas Bewick and
> George Cruikshank. There is, however, less cause for regret in the instance of
> Bewick….the genius of Cruikshank has been cast away in an utterly ghastly and
> lamentable manner: his superb line-work, worthy of any class of subject, and his powers
> of conception and composition, of which I cannot venture to estimate the range in their
> degraded application, having been condemned by his fate, to be spent either in rude
> jesting, or in vain war with conditions of vice too low alike for record or rebuke, among
> the dregs of the British populace. Yet perhaps I am wrong in regretting this: it may be an
> appointed lesson for futurity that the art of the best English etcher in the nineteenth
> century, spent on illustrations of the lives of burglars and drunkards, should one day be
> seen in museums beneath Greek vases fretted with drawings of the wars of Troy, or side
> by side with Dürer’s *Knight and Death*.261

Ruskin speaks of Cruikshank’s choice of subject matter, and more specifically, his *art*, in the
language used to describe drunkards themselves: “degraded application,” “condemned by his
fate,” “among the dregs of the British populace.” Perhaps even more significantly, Ruskin was
correct in his supposition that Cruikshank’s engravings would some day be exhibited in
museums. The British Museum, for example, has exhibited his work in the room dedicated to

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260 See *George Cruikshank’s The Worship of Bacchus in Focus*.
261 Quoted in Bates, *George Cruikshank*, 73. Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) was an engraver who published *A
History of British Birds* (1816).
the display of engravings from the Museum’s permanent collection, and if they are not seen
directly beneath Greek vases fretted with drawings of the wars of Troy, then they are certainly
displayed only a few rooms away.

In the same year that Ruskin published the scathing critique of his temperance advocacy
and the artistic results, Cruikshank published *Our Gutter Children* (Fig. 3.7), a partly satirical,
partly earnest manifesto of sorts that included both visual and textual components. The work
was created in response to a suggestion made in the press by Maria S. Rye to remove the
daughters of active lower-class alcoholics from cities and towns “such as London, Manchester,
Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Cork, etc., etc., etc.,” and send
them to Canada and the Western States of America. ²⁶² The engraving represents well-dressed
men and women sweeping up tiny “gutter girls” and shoveling them into the back of a cart, much
like mud and dirt were removed from nineteenth-century streets. ²⁶³ The man on the far left is
shown saying: “There are many plans suggested for providing for the neglected children of
drunken parents. But none such a sweeping measure as this, for by this plan, we provide for
them at once, & get rid of the dear little ones altogether.” The woman in the back says: “This is
a delightful task! & we shall never want a supply of these neglected children whilst the pious &
respectable Distillers and Brewers carry on their trade and we shall always find plenty of the
little dears about the gin palaces & the beer shops.” The man in the top hat remarks: “According
to the teaching of Jesus, all these little gutter girls are our sisters, & therefore, I feel strong duty

²⁶³ See Joseph Whitworth, *On the Advantages and Economy of Maintaining a High Degree of Cleanliness in Roads
and Streets; with an Account of the Construction and Operations of the Street-Sweeping Machine* (London: William
Clowes and Sons, 1847). Whitworth identifies the general advantages of street cleanliness, including the perfect
supply of water, perfect drainage and the entire prevention of any collection of decomposing filth (1). He adds:
“Dirt, decomposing in the streets, is one of the sources of that impurity of air which depresses the health of the
inhabitants of large towns; it is also one great impediment to the formation of habits of domestic and personal
cleanliness. Of this, all who have been observant of the habits of the poorer classes are well aware....” (1).
as a Christian Minister to assist this good work.” The woman on the right, probably meant to be Maria Rye, observes: “I am greatly obliged to you, Christian ladies and gentlemen for your help and as soon as you have filled the car, I’ll drive off & pitch the little dears aboard of a ship & take them thousands of miles away from their native land so that they never see any of their relations again.”

Figure 3.7. George Cruikshank, Our Gutter Children, letterpress with an illustration etched on glass, 1869, National Art Library, London.
Through the mouths of these four figures Cruikshank lampoons the respectable middle-class social reformers who were determined to help those less fortunate than themselves but without getting their hands dirty; the brewers and distillers; the clergy; and people like Maria Rye who made suggestions that Cruikshank regarded as foolish because of their insensitivity to people’s suffering. Although Rye’s suggestion was surely made in all earnestness, Cruikshank turns her proposal into one that recalls Jonathan Swift’s satire *A Modest Proposal* (1729), in which Swift’s narrator recommends the consumption of babies’ flesh for the starving Irish.264 Cruikshank is critical of Rye’s proposal because he regards it as comparable to the transportation of criminals. He also expresses concern that the little girls will be shipped to America as “white slaves, as the black slaves used to be sent from Africa, when the horrible slave trade existed!”265

Cruikshank, of course, regarded total abstention from alcoholic beverages as the only solution to the dilemma of “gutter girls.” He turns from a critique of Rye’s proposal to his own experiences as an abstainer, focusing on the artistic, financial and commercial ramifications, and describing the central paradox of his life: “I have worked against drunkenness and gin-shops with pen and pencil for about sixty years, and for about a quarter of a century before Teetotalism was ever heard of, and all that I did against drunkenness was highly approved of by the press and the public, whilst I partook of alcoholic liquors myself, but when I became an abstainer, about three or four and twenty years back, people thought I had lost my wits.”266 (According to this account, Cruikshank stopped drinking in 1845 or 1846.) He continues: “My joining this good cause has cost me thousands – a fortune – and it is rather galling to find, that those who attempt to save their fellow creatures from destruction should have to pay heavily for their

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266 Cruikshank, *Our Gutter Children*, 4. All emphases in the original.
benevolence, whilst those who, although perhaps unthinkingly, are nevertheless the cause of sending their fellow-creatures to destruction, are rolling in wealth.” This statement indicates that Cruikshank was very much aware of the detrimental effects that his temperance had had on his financial situation. Unlike Ruskin and others, however, Cruikshank never admitted or suggested that his identity as an enthusiastic temperance advocate had in any way diminished his artistic powers. Indeed, Cruikshank’s regard for his own talent never wavered, at least not in public.

The Artist-Scholar and Male Hysteria

In a lecture delivered in 1878 (the year Cruikshank died), Dr. Alfred Carpenter remarked: “I seldom meet with neuralgia in the total abstainer, whilst hysteria is in a great measure absent in those families whose ancestors have been perfectly temperate people. I have traced back several cases of strongly marked hysteria, in all I have found a certain dependence upon Alcohol, not only in the patient, but also in the patient’s immediate ancestors.” He adds: “I have met with numerous cases of acute neuralgia in healthy sensitive females; it is generally styled agony in those who are hysterically inclined; some declare that it is only relieved by Alcohol, or chloral hydrate, or some narcotic.”

Carpenter, like so many other physicians during this period, associated hysteria chiefly with women. According to Victor Horsley and Mary Sturge in 1907, “The effect of alcohol on the emotions will be recognized at once if we describe, for instance, the emotional developments in a woman who is fond of its use. They are usually as follows: her temper becomes irritable and fractious, hysterical outbursts are common, and she becomes absurdly timid and full of strange fears.”

Another observation made by Carpenter is even more relevant for my purposes here: “There is sometimes great mental power in this class of

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cases, a brilliant intellect or great genius…. These cases generally go from bad to worse, and
end in suicide, or as general paralysis, or dementia….” 269 Despite their obvious distaste for his
brand of temperance, Cruikshank’s biographers were not stingy with praise for his intellectual
and artistic powers, at least in the years before he became a temperance advocate. I will accept
the biographers’ judgments – that Cruikshank had a superior intellect – in order to make a point
of my own.

In 1873 S.C. Hall, the editor of the Art Journal, formerly The Art Union, published The
Trial of Sir Jasper, A Temperance Tale in Verse. 270 Hall published more than twenty wood
engravings in his book, and many famous names were linked with the project, including John
Tenniel, 271 Birket Foster, 272 and the Dalziel Brothers. 273 Cruikshank’s contribution to the text
was an image entitled The Scholar in Bedlam (Fig. 3.8). Hall’s over-riding theme was the artist
as witness, for, as Hall wrote, “ART can give a living force to VERSE.” 274 There are two poems
in Sir Jasper that are significant for Cruikshank’s image. The first reads, in part:

That witness is an ARTIST! On his brow
Genius was seated; shame degrades it, now;
And self-reproach. Grand works within his brain

269 Carpenter, Alcoholic Drinks, 26-27.
270 The Art Union became The Art Journal in 1849. For a discussion of Hall’s life and career see Hazel Morris,
271 See Roger Simpson, Sir John Tenniel: Aspects of his Work (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses,
1994), 56.
273 See George Dalziel and Edward Dalziel, The Brothers Dalziel: A Record of Fifty Years’ Work in Conjunction
with Many of the Most Distinguished Artists of the Period, 1840-1890 (London: Methuen and Co., 1901). In their
autobiography, the Dalziel brothers are critical of Hall because he apparently did not fulfill his promise that no other
wood engravers would ever be employed for his works. “But,” they write, “perhaps it is only characteristic of the
man to say that this promise was never carried out” (37). They describe Cruikshank as “vain” and “versatile” (44),
and remark that “No man ever had greater faith in self than the clever, excitable George Cruikshank” (46). They
also attribute the role of catalyst in Cruikshank’s decision to become a total abstainer to Dr. Blomfield, the then
Bishop of London (49-50), not William Nash as in Jerrold’s account.
Jasper is a distiller who is being tried for all the deaths his product has caused.
Dwindled to nothings but a shadowy train;
His great intending – all – have come to naught;
All perished in the ruin he has wrought.
Giving to those who gave him love and thought
A grief of heart for premature decay
Of powers that might have won him wealth and fame,
And had already dignified his name.  

The irony of this poem is, of course, that Cruikshank’s name was in better standing when he was actively drinking than in his period of abstinence, which lasted until his death in 1878. The phrase “great intending” could describe both Cruikshank’s artistic labours and his temperance labours, but it was the latter that contributed to the premature decay of his wealth and fame.

The second poem of interest is more directly related to Cruikshank’s image because it refers to the “scholar” witness:

That witness is a SCHOLAR: one who stood
High in the college-books – of promise good.
Ten thousand devils haunt him day and night;
Haunt him alike in darkness and in light.
Horrible fancies of all hideous things,
Of birds with crawling feet and dogs with wings;
[...]  
The bones have left his limbs;
His hair is flame
That burns his very brain;
And shadows of a past – a ghastly train –
Buzz in his ears of future guilt and shame.  

275 Hall, Sir Jasper, chapter 5.
276 Hall, Sir Jasper, chapter 5. Hall published also published An Old Story: A Temperance Tale in Verse, 2nd ed. (London: Virtue and Co., 1874). In a review of An Old Story in Hall’s Art Journal, the anonymous reviewer wrote that the “purpose of the publication being to aid the many earnest workers who are laboring heart and soul to suppress, or at least depress, ‘the national vice which is the national curse.’ [...] Hitherto, or at least until within a recent period, Art was rather the ally, than the foe, of drunkenness. Like the poets, the painters (with some glorious exceptions, George Cruikshank and others), exhibited only its social charm, keeping out of sight the degradation, the poverty, the misery, and the crime to which it invariably and inevitably led.” “An Old Story,” The Art Journal, vol. XIV (Sept. 1875), 310. In describing an apprentice who spent his inheritance on alcohol “chiefly in the vicinity of the Surrey Theatre,” the Dalziel brothers write: “Poor fellow! It was the old, old story – the drink – the drink that did it.” Dalziel and Dalziel, Brothers Dalziel, 348.
The suggestion here is that the scholar has gone mad with drink. Cruikshank’s Scholar is represented as visibly agitated, with his mouth open and eyes wide. These were some of the visual signifiers of female hysteria in the nineteenth century. Elaine Showalter observes that hysteria is a “mimetic disorder; it mimics culturally permissible expressions of distress.”²⁷⁷ I do not mean to imply that insanity and hysteria were conceived as the same thing in the nineteenth century. However, Cruikshank, or perhaps Hall, deliberately identified the scholar represented in Sir Jasper as “mad” rather than hysterical. As Showalter has shown, hysteria is a malady that is

²⁷⁷ Showalter, Hystories, 15.
as hard to define as it is to diagnose. I believe that Cruikshank and Hall would have consciously avoided using the term “hysteria” to describe Cruikshank’s scholar because of the feminine connotations of that disease. In reading the scholar as hysterical rather than mad, I am highlighting the subjective nature of reading any physiological or biological state, whether alcoholism, insanity, or homosexuality, from a visual image. How is madness represented in art? How is hysteria represented in art? These questions inevitably remind us that in the nineteenth century physicians such as Hugh Welch Diamond believed that certain diseases, including alcoholism, could be read from the body, as well as from other visual “evidence” such as photographs.

Rosemary Betterton has discussed the use of visual signifiers of hysteria in early twentieth-century anti-suffrage imagery. These corporeal signifiers included gaping mouths, stiff limbs, and staring eyes, as in John Hassall’s *A Perfect Woman* (1912), a postcard that shows a screaming woman with an almost rodent-like face waving a placard saying “I want a vote.” A similar strategy was used in the *Daily Mirror’s* full page spread “The Suffragette Face: New Type Evolved by Militancy,” published on 5 May 1914. Photographs of unnamed suffragettes were described in the textual captions as “Dishevelled after fighting” and “Screaming with impotent rage.” As Betterton points out, these images were deliberately aligning suffragettes with hysterical women. For nineteenth-century neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, she writes, “hysteria was a psychological disorder manifest in physical symptoms, and he claimed to identify in photographs of female nervous patients certain bodily states representative of

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278 For a discussion that identifies the problematic of identifying homosexuality based on physical evidence, see Andrew Stephenson, “Precarious Poses: the Problem of Artistic Visibility and its Homosocial Performances in Late-Nineteenth-Century London,” *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 6, issue 2 (Winter 2005): 73-104.
279 I discuss H.W. Diamond’s psychiatric photography further in Chapter 5.
hysteria.”281 Although Charcot acknowledged forms of male hysteria, the photographs of
patients that he commissioned “interpreted, or staged, hysteria as a specifically female sexual
disorder with strong erotic and visual signification.”282

In Betterton’s reading of Charcot’s photographs an excess of emotion is also seen as a
sign or symptom of hysteria. Cruikshank’s Scholar could be read as one possible solution to the
dilemma of how to represent an excess of emotion in art. The flaming hair, related in Hall’s
poem to painful memory and madness, could also be interpreted as a metaphorical representation
of emotions that are overwhelming the subject. Significantly, writing in 1840, Thackeray
described Cruikshank’s artistic labours in these terms: “He has been obliged to sell his wit for his
bread, week by week, to wring laughter day by day, sometimes, perhaps, out of want, often
certainly from ill-health or depression, to keep the fire of his brain perpetually alight, for the
greedy public will give it no leisure to cool.”283 Thackeray uses the trope of the artist’s brain on
fire in order to indicate the public’s excessive desire for his artistic output, which, he suggests, is
causally linked with Cruikshank’s ill-health and depression.

Cruikshank’s biographers often spoke of the artist’s excesses. Jerrold wrote that in his
drinking days “Cruikshank was convivial – sometimes to excess,”284 and also that “he seemed to be
troubled with an excess of life.”285 Stephens remarked that Cruikshank was “erroneously” and
“excessively proud” of The Bottle, suggesting that his pride blinded him to his own artistic
limitations.286 Intemperance, according to nineteenth-century theories of alcohol addiction, was

282 For a broader discussion of the visual culture of the suffrage movement, see Lisa Tickner, The Spectacle of
283 Quoted in Bates, George Cruikshank,
286 Stephens, Memoir, 4.
usually defined in terms of drinking to excess. Excessive emotions could also result from
drunkenness, but this was usually linked with female drinking. Ralph Barnes Grindrod wrote in
1843 that “Hysterical affections are among the most common of those [diseases] induced by
female wine-bibbing.”287 He adds, however: “Be it remembered also that in men, and more
especially in studious men, that species of nervousness, which so much resembles hysteria, is
often maintained by the daily use of fermented liquors, even in a moderate quantity.”288 If we
read The Scholar in Bedlam as a self-portrait, or at least a form of “autobiographical self-
disclosure,”289 thus concluding that this is how Cruikshank felt near the end of his drinking, it is
no wonder he quit, even though publicly he chose to represent his recovery as financially
motivated.

My objective in quoting Grindrod and other writers concerned with hysteria is not to
propose that Cruikshank was a hysteric, either while drinking or once sober, but rather to argue
that Victorian art critics, art buyers and other commentators may have read Cruikshank’s words –
both oral and written – as hysterical. Showalter points out that hysteria has traditionally been
linked with women, but that by the eighteenth century, “blaming the nerves or the brain for
hysterical symptoms also made it possible to recognize that men too might be sufferers, even
though women still predominated as patients since they had fewer outlets for nervous energy.”290
Dr. Philip Slavney has observed that although at one point in medical history hysteria was
regarded as an “affliction that troubles the mind,” later – during the period that Cruikshank was
actively promoting temperance – hysteria was believed to be “an affliction of the mind that was

287 Grindrod, Bacchus, 239.
288 Grindrod, Bacchus, 240.
290 Showalter, Hystories, 16.
expressed through a disturbance of the body.”291 While there is no evidence in his biographies that Cruikshank exhibited any of the “disturbances of the body” associated with hysteria, namely limps, seizures, coughs, headaches, fainting and so on, his words and actions constructed a body that could be read as hysterical.

**The Artistic Consequences of Sobriety**

According to Sir Frederick Mott in 1924,

> Even the aesthetic feelings which are the last to come evolutionarily, and, therefore, normally the first to go, may, owing to an inherent tendency and constant habitual and sub-conscious activities in associative memory tolerate better the deteriorating effects on the mind produced by chronic alcoholism, and, therefore, resists longer the work of destruction than the moral sense. The aesthetic sense may thus remain when the elementary feelings of right and wrong may be lost or perverted. Thus a chronic alcoholic artist may, by his conduct, be anti-social, and yet still delight the public, whether it be in painting, sculpture, music, poetry, or the drama.292

If we accept Mott’s conclusions about alcohol’s effects on “aesthetic feelings” or the “aesthetic sense,” we can then conclude that Cruikshank’s years of heavy drinking – he was around fifty-five years old when he successfully stopped drinking – would not have necessarily impacted his artistic abilities. Indeed, it was his work from the 1830s, when the artist had already been drinking for many years, that critics such as Ruskin regarded as his best output. My concern here is not the negative consequences that alcohol consumption may have had on Cruikshank’s art, but rather, the negative impact that his sobriety had on the reception of his art.

I have already shown that his most famous temperance-minded works, *The Bottle*, *The Drunkard’s Children*, and *The Worship of Bacchus*, were heavily criticized for both formal and ideological reasons. Sometimes these two aspects of his work intersected, as Cruikshank himself pointed out when he noted that because he wanted *The Bottle* to reach as many viewers as

possible, he chose the glyphographic process due to its lower cost, which resulted in lower quality images. This aesthetic consequence of wanting to disseminate the didactic series to the widest possible audience was only one problem noted by art critics.

Another was the narrative itself. Writing in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1863 John Paget remarked of the husband in *The Bottle*: “This man is the hero of the country, and Mr Cruikshank would fain persuade us that such a man goes post-haste to the devil, because on an unlucky day he drank a glass of whisky. If we could believe this we should be compelled to give up the axioms of morality in which we have confided all our lives. The status of the man is the result of a formed character, of long habits of self-denial. If such a character is to be destroyed, and such habits to be upset so easily, what becomes of our trust in our fellow-man?” Paget continues:

In his eagerness to impress the moral he has so much at heart, Mr Cruikshank has overlooked the fact that he is striking at the root of other virtues as important as those he would inculcate. If we are to accept his view of human nature, we must abandon all trust in the axiom that a character once formed for good or for evil is not upset save under the most exceptional circumstances – circumstances so exceptional that they cannot fairly enter into the calculation of the moralist. If this be so, training and education are of no avail; we are the mere victims of chance; and our moral constitutions are so feeble that they wither away in hopeless consumption on the slightest exposure to the free air of the world.

It is clear from this passage and from Sala’s critique of *The Bottle* that Cruikshank threatened his critics’ fundamental beliefs about morality, punishment, drunkenness and perhaps even the authors’ own drinking habits. The result is art criticism that has a distinct undertone of anxiety.

**Conclusion**

Cruikshank’s biographies are full of points of intersection between art and alcohol.

According to Sala, the working title for Jerrold’s biography was *George Cruikshank, Artist and

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Temperance Advocate. Jerrold himself thanked Benjamin Ward Richardson, the physician who distanced himself from the fanaticism of the temperance movement, in the preface to his biography on Cruikshank. He also included this meditation on intemperance in the artist’s biography:

What constitutes intemperance? According to Dr. Alfred Carpenter, any consumption of alcohol sufficient to furnish the blood with one part alcohol in five hundred of blood, is dangerous to health, and therefore is an act of intemperance. A more moderate indulgence, he says, is not yet proved to be deleterious. The late Dr. Anstie put temperance in a different way. An average man or woman cannot, according to him, take more than a couple of glasses of sherry without injury. Dr. Carpenter has denounced the habitual use of stimulants, even in a very diluted form, and to enable the drinker to do more work than he could get through without them, as unquestionably injurious – and therefore an act of intemperance.

Jerrold cites two medical physicians known for their writing on alcohol in order to define intemperance, and does so in terms of amounts of alcohol consumed, rather than behaviors and actions that result from alcohol consumption. Cruikshank’s biographers repeatedly identify not his drinking days, but his temperance days as intemperate, focusing on his “fanatical” behavior, diminished artistic powers, and financial failures. This seems to suggest that the authors were more sympathetic, or perhaps empathetic, towards Cruikshank when he was still consuming alcohol. Drinking was, after all, a common social practice among men of all social classes. Cruikshank’s devotion to temperance isolated him from his former friends and patrons. His oral and written diatribes seemed coloured by a hysteria that had previously been associated with women and, ironically, drunkenness. This taint of mental illness in turn painted him as something of a mad scholar, and his masculinity was threatened by his emotional outbursts. On a basic, socio-economic level, because he no longer took part in the masculine practice of

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295 Sala, “George Cruikshank,” 545.
convivial drinking, he no longer got drunk with potential consumers of his artworks, which would have had an impact on his financial remunerations.

Cruikshank’s biographers, and indeed Cruikshank himself, emphasized again and again the negative ramifications his teetotalling had on his finances. The artist often highlighted the fact that while his temperance advocacy had resulted in his own financial insecurity, brewers and distillers were thriving financially. He wrote in Our Gutter Children that “in the sale of [alcoholic] ‘Refreshment’ there are immense profits – millions and millions – and as a ‘pounds, shilling, and pence’ question, of course the larger the quantity sold to the public, the larger the profit, so the highly respectable Distiller, the highly-respectable Brewer, the respectable Publican, the Beer-Shop Keeper, and the Christian government get more profit by the ‘hard drinking,’ or the man who goes on drinking until he is drunk, than they do by the ‘moderate drinker.’”

In The Worship of Bacchus: A Great Delusion (1876), E. Clark quotes the following passage from a book on brewing: “The brewer is in great measure bound to conform to the will and taste of his customers, whether it be refined or vitiated – addicted to sobriety and taste, or given to wallow in the depths of dissipation; as the market is, so must be the commodity, or it will cease to be a market.” Just like brewers, artists (in theory if not in practice) are bound to conform to the will and taste of their customers, but Cruikshank refused to do this. In what might be called his “addiction to sobriety,” Cruikshank chose to ignore what his patrons wanted:

297 Cruikshank, Our Gutter Children, 2-3.
298 E. Clark, The Worship of Bacchus: A Great Delusion. Illustrated by Drawings, Diagrams, Facts, and Figures (London: James Clarke and Co., 1876), A. Emphasis my own. Interestingly for my discussion in this chapter, Clark not only refers to the “worship of Bacchus,” who he identifies as a “false god,” but he also writes that thousands of men “have sacrificed their wives and children to these gods, and many have thrown themselves under the car of Juggernaut…” (5). Clark does not refer directly to Cruikshank, but it is likely that he knew the artist’s work. However, even if he did not, there were many references to “Bacchus” and the “Juggernaut” in temperance literature in the nineteenth century.
satire without the rhetoric, art without the moralizing. Certainly, no one appreciates being told to stop doing something they enjoy simply because the other person has decided to stop. The great paradox of Cruikshank’s life was that, as an active drinker, he was more artistically and financially successful than when he had ceased to spend money on alcohol and was a sober member of society. As I have demonstrated, this paradox could only occur because of intersecting Victorian beliefs about art, alcohol, money and temperance.
Chapter 4
Addictive Architecture: The Crystal Palace, Gin Palaces and Women’s Desire

Fashion has done much more than the medical profession promoting the extension of the evil [of drink]. […] We are no more responsible for the tide of drunkenness and consequent disease which now invades us, than we are for the absurdities in dress, or those follies of architectural design which daily give rise to serious evils, by means of which the promoters openly disregard common sense, and studiously ignore the laws of health.299

In this chapter I examine an architectural structure that has not been extensively examined in relation to drinking culture – the Crystal Palace, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition of 1851300 – as well as a type of architecture that has received no serious attention from architectural historians or art historians – namely, gin palaces.301 In the second half of the chapter I discuss how women’s desire for alcohol appears to have had a material impact upon architecture and space in Victorian London. I argue that addiction was a strong motivating force for women transgressing ideological boundaries between ostensibly “masculine” and “feminine” spaces, thus illuminating the boundaries’ inherent fluidity and permeability.

Scholars who have examined taverns and alehouses in the nineteenth century and in earlier periods have widely asserted that women were consistently present in these spaces, although the alehouse remained, in the popular imagination at least, a “masculine” space.302 I

301 The lack of scholarly interest in gin palaces can be partially explained by their disappearance in the nineteenth century, the absence of architects’ and builders’ names attached to the projects, and the very limited records about gin palaces in British archives.
302 See, in particular, Peter Clark’s important study *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1983), especially 13, 115, 131-32, 225, 341. See also Mark Girouard, *Victorian Pubs*
will pursue this thread even further in this chapter, arguing that women’s desire for alcohol gave them the impetus, and courage when needed, to enter public drinking spaces. Addiction to alcohol made women even more willing to transgress social norms related to drinking and public comportment. Primary research indicates that women’s desire for, and addiction to, alcohol in the nineteenth century was so powerful that specifically “feminine” spaces were created for women to drink in. In one non-fictional account, which I will discuss at length, a “ladies’ pub” is described as a safe place, and distinctly “feminine” space, for women to enter in order to drink in semi-privacy. Moreover, nineteenth-century texts and images reveal that gin palaces and other spaces that women penetrated in order to drink were not only the domain of working-class women, but were universalizing spaces that allowed women of various classes to fulfill their desire to consume alcohol. Women who drank were therefore a significant group of consumers who not only had an impact on the drink trade, but also controlled, to a certain extent at least, the construction of architectural projects.  

This chapter will be the story of more than one type of palace. Although the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition have received extensive attention in various fields, including art...
history, since 1851, I approach the Crystal Palace as a structure that was at the centre of a debate regarding the Sunday Closing Act, which was directly related to the drinking culture of London. In 1853, a flurry of pamphlets were written for and against the re-erection of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. For those who supported the rebuilding project, the prospect of working-class men and women going to the Palace on a Sunday instead of to the pubs was a primary reason to proceed with the proposal. Although beer and spirits had been banned at the Crystal Palace in 1851, they were permitted once the Palace was re-erected at Sydenham, much to the chagrin of graphic artist George Cruikshank whose intemperate temperance I discussed in the previous chapter.

There were several parallel narratives that accrued to the Crystal Palace and gin palaces. One was the presence of women in public, actively looking, as well as being looked at. The second was the “drink question.” This phrase was used by nineteenth-century physicians and social reformers concerned with the abundant drinking taking place in Britain at the time. The third narrative was related to glass and other architectural elements. In my discussion of gendered spaces and women in public I will turn to feminist art historians such as Lynda Nead and Griselda Pollock, as well as feminist architectural historians such as Jane Rendell and Lynne Walker. Theory and primary research are woven together in my discussion of addiction and nineteenth-century visual and material culture in order to destabilize, once again, the ideology of separate spheres.

**George Cruikshank’s The Glass and the New Crystal Palace**


As was made clear in the previous chapter, after around 1847 or 1848, George Cruikshank’s artistic output became increasingly steeped in temperance concerns and rhetoric. Only three years after *The Drunkard’s Children* (Fig. 5.9) was published, the British nation’s eyes were turned *en masse* to the upcoming spectacle of the Great Exhibition. In 1851 Cruikshank and Henry Mayhew published the joint effort *1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, who came up to London to ‘Enjoy Themselves,’ and to see the Great Exhibition*. The fictional narrative, written by Mayhew with nine engravings by Cruikshank, recounts the Sandboys’ efforts to view the Great Exhibition, which are always foiled in some madcap fashion. Ultimately, the exhibition closes before they have had the chance to see it, and thus they return to their hometown of Buttermere promising to never return to London in order to “enjoy themselves” again (Fig. 4.1).

Perhaps because Cruikshank was in charge of the images and not the text, there is no temperance moral in the story comparable to that found in *Cinderella* and his other fairytales. There is, however, a reference to the so-called “shilling day,” which was instigated so that labourers could afford to attend the exhibition. The following passage is important because it points to the concerns that the organizers felt about working-class people viewing the exhibition; these concerns are related to the debate about the re-erection of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, which I discuss below.

> For many days before the ‘shilling people’ were admitted to the building, the great topic of conversation was the probable behavior of the people. Would they come sober? Will they destroy the things? Will they want to cut their initials, or scratch their names on the panes of the glass lighthouses? But they have surpassed in decorum the hopes of their well-wishers. The fact is, the Great Exhibition is to them more of a school than a show.
[...] Hence it is, that what was a matter of tedium, and became ultimately a mere lounge for gentle folks, is used as a place of instruction by the people.\textsuperscript{306}

Figure 4.1. George Cruikshank, \textit{The Opening of the Great Hive of the World}, from 1851: or, \textit{The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, who came up to London to \textquote{Enjoy Themselves}, and to see the Great Exhibition}, 1851, etching, National Art Library, London.

The text begins with the \textquote{cultured} upper-classes\textquotesingle assumptions about working-class attendees at the Great Exhibition – that they will be drunk, and that, because of both their intoxication and lack of artistic sensibility, they will destroy the \textquote{things} on display – and finishes with a reversal of classed expectations regarding the reception and \textquote{use} of the Great Exhibition. It is the working-class audience who are instructed and respectful, while the \textquote{gentle folks} are blasé and gauche in relation to the objects exhibited. Interestingly, one of Cruikshank\textquotesingle s many biographers, Blanchard Jerrold, wrote a book on the history of industrial exhibitions in 1862, in which he remarks that the police returns for 1851 showed that \textquote{London was less criminal and less riotous

\textsuperscript{306} Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank, \textit{1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, who came up to London to \textquote{Enjoy Themselves}, and to See the Great Exhibition} (London: David Brogue, 1851), 181.
while the shilling days lasted, than in ordinary unattractive times,”\textsuperscript{307} thus suggesting that the criminals of London were viewing the Exhibition and safely off the streets during the shilling days.

\textit{1851} does not refer to the fact that no alcohol was permitted on the grounds of the Great Exhibition or inside the Crystal Palace. Cruikshank did, however, draw attention to it in his 1853 text \textit{The Glass and the New Crystal Palace} when he wrote emphatically that “the crowning triumph [of the temperance movement] was the exclusion of all intoxicating liquors from the Great Exhibition of 1851.”\textsuperscript{308} \textit{The Glass and the New Crystal Palace} is many things. It is a response to Cruikshank’s critics – for example, the gentleman who reviewed \textit{The Drunkard’s Children} and asked whether all the misery that the artist represented in this series would really occur because a man “took a glass of whisky after his goose?”\textsuperscript{309} Cruikshank’s visual response to this review was an engraving for \textit{The Glass} of an intoxicated goose wrapped around a lamppost; the artist identified it as the “goose after whisky.” \textit{The Glass} is also a call to arms for Cruikshank’s fellow teetotalers, who, according to the artist, are afraid to articulate their views publically because of the “violent persecution” meted out by British drinkers upon the backs of abstainers.\textsuperscript{310} Cruikshank remarks that this underground group of teetotalers include “some of the nobility,” “many first-rate medical men; members of all the liberal professions – in law, in literature, and in the arts and sciences; members of parliament, and private gentleman.” But, he

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{307} Blanchard Jerrold, \textit{The History of Industrial Exhibitions, from their Origin to the Close of the Great International Exhibition of 1862} (London: Kent & Co., 1862), 10.
\item\textsuperscript{308} George Cruikshank, \textit{The Glass and the New Crystal Palace} (London: J. Cassell, 1853), 5.
\item\textsuperscript{309} Cruikshank, \textit{The Glass}, 5. We will remember that the young man and woman in \textit{The Drunkard’s Children} are the son and daughter of the man in \textit{The Bottle} who apparently got his wife hooked on gin, and who subsequently murdered her with a gin bottle. The first plate of \textit{The Bottle} shows the family sitting down to a quiet, happy meal, which included glasses of gin for the mother and father.
\item\textsuperscript{310} Cruikshank, \textit{The Glass}, 5.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
writes, “Many of this class, to be sure, have not yet had the moral courage to come forth to avow this before the public…”311

Finally, *The Glass* is a document of Cruikshank’s attempt to repeat the temperance movement’s success at the Great Exhibition of 1851 by proposing that alcohol be banned at the “new Crystal Palace” at Sydenham. As Cruikshank records, the London Temperance League, of which the artist was Vice President, sent a memorandum to the directors of the Sydenham project in 1852 asking them not to sell wine, beer or spirits as “refreshments” at the new Crystal Palace. Cruikshank sent the letter on 13 December 1852. On 14 December, he received a letter from the secretary of the Crystal Palace Company, Mr. George Grove, who wrote:

I have great pleasure in being able to give the most distinct reply to your question. The directors of the Crystal Palace Company will not allow, and have never intended to allow, the sale of intoxicating liquors or strong drinks at anytime or under any circumstances in their grounds. The directors of the Crystal Palace Company feel that they would have failed in duty to the public as well as in duty to themselves and to the objects they profess, had they not from the outset acted upon this determination. It has been held as a reproach that the people of England are incapable of employing their leisure hours without having recourse to the bottle. The directors are of the opinion that the people would have never been subjected to the reproach had care been taken to have furnished them with a higher and more ennobling recreation. The masses have invariably shown that they prefer the highest enjoyments to the lowest, and when the directors had established their plans for securing the former at the Crystal Palace, they took care effectually to exclude the latter by asking the Prime Minister when he granted a charter to insert a clause forbidding forever the sale of stimulating drinks within the park and building of the Crystal Palace Company. The clause has been inserted, and runs as follows: - ‘And we do hereby declare that this our royal charter is granted on the condition following, that is to say, that no spirituous or other fermented or intoxicating liquors shall be furnished to the persons visiting the said building or ground of the said company.’312

Cruikshank published this letter in *The Glass* in good faith, accepting Grove’s epistle as confirmation that there would be no alcoholic beverages permitted in or around the Crystal Palace. However, some time between 14 December 1852 and the day the new Crystal Palace

opened at Sydenham on 10 June 1854, forces conspired to remove the clause regarding intoxicating liquors, and alcohol was indeed sold at the new Crystal Palace.\textsuperscript{313} As one writer commented in an 1854 issue of the \textit{Art Journal}, “We have asked and been promised Art Manufactures in the Crystal Palace, and in lieu thereof, we are offered gin and porter.”\textsuperscript{314}

**The New Crystal Palace and the Sunday Closing Act**

Regarding the opposition to the Palace of Hampton Court being open to the public on Sunday afternoons because of the “rude and noisy behavior” of working-class visitors, Cruikshank writes in \textit{The Glass and the New Crystal Palace} that it is not the Palace itself, nor the cartoons of Raphael that cause this misconduct, but rather “it is to be traced to the public-house that is \textit{also open on the Sunday afternoon,} - yes, if there be any disgraceful conduct upon these occasions, the fault lies not so much in the people as in the \textit{strong drink} – the \textit{gin}, and the \textit{beer}, and the \textit{wine}, which they get at the public-houses before they go to the palace.”\textsuperscript{315} Believing that the Crystal Palace would be void of alcoholic temptation, Cruikshank proposed the new Crystal Palace as an alternative to the public house on Sunday afternoons, much like Christian ministers and social reformers attempted to create churches that were more inviting than taverns through ornamentation and other beautifying strategies.\textsuperscript{316}

Cruikshank was not the only nineteenth-century writer to point to the Crystal Palace as an uplifting and educative alternative to public drinking spaces. In 1851 James Silk Buckingham wrote that “the Crystal Palace may be truly called a \textit{SCHOOL OF TEMPERANCE}, which all the

\textsuperscript{313} Peter Gurney writes that “Temperance advocates had a problematic relationship with the Crystal Palace from the start owing to the company’s prevarication over the sale of alcohol, a difference that eventually proved irresolvable.” Gurney, “A Palace for the People?,” 141.


\textsuperscript{315} Cruikshank, \textit{The Glass}, 28. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{316} See Diana Maltz, \textit{British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 133.
lessons it teaches equally contribute to make it a TEMPLE OF PEACE.”317 An explosion of rhetoric on the Crystal Palace as a substitute for drinking spaces occurred following the proposal to reconstruct the Palace at Sydenham. Writers on both sides of the debate responded with vehemence, some arguing that the structure would be a source of enlightenment for the masses, and others arguing that it would be an eyesore that should not be reconstructed following the Great Exhibition. Paxton himself published a proposal to turn the Palace into a winter garden under glass that would simulate the Italian climate, rather than taking it apart or transporting the structure to another country.318 A writer using the pseudonym “Greville” responded directly to Paxton’s pamphlet, referring to the latter’s “extraordinary ingenuousness.” Paxton, he writes, “who gravely confesses that a structure which chiefly recommended itself for adoption by reason of the facility with which it could be removed, was originally designed for a permanent winter garden on the site which it now occupies.” The author asserts that the public initially opposed the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, and were induced “under a sentiment of courtesy to the wishes of the Prince to withdraw their opposition.” According to Greville, the commissioners of the building entered into a solemn contract that they would remove the structure, whatever form it might be, at the end of six months. Therefore, for this writer, the Crystal Palace was always meant to be a temporary site, comparable to a carnival that is set up with the acceptance that it will be pulled down again. He quotes from an article in The Times, published on 5 July 1850, which stated that a glass building could probably “be put together and taken down with much less labour, and much less time, than an ordinary building.”319 The Crystal Palace was,

319 Greville, An Answer to ‘What is to Become of the Crystal Palace?’ (London: John Ollivier, 1851), 16.
therefore, widely accepted as a transient structure, and the use of glass was regarded as ideal for this reason.

Many who were opposed to the reconstruction of the Crystal Palace focused on the original promise by the Great Exhibition’s organizers that the Palace would be a temporary, ephemeral structure. The supporters of reconstruction emphasized its potential to draw people away from public drinking spaces, especially on Sundays. John Rose Butlin, in a defense of the new Crystal Palace, pointed directly to British men and women’s addictions as a reason to open the Palace on Sundays. “In this vast city,” he writes,

thousands find Sunday their only opportunity for rest and recreation. This opportunity is often perverted to bad purposes. The churches are unvisited, while those who should be worshiping God give themselves up to every kind of vice and folly. The love of enjoyment which exists more or less in every human heart urges them to forget their toils, and few pleasures are within their reach to save those which are sensual. Now, pleasures that appeal to the senses are very apt to be carried into excess.

He went on to identify this excess with addiction: “The poor are addicted to sensual gratifications, but scarcely more so than many above them who feel no great relish for mental enjoyments.”320 Like the text by Mayhew and Cruikshank, what appears to be simply a negative observation regarding the drinking habits of the lower classes, turns into a critique of the upper classes, a particularly interesting element of the discourse that developed around the Crystal Palace and alcohol consumption.321

Edward Higginson had a similar opinion when he wrote his own pamphlet on the Crystal Palace and the prospect of it being closed on Sundays. In The Crystal Palace and the Golden

321 Kate Mitchell wrote that the Sunday Closing Acts “have resulted in producing greater order in the streets that day, but they have by no means grappled with the drink question, and I doubt whether their existence has diminished the revenue as much as a thousand pounds during a year.” Kate Mitchell, The Drink Question: Its Social and Medical Aspects (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. and British Women’s Temperance Association, 1889), 62.
Day; or, Sunday Blessings to Body and Soul (1853), Higginson refers to the “refreshment” both of the mind and body with which the working classes will return to their labour on Monday morning if they have spent the day at the Palace rather than in public houses or gin palaces.}\(^{322}\) “Refreshments” was Cruikshank’s favourite term to refer ironically to intoxicating drinks. He did so in The Glass and the New Crystal Palace, as well as in Our Gutter Children (1869), which I discussed in the previous chapter. In a particularly sarcastic passage, Cruikshank, perhaps spurred on by the fact that, after all his efforts, alcohol was sold at the new Crystal Palace, remarks: “I was going to say such as Gin, Rum, Brandy, Whiskey, and Beer; but it has just occurred to me that I ought to substitute the word ‘REFRESHMENT,’ when speaking of these drinks; the publicans and the public do not now use these old-fashioned words for spirits and malt liquors, they are considered vulgar and out of place, and therefore they all come under the term ‘Refreshment.’”\(^{323}\)

The debate continued after the structure was rebuilt at Sydenham in 1854. In the same year, the Wilson Patten Bill was passed, which restricted the opening of public houses in London on Sundays.\(^{324}\) Religious authorities believed that the Crystal Palace’s hours should also be restricted on that particular day for reasons pertaining to worship. Defenders of the new Crystal Palace responded to this belief, arguing that keeping the Palace open on Sundays would benefit the lower classes morally, if not spiritually. One anonymous author wrote a pamphlet about his years of illness in youth, which resulted in “many a vacant and misspent day,” remarking that had the Crystal Palace existed during that time, his days would have been more productively

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\(^{323}\) George Cruikshank, Our Gutter Children (London: George Cruikshank, 1869), 2.

He argues that the Palace should be kept open on Sundays, and his argument is founded on an acceptance that working-class men and women have few choices for leisure activities, and that leaving the Palace open would offer an alternative to drinking: “Instead of closing the doors upon Sunday for the benefit of the devil and the beershops, it ought to be the business of the professed enemies of these powers, to procure that they should be thrown open, and that competent men should be at hand to explain to the multitude the wonders there unfolded to the view, and to expound the relations of these objects to religion and to God.”

Charles John Vaughan also positioned the Crystal Palace as the dialectal opposite – morally speaking – to drinking spaces. In his contribution to the debate on the Sunday Closing Act, Vaughan wrote that “the question really lies not between the Crystal Palace and the Church, but between the Crystal Palace and the street or the gin-shop.” Unlike the defenders of the Palace quoted above, Vaughan did not believe that the lower classes would be uplifted by the structure and its contents: “I believe, however, that no gallery of painting or of sculpture will have any abiding attractions for the class thus described: tastes so brutish will not be transformed by any expedient: they will remain what they are, until a mightier engine shall bear upon them: no display of art will allure them to civilization.”

Two anonymous authors, who identified themselves as the ghosts of Calvin and Luther on the front page of their pamphlet, made a very interesting contribution to the debate regarding the new Crystal Palace, because, anticipating Marx, they compare religion to a narcotic drug that renders its worshipers stupefied. The use of this metaphor is particularly significant in light of their conclusion: “Homeopaths tell us that we have been lamentably over drugged under the

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325 ‘Peace where there is No Peace.’ or, the Days Non at Sydenham, with a Glance at the Sunday Life of the Homeless in London (London: John Chapman, 1854), 18.
326 Peace where there is No Peace, 24.
good old system [of Christianity]. We shall adduce a few facts, to show how pernicious have been the overdoses of our Sabbatarian allopathists. In some cases, we shall find that these have acted as an opiate, lulling the faculties into a state of torpor; in others, as a maddening draught, driving the unfortunate victims to commit the greatest excesses….328 They, like so many others, supported the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sundays, refuting those who argued that keeping the doors open on that day was akin to communing with the devil. The “Ghosts” remarked that “Satan and sobriety hand in hand would be, we think, a novelty, - the greatest one in the Palace.”329 Their concluding statement offers a fitting segue into my next section. “Practically,” the authors write, “the clergy argue the question as if it were the Palace against the Church. But it is not so. In Principle it is just this: shall it be the Gin Palace or the Crystal Palace – drunkenness or temperance?”330

If the question was indeed between the gin palace or the Crystal Palace, what did these two types of architecture have in common? How did they differ, beyond the obvious differences in function? And perhaps most importantly for my purposes here, how did the two sites – as ideas, as spaces, and as visual and material culture – contain potential for women to transgress gendered boundaries, both spatial and ideological? I address the first two questions in the next section, and in the rest of the chapter I focus on the gendering of space, the activity/activeness of women’s drinking, and the possibility of reading architecture through the framework of addiction theory.

**Mirror Images: The Crystal Palace and the Gin Palace**

In *Stone the First at the Great Glass House* the anonymous author employs the spatial act of “filling” as a metaphor for the intoxicating effect that the Crystal Palace supposedly has on its visitors: the Palace is “raised, mushroom-like,” that is, like a self-perpetuating fungus, and it is “filled, first with odds and ends from all corners of the earth, and next with starers.” The author suggests that while the building is filled with “starers,” the starers are subsequently filled, in a superficial way, by the “odds and ends,” a phrase that effectively empties the objects exhibited in the Crystal Palace of their cultural and artistic capital. The belief in the intoxicating or narcotic effect that art – whether painting or fiction – had on people was part of a Victorian mistrust of many things that seemed to alter reality, and this, of course, included alcohol and drugs. Desire, imagination, intoxication, and other routes to pleasure, both physical and mental, were regarded as destabilizing forces, because they allowed a person to detach from everyday responsibilities. Thus the desire to fill with art, novels, alcohol, or drugs was viewed by many as threatening to the equilibrium of British society. As the editors of *Victorian Prism* (2007) observe in their introduction:

Like the commodities it enshrined, the Exhibition stimulated both persistent attempts to attain the gratification of capturing it and the awareness that its value would always remain elusive. It was both monumental and essentially transient, colossal and evanescent. Like the plate glass that covered its surface, the Crystal Palace could appear the architectural symbol of either the liberal utopia of ‘transparent’ social relations founded upon free trade, or modernity’s *false* promise of such transparency (since the building reflected light and thus ‘closed itself to outside scrutiny’).

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I return to the “false promise of transparency” in my discussion of gin palaces. For now, note the authors’ use of the term “gratification,” and the fact that they argue that it is “elusive.” Just like the pleasure of alcohol and drugs, they argue, any gratification enjoyed at the Crystal Palace was ultimately elusive and transient.

The author of *Stone the First at the Great Glass House* appears to have been suspicious of any “filling” that would lead to a diminished sense of reality, and by extension, responsibility. The following statement reveals a thread between the Crystal Palace and the gin palace as spaces that had a material impact on the individuals who entered them. The implicit message in this pamphlet is that the people who fill the Crystal Palace will leave with altered perceptions. The same argument, of course, could be made for any public drinking space. The author asserts: “I am no enemy of Caesar, but I am to the *false palaces* that he would raise; to the delusions into which he would feed the multitude; to the stones which he would give the hungry children instead of bread; to the glass sausages with which he would cram them.”334 The phrase “false palaces” is a perfect description for those spaces in which people enter with the desire to fill themselves with something that holds the promise of an altered reality, when that promise is an empty one, at least in terms of a sustained alteration. The author’s argument is that the objects found in the Crystal Palace were no more than bits and bobs, “glass sausages,” that look like they will satiate, but which leave the hungry person hungrier than ever. Significantly, many nineteenth-century physicians argued that drinking alcohol actually made people thirstier.335

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335 See, for example, Charles H. Stowell, who wrote that “As in the case of opium and some other poisons, the use of alcohol in beer, wine, cider, or in any such liquor, excites an appetite for more alcohol.” Stowell, *A Healthy Body: A Textbook on Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Alcohol, and Narcotics* (New York, Boston and Chicago: Silver, Burdett and Company, Publishers, 1891), 9.
increased the desire for more alcohol, leading people to keep drinking until they were drunk. This pattern of constantly unfulfilled desire can lead to addiction. In “Smoking, Addiction, and the Making of Time” (2002), Helen Keane observes that addiction is the potentially endless repetition of pleasure, highlighting the “addictiveness of desire itself.”

This acceptance of the addictiveness of desire allowed concerned parties in the nineteenth century to argue that anything pleasurable could be addictive, and therefore dangerous. If we extend the author’s argument in Stone the First, it would not be outrageous to conclude that he would have described the Crystal Palace as an addictive space because of the promise of pleasure it offered.

The promise of pleasure was also offered by gin palaces, but this was not the only similarity in the parallel narratives constructed around these two types of “false palaces.” Some critical responses to the Crystal Palace mirror texts that were written about gin palaces, and other kinds of public drinking spaces, in the way they both focus on the optical impact the structures had on viewers and the questionable aesthetics of the architecture. John Ruskin used his pamphlet about the new Crystal Palace re-opening at Sydenham to voice some of his well-known concerns regarding the state of English architecture and the damage that reconstruction had had on that tradition. His opinion on the Crystal Palace itself, however, is more relevant for my purposes here, and I quote extensively from Ruskin’s text in order to establish that some of the language that he used in his criticism of the structure echoes the language used to critique gin palaces earlier in the century. Ruskin starts out with the semblance of approval, remarking that

337 Another anonymous author responded to Joseph Paxton’s proposal by remarking that the idea for a winter garden was based on the principal of pleasure. See A Medical Man’s Plea for a Winter Garden in the Crystal Palace (London: John van Voorst, 1851), 3.
For the first time in the history of the world, a national museum is formed in which a whole nation is interested; formed on a scale which permits the exhibition of monuments of art in unbroken symmetry, and of the productions of nature in unthwarted growth, - formed under the auspices of science which can hardly err, and of wealth which can hardly be exhausted; and placed in the close neighborhood of a metropolis overflowing with a population weary of labour, yet *thirsting for knowledge*, where contemplation may be consistent with rest, and instruction with enjoyment. It is impossible, I repeat, to estimate the influence of such an institution on the minds of the working-classes. How many hours wasted may now be profitably dedicated to pursuits in which interest was first awakened by some accidental display in the Norwood Palace; how many constitutions, almost broken, may be restored by the *healthy temptation* into the country air, - how many intellects, once dormant, may be roused into activity within the crystal walls, and how these noble results may go on multiplying and increasing and bearing fruit seventy times sevenfold, as the nation pursues its career, - are questions full of hope as incapable of calculation.338

In this passage Ruskin refers to the working classes’ “thirst for knowledge,” suggesting that this is a kind of desire that they are seeking to fulfill by filling the Crystal Palace. Furthermore, he positions the Palace as a “healthy temptation,” an alternative to the “wasted” hours spent filling in other ways. Like many of the defenders of the Crystal Palace, Ruskin points to the structure as an *alternative* to activities that “waste” time; although he does not explicitly refer to drinking or public drinking spaces, these are implicit in his text.

Positioning the Crystal Palace as an alternative to gin palaces mirrors the medical practice of replacing one addiction with another, for example, prescribing morphine for alcoholism. As Susan Zieger has shown, this practice of prescribing one addictive substance for the treatment of addiction to another substance resulted in an army of female morphine addicts in the nineteenth century.339 It is important to note that Joseph Paxton, among others, championed the Crystal Palace as an alternative space to both the badly-ventilated homes of the lower classes

and the filthy air of London. Paxton proposed that individuals go inside the Crystal Palace to find cleaner air, ease, comfort and pleasure. Significantly, Victorian social reformers lamented that these were the very factors that seduced people into spending substantial time (and money) in gin palaces, although cramped public drinking spaces did not necessarily have cleaner air than squalid working-class dwellings. Ralph Grindrod wrote in 1843 that “The irritable state of mind which the use of strong drink occasions, forms an insuperable obstacle to domestic happiness, and hence the flight of their wretched victims from the bosom of an affectionate family to the savage haunts of intemperance and vice.” These “savage haunts” included public houses and gin palaces, making these spaces ambivalent alternatives to the family home.

Ruskin’s introduction to his pamphlet suggests that he, like Paxton, is proposing the Crystal Palace as an alternative to alehouses and gin palaces. The appearance of approval, however, is quickly replaced by his true estimation of the structure, when he states:

For three hundred years, the art of architecture has been the subject of the most curious investigation; its principles have been discussed with all earnestness and acuteness; its models in all countries and of all ages have been examined with scrupulous care, and imitated with unsparing expenditure. And of all this refinement of enquiry, - this lofty search after the ideal, - this subtlety of investigation and sumptuousness of practice, - the great result, the admirable and long-expected conclusion is, that in the centre of the 19th century, we suppose ourselves to have invented a new style of architecture, when we have magnified a conservatory.

In no uncertain terms Ruskin concludes that the Crystal Palace is not an innovative structure, but rather a building based on a pre-existent, pre-fabricated form of ignoble architecture in excess. This estimation recalls Greville’s argument that the Crystal Palace “engages not our feelings; our sentiments are not affected by the anticipation of its dispersion. We can build a hundred others,

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if the occasion demands, at the same or possibly cheaper outlay.” And furthermore, “it has no claims as a special work of art, incapable of being reproduced…” For these reasons, some nineteenth-century commentators argued that the Crystal Palace was not, in the strictest sense, architecture, but rather a feat of engineering. Most importantly for my purposes in this chapter are Ruskin’s comments regarding the optical effects of the Crystal Palace on its viewers, specifically those viewers who did not have the artistic sense (i.e. the labouring classes) to view the Palace in the “correct” way. We have already seen that at least one writer believed that the Crystal Palace, as well as its contents, could and would lead to delusion in certain kinds of “starers.” Ruskin’s critique of the Palace as architecture includes, significantly, references to classical architecture as well as the optic impact of the structure’s principal material, namely, glass:

It is this, then, that our Doric and Palladian pride is at last reduced! We have vaunted divinity of the Greek ideal – we have plunged ourselves on the purity of our Italian taste – we have cast our whole souls into the proportions of pillars, and the relations of order - and behold the end! Our taste, thus exalted and disciplined, is dazzled by the luster of a few rows of panes of glass; and the first principles of architectural sublimity; so far sought, are found all the while to have consisted merely in sparkling and in space.

According to Ruskin, the Crystal Palace is all surface with no depth. It “dazzles” and “sparkles,” but is ultimately tasteless architecture, if it is architecture at all. As we shall see, the textual responses to gin palaces made a related, but contrary argument. They visualized gin palaces as architectural sites that relied on surface to conceal their hidden depths; the surfaces were therefore strategic and deceptive, and the depths were dangerous and decadent.

343 Greville, An Answer, 22-23.
Unlike Ruskin, the anonymous author of *The Crystal Palace. An Essay, Descriptive and Critical* (1854) penetrates the surface of the Palace in a way that positioned it even more closely to a public drinking space. In this text, the author invents a fictional French gentleman, Monsieur Sucré de l’Eau, through whose eyes we see the clash between art and alcohol that takes place within the walls of the “renowned Palace of purity and light.” Monsieur Sucré de l’Eau takes a ramble through the Palace and concludes that “Versailles is vulgarized. Art has revealed a new sphere and given the scepter of it to England.” The narrator interjects at this point, remarking that “Across this current of thought strikes ‘Pint bottle of stout!’ ‘Some pork-pie!’ ‘Bass’s pale ale!’ ‘Keep any rum?’ ‘Got any pea-soup, hot?’ ‘Why can’t you let us have a drop of brandy?’”346 This juxtaposition between art and alcohol is meant to disconcert the reader, and to invoke the jarring nature of commerce on a viewer at the Crystal Palace. What the narrator does not say, however, is that, just like the alcohol, the art is also commodified. Peter Gurney has demonstrated how almost everything could be consumed at the Crystal Palace. He adds that “people went to the Crystal Palace on the spree, deliberately to overindulge their usually constrained appetites, especially the desire for alcohol,” thus making the Crystal Palace at Sydenham more like a gin palace than an alternative to that space.347

In the guise of “Boz” Charles Dickens wrote an article entitled “Gin Shops” in 1836 that is significant for its description of the exterior and interior of this kind of public drinking space. It would be helpful to pause here in order to clarify the terms used to describe the various public drinking spaces that were in existence in the nineteenth century.348 Regarding gin shops in eighteenth-century London, Jessica Warner has remarked that little is known about this type of

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347 Gurney, “A Palace for the People?,” 144.
348 Peter Clark has discussed the “terminological confusion” between inns and alehouses for historians of alcohol. See Clark, *The English Alehouse*, 5.
space during this period: “Hidden from view and known only to local customers, these shops have all but vanished from the historical record.” Gin shops in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could not be considered architectural structures as such; a gin shop existed as an imagined space wherever one chose to sell gin: a spare room in a domestic or commercial space would suffice, and transactions often occurred on the street, making four walls and a roof unnecessary for this type of commercial exchange. There was no architectural style or elements that were associated with gin shops in the eighteenth century. Still, this addictive space – that is, a space where addictions were believed to be initiated and exacerbated – received negative press in the eighteenth century, just as gin palaces did in the nineteenth. Henry Fielding, for instance, wrote that “Gin shops are undoubtedly the Nurseries of all manner of Vice and Wickedness.”

Gin palaces, according to my understanding of them as an architectural type, were a nineteenth-century phenomenon, and came into being when gin retailers entered into fierce competition with beer sellers through the strategies of aesthetics and space. Peter Clark has shown how the English alehouse evolved over approximately four hundred years. The tavern or public house as we know it today – comfortable, inviting interiors with decorative elements – was a nineteenth-century development based on commercial competition. Ornament and comfort were introduced as a way to draw drinkers into the space and keep them drinking beer rather than gin. The gin palace was a direct response to this change in the aesthetics of alehouses, which was precipitated by the Beerhouses Act of 1830. However, there seems to have been an exchange of architectural elements and strategies for capturing the attention of

350 Quoted in Warner, Craze, 56.
351 See Clark, English Alehouse.
drinkers even before the 1830s. Clark writes that the “great age” of gin palaces arrived in the 1830s and 1840s when “their proprietors and builders scaled increasingly extravagant heights of architectural bravura,” but that even before 1830 gin-drinkers were flocking to the “handsome shops of Thompson and Pearson on Holborn Hill or Weller’s more showy establishment in Old Street Road.”\textsuperscript{353} Although some of the proprietors’ names have come down to us in periodicals and records, the names of gin palaces’ architects appear not to have been preserved in the same manner. However, Clark refers to an architect by the name of William Robert Laxton, a name uncannily close to Paxton’s, who designed new “shop-style” façades for alehouses during this period, emulating gin palaces and their large glass windows.\textsuperscript{354}

Rev. Henry Worsley observed in 1849 that in recent years Parliament had set out to position beer as the great national beverage as opposed to gin, a foreign product. The result was that “A competition was immediately opened between the beer-shops and the public houses; and the proprietors of the latter, since their custom was very much diminished by the new additions to the trade, were obliged to have recourse to fresh expedients, and endeavored to \textit{fascinate the eyes} of passengers by outward decorations, and the \textit{glittering display} of their spirit-houses: in fine, converted the old taverns into the modern gin-palace.”\textsuperscript{355} As this passage reveals, the terminology used to identify different types of public drinking spaces was not consistent in the nineteenth century. While “public house,” or “pub,” is usually associated with taverns and alehouses, here the public house is the antecedent of the gin palace, primarily because it sold more various intoxicating beverages than the “beer-shop,” which sold only beer. It is important to flag the similarities between Worsley’s description of the modern gin palace and Ruskin’s

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\textsuperscript{353} Clark, \textit{The English Alehouse}, 296.
\textsuperscript{354} Clark, \textit{The English Alehouse}, 277.
\end{flushright}
critique of the Crystal Palace. Both writers focus on the optical effects of the exterior, suggesting with the words “dazzling,” “sparkling,” and “glittering,” that the surface of these structures would literally and metaphorically blind their viewers to what lay underneath: either a lack of substance in Ruskin’s case, or a space of depravity and prostitution in Worsley’s.\footnote{For a discussion that highlights the intoxicating nature of the optics of “glitter,” see Gillian Swanson, “Drunk with the Glitter: Consuming Spaces and Sexual Geographies,” in \textit{Postmodern Cities and Spaces}, eds. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 80-99.}

Kate Mitchell remarked at the end of the nineteenth century, “The public-houses must be rivaled in brilliancy, decorative work, and general attractiveness.” Whereas the writers I quoted earlier in this chapter proposed the Crystal Palace as an alternative space to gin palaces, Mitchell proposed that coffee taverns, a public space that was central to the literary culture of the eighteenth century, should be altered aesthetically in order to seduce drinkers away from public houses, that is, “modern gin palaces.” Mitchell asserted that “there are few coffee-taverns that are rendered sufficiently attractive to induce working men and women to quit the public house for them.” She suggests that the coffee-taverns of the future have a “brilliantly lighted and handsomely decorated bar to take them in…,” indicating that she was familiar with the inside of a gin palace, whether from texts or experience. Finally, she remarked that “the coffee-taverns will rear their inviting fronts where now the public-houses stand with their fatal and awful attractiveness.”\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{The Drink Question}, 253, 254.} This last statement recalls a famous comment made by John Ruskin in his analysis of William Holman Hunt’s \textit{The Awakening Conscience} (Fig. 4.2). In a letter to \textit{The Times}, Ruskin observed that the painting had been widely misunderstood. His description of the interior in which the painting is set illuminates the way a space could be read morally through its contents: “That furniture so carefully painted, even to the last vein of rosewood – if there is nothing to be learnt from the \textit{terrible luster} of it, from its \textit{fatal newness}; nothing there that has
Figure 4.2. William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, oil on canvas, 1060 x 857 x 97 mm, Tate Britain, London.

the old thoughts of home upon it, or that is ever to become a part of home?" In Ruskin’s interpretation, a house is not necessarily a home. Gin palaces, characterized by their decorative luster and perhaps even their very modernity, were constructed as an alternative to the home by providing the comforts that certain homes did not possess. Whether or not Mitchell was aware of Ruskin’s art criticism, this instance of intertextuality imbues Mitchell’s reading of an architectural space with moral, as well as aesthetic, undertones.

In the nineteenth century “gin palace” and “gin shop” were sometimes used interchangeably, so Dickens’s article could also have been titled “Gin Palaces,” or even “Public

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Houses.” In “Gin Shops,” Dickens uses a disease metaphor, not surprisingly, considering the link made between alcohol and disease in the nineteenth century, to describe the relationship between drunkenness and the apparently sudden appearance (like mushrooms) of gin palaces in London:

Six or eight years ago the epidemic began to display itself among the linen-drapers and haberdashers. The primary symptoms were an inordinate love of plate-glass, and a passion for gas-lights and gilding. The disease gradually progressed, and at last attained a fearful height. Quiet dusty old shops in different parts of town were pulled down; spacious premises with stuccoed front and gold letters were erected instead; floors were covered with Turkey carpets; roofs supported by massive pillars; doors knocked into windows, a dozen squares of glass into one.…359

Dickens identifies another “symptom” in “a strong desire to stick the royal arms over the shop door, and a great rage for mahogany, varnish, and expensive floor cloth,” and refers to “stone balustrades, rosewood fittings, immense lamps, and illuminated clocks at the corner of every street.”360 As Thomas Reed has noted, in Victorian Britain, as well as in earlier periods, corners were urban spaces associated with alcohol consumption: “they literally had ‘a corner’ on drink.”361 The reference to “Turkey carpets” invokes an Oriental ambience, one that can be linked to the Great Exhibition, which apparently included an overabundance of “velvets and carpets,”362 or alternatively, to the opium dens that were sprinkled throughout London’s East End.363 Dickens also refers to “a dozen squares of glass into one,” which also denotes a parallel between the architectural designs of gin palaces and the Crystal Palace.

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361 Reed, The Transforming Draught, 142.
In The Glass and the New Crystal Palace Cruikshank refers to the “outside of the magnificent palace-looking edifices for the sale of wine, beer, spirits, and tobacco.” With the phrase “palace-looking edifices,” Cruikshank illuminates the fact that gin palaces are mere simulacra of the kind of spaces their architects’ were wishing to ape. They were not royal spaces – nor, strictly speaking, was the Crystal Palace – and the abundance of ornament and glass functioned to simulate the promise of pleasure upon entrance. The wood and decorative elements that Dickens emphasizes offered visual and tactile sensations; the dazzling glass windows were ostensibly a source of light, and therefore health, but the glass did not necessarily result in transparency. At least one nineteenth-century writer reported that gin palaces were designed to keep people from seeing inside: “If you observe the dram-shops,” he wrote, using another term that was used to describe gin palaces during this period, “you will see…[that] attention [has been paid] to the point of concealment. In the first place, the inner doors are provided with a spring, so as to shut again as soon as the customers are entered. In the second place, the windows are constructed as to render it impossible for passengers without to observe what is doing within.” This passage recalls the observation made in the introduction of Victorian Prism that, although the Crystal Palace was made of glass, viewers could not see through its walls, thus offering a “false promise” of transparency.

In a beautifully written meditation on glass at the Crystal Palace, literary historian Isobel Armstrong unravels the impact that the material had on people and things. She argues that,

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364 Cruikshank, The Glass, 8.
365 “…at the very time too when every class of this trading community is distressed to such a degree, that there have been meetings, petitions, and deputations, for reductions, not only of customs, but repeal of taxes on income, as well as on windows! Is it not an anomaly that the excise on glass is repealed and the tax on WINDOWS IS CONTINUED?” Richard Dover, The Public Health versus Pestilential Disease (London: Ridgway and Sons, 1849), 21.
within the glass walls of the Crystal Palace, “Things take on a strange status, they become anomalies. And with this, the meanings of need and luxury (there is no gap between need and desire) begin to lose the power of opposition as what these categories mean is thrown into question.”

Alcohol was often identified as a dubious luxury in the eighteenth century, and this conception continued into the nineteenth. A possible definition for addiction could be the state of being that occurs when there is no gap between need and desire, that is, when desire becomes need, and luxury becomes that which must be consumed. Armstrong suggests that glass had this mystical effect on things at the Crystal Palace. If she is not exactly proposing that glass became addictive in that structural context, then perhaps my discussion of gin palaces and women’s desire for alcohol will point more firmly in that direction. Nineteenth-century critics of both the Crystal Palace and gin palaces were ultimately concerned that desire was actually addiction; that is, that the desire to fill – with things or with alcohol – would subsume people in a constantly self-perpetuating cycle of repetition and transient pleasure.

It is through the concepts of desire and addiction, those slippery terms that can either co-exist or anticipate each other, that I will embark on a feminist reading of public drinking spaces. As I noted at the outset of this chapter, I argue that it was primarily a desire for alcohol, but also a desire for mobility, companionship, freedom and vision, that motivated women of all classes to leave their homes and enter spaces that have long been thought of as “masculine.” When desire


became addiction some women were even more willing to transgress imaginary boundaries, but some also found alternative routes to alcohol, via the Grocer’s Licensing Act, for instance.  

I believe that, even more than desire, addiction evaporated the ostensibly solid lines between “masculine” and “feminine” spaces.

**Women’s Drinking and Women’s Spaces**

So far in my discussion I have been concerned primarily with elucidating the parallels between the Crystal Palace and gin palaces, which were both social spaces and material culture. In the second half of my discussion I employ speculative addiction theory, reading primary texts and architectural spaces for both female agency and powerlessness over alcohol in order to determine how architecture intersected with these two dichotomous states of being.

Visibility in space denotes presence of body if not presence of mind. As I argued in Chapter 2, the intoxicated woman represented in Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* (Fig. 2.1) is out of her mind, not necessarily insane, but not in touch with either her mind or her body. Yet her public drinking is important for my purposes here, because Hogarth represented the woman as a body filled with alcohol but vacated of morality, and her position in public space is related to the construction of the drunken female body as both empty and full. A woman who drank to excess in the eighteenth century was expected to feel shame; a woman’s excess was a shameful act, and thus shame was largely feminized. The gendering of shame as a primarily feminine emotion persisted in the nineteenth century, although it is important to note that in the context of

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369 See W.A. Holdsworth, *The Licensing Act, 1872, with explanatory introduction and notes; an appendix containing the unrepealed clauses of previous licensing acts; and an index* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1872).

addiction both men and women have been shamed.371 (We will recall that in S.C. Hall’s The Trial of Sir Jasper (1873), which I discussed in the previous chapter, a male alcoholic scholar experiences guilt and shame because of “shadows of the past.”) Writing in 1888, Dr. Norman Kerr argued that the approach of puberty affected women’s “mental equilibrium,” which could lead to “perverted appetite and morbid cravings.” “Whatever the article craved for,” he wrote, “the [female] patient is generally ashamed of her perversion of taste when the period is over. With those who resort to alcoholic and other inebriants, there is a great risk of the initiation of periodic inebriety.”372 Although Kerr was one of the most sympathetic physicians writing about addiction in the nineteenth century, he accepts as natural that a woman would be ashamed because of her cravings, which are explicitly associated in this passage with perversion. This begs the question: if a woman was addicted to alcohol in a society where alcoholics were not shamed, would she feel shame? I believe not. Now I wish to turn to the question of what women did in nineteenth-century London when they craved alcohol, considering that they were expected to feel shame about their alcohol consumption – especially if it was deemed ‘excessive’ – and how their experience of shame and/or being shamed guided their movements in and through space.

Jessica Warner has shown that despite the practice of shaming women who drank in the eighteenth century, women were still highly visible in gin shops during this period: “Paris had its taverns, but they catered primarily to men. In London, by contrast, women were among the gin shops’ best customers, drinking side by side with men….it was the behavior of the women who

371 In 1930 James Douglas, writing in the Express, advised women to leave alcoholic husbands: “She can administer to her husband the only shock which may arouse his manhood, galvanise his conscience, and stimulate his shame. Let him come back to a wifelss home…If she cannot save her drunken husband, she can save herself.” Quoted in Adrian Bingham, Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 237.
372 Norman Kerr, Inebriety, its Etiology, Pathology, Treatment and Jurisprudence (London: H.K. Lewis, 1888), 171.
drank gin that most offended polite society, if only because so many of them seemed to prefer
drinking gin to producing and raising the nation’s next generation of soldiers, sailors, and
labourers.”373 The people who were “ashamed” of women who drank, then, felt affronted
because the women’s bodies were filling with alcohol rather than with babies, although many
women who drank in the eighteenth century were certainly active procreators as well. In 1851,
Joseph Buckingham wrote that there were fourteen principal “gin shops” in London: two in
Whitechapel, three in Mile End, one in East Smithfield, one in the Borough, one in Old Street,
two in Holborn, one in Bloomsbury, and three in Westminster. In these gin shops, Buckingham
wrote, women surpassed the men “in the grossness and depravity of their demeanor.”374 This
statement does not necessarily reflect the fact that women engaged in more outrageous behavior
than men in gin shops, but because they were women, any acts they performed, were, in
Buckingham’s eyes, far worse than anything a man could do. Nineteenth-century statements
such as this one lead me to wonder why scholars concerned with the history of alcohol have
persistently and emphatically stated that public drinking spaces were exclusively masculine
spaces.375

The next part of my discussion will be based on a close reading of a text from around
1888 entitled Babylonian Cups; or Behind the Scenes. How they Drink in London, written by a
“Special Commissioner.” Many nineteenth-century writers concerned with alcohol alluded to
Babylon in order to draw an imaginary link between that late, great empire and Britain. As
Lynda Nead has shown, the image of London as “Victorian Babylon” was an uneasy one.
Babylon had apparently descended into decadence and disappeared, and writers concerned with

373 Warner, Craze, 63.
374 Buckingham, An Earnest Plea, 33.
375 See, for instance, Clark, The English Alehouse.
drunkenness warned that Britain, and especially London, was heading in the same direction.  

Dr. Kate Mitchell, who was, interestingly, Lecturer on Physiology and Health at the Crystal Palace, wrote in 1889, “A nation’s downfall has nearly always been preceded by a period of licentiousness in drink, manners and morals.”

In the preface to *Babylonian Cups*, Henry Williams observes that women’s drinking has increased since the Grocer’s License, thus establishing that alcohol consumption by women will be an important part of the text that follows. Williams remarks that before the Grocer’s Licensing Act a lady would pause and ponder whether she or her maid would actually go into a public house to purchase and consume alcohol, but with the Grocer’s License “this barrier to indulgence is effectually removed.” The barrier Williams refers to is, of course, a mental barrier: an imaginary boundary imbued with physical dimensions through both the ideology of separate spheres and ideologies about alcohol consumption, which effectively shamed women about their drinking. Kerr recounted this story about a female alcoholic whose addiction apparently worsened because of the Licensing Act, which allowed grocers to sell spirits, thus offering women the option of not entering public houses, gin palaces or other public drinking spaces:

An amiable and accomplished lady, aged twenty-six...she is one of the victims to that most demoralizing of all legislative measures – The Grocer’s Licensing Act. It was long ere she sank so low as to enter a public house, and was wont to purchase her weapons of suicide at the grocer’s, and the railway refreshment bar. Everything that can be done has been done to save this poor unhappy worshipper of Bacchus, but in defiance of all she is daily drinking herself to her grave.

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Kerr concludes that “had we a Compulsory Seclusion Bill she might be separated from her destroyer for a season…. But this would be an interference with the liberty of the subject!” This statement anticipates my discussion in the next chapter regarding addiction and compulsory confinement. For now, I wish to point to the fact that with the Grocer’s Licensing Act (1872), women – or their maids, depending on their class – could purchase alcohol and consume it in the privacy of their own home. Privacy, of course, is a classed concept, as Warner has pointed out. The homes of lower-class women did not necessarily guarantee privacy, and therefore hiding their drinking was more difficult than it was for middle- and upper-class women.

The Grocer’s Act provided women with an alternative to entering spaces that, as we have seen, were ideologically constructed as “masculine,” and nineteenth-century commentators clearly aligned the Act specifically with women’s alcohol consumption in general, and their secret drinking in particular. One writer observed,

Baneful as is the effect of excessive drink upon men it is infinitely more so upon women, and, whatever be the explanation, it is undeniable that it exercises a more potent influence and takes a deeper hold upon a woman who has given way to it than a man. Reclamation is more hopeless; and it is to be regretted that they have so many facilities for obtaining drink ‘on the sly.’ Among these are the grocers’ and confectioners’ licenses which do most certainly encourage secret drinking among women. [...] As a rule a man drinks openly, but a woman does it secretly, the last persons to suspect her being often her husband and her most intimate friends.

Susan Zieger has shown how female morphine addicts were represented as devious and secretive in nineteenth-century fiction and non-fiction. Women’s drinking was also often described as

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380 Warner, Craze, 2.
381 Cheryl Krasnick Warsh discusses the practice of drinking cologne as another strategy that women used to hide their drinking. See Warsh, “‘Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart’: The Drinking Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada,” in Drink in Canada: Historical Essays, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 77.
382 J. Johnston, Alcohol from a Medical Point of View (London: Barret, Sons and Co, 189), 10.
383 Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 131.
secretive, in part because some of it likely was, but despite the ideological construction of public
drinking spaces as “masculine,” and the deeply rooted belief that women who drank in public

were either prostitutes or promiscuous, female presence in public houses and gin palaces was
reported in textual accounts and represented in graphic art. Although, as Lynda Nead has
pointed out, visual images cannot unproblematically be viewed as direct reflections of reality, it
is noteworthy that in nineteenth-century graphic representations of gin shops there are always
women of various classes drinking alongside the men. In Thomas Rowlandson’s *Dram Shop*
(Fig. 4.3), the women dramatically outnumber the men. In the right foreground a triad of women
recline on the floor in varying degrees of drunkenness. One is fully prostrate with her face on
the floor, the middle figure leans against a barrel of Old Tom with both of her breasts hanging
completely out of her dress, and the old woman behind her sits hunched over with a pipe stuck in

Figure 4.3. Thomas Rowlandson, *The Dram Shop*, from *The English Dance of Death*, 1815-16,
coloured aquatint, 12.2 x 20.9 cm, Gemmell Collection, University of Glasgow.

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384 See Lynda Nead’s critique of reflection theory in *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian
her mouth, looking as though she has taken up full-time residence in the dram shop. The women in Rowlandson’s engraving are of different ages and different classes. Physiognomies denote both social status and the length of time the women have been consuming alcohol. The three young women at the bar, for instance, have smooth white skin and pretty white dresses, and are clearly only beginning their relationship with gin. They are not prostitutes or working women with weather-beaten faces who have had to stand outside for hours in the sun or rain, but ladies of the middle or upper classes. The women in the background, however, have faces that are barely finished sketches, which gives them a haggard, even bestial appearance. Rowlandson’s print was obviously a source of inspiration for Cruikshank’s The Gin Shop of 1829 (Fig. 3.1), which I discussed in the previous chapter. Rowlandson represents a skeleton pouring poison into a giant barrel of gin, which foreshadows Cruikshank’s barmaid, whose mask of pretty femininity hides behind it a skull. There are fewer figures in the latter engraving, but there are a few women shown consuming alcohol, seemingly without any concern for the fact that they are in a public drinking space.

The author of Babylonian Cups spends a considerable amount of time describing women’s drinking habits. He – and it will become apparent that it is significant that the author is a man – sets out to offer some “sketches” of the darker scenes of drinking practices in London, and in doing so establishes himself as a kind of flâneur, who observes the goings on in various urban locations and describes what he sees. But his privileged identity as a white male is complicated, if not entirely undermined, by the gender relations at play in one particular space. In a chapter on the “Ladies’ Pub,” the author enters the space around 11 a.m.: “the time that ‘little sinking’ so well known to the drinker, is apt to most forcibly develop itself” (BC 16). We
would now call the “little sinking” withdrawal.385 This space, while related in some ways to a gin palace, is not the same thing. It has similar, decadent decoration to the space described by Dickens in “Gin Shops,” but the beverage of choice is sherry.386 From observation, the author determines that customers “must retire into semi-privacy, order a cake or a tart, and then the sherry follows as though it were quite an after-thought on their part – a mere circumstance of the cake, and not the circumstance which caused them to enter” (BC 16).387 This exchange reflects a non-verbal communication between the barmaid and the female customer. Entering the space, if the customer is a woman, is equivalent to entering a silent contract: if I enter, I want a drink. Words are unnecessary.

The customers include a “female drunkard,” “politely called a dipsomaniac, who is in as clear a state of ‘shakes’ as woman well can be” (BC 18). The female drunkard’s body gives her away as an alcoholic – her delirium tremens indicate that her body is in withdrawal and needs a drink to reach equilibrium again; alcohol for this woman is no longer a luxury. It becomes clear to the author that unaccompanied men are not welcome, precisely so that women like the “female drunkard” do not have to exhibit their addiction to the opposite sex, although the journey on the streets of London to the pub is another question. The barmaids “stare such [male] personages frigidly out the shop if they are weak-minded enough to go, which I was not” (BC 21). The power of the female gaze is apparent here, taking back a space intended for female pleasure (or need) by silently pressuring men to vacate the premises. It is left to the barmaids, who may or

385 Barry Milligan has noted that the chief physiological effects of addiction are tolerance, the necessity for increasingly larger amounts of a substance to produce the original effect, and withdrawal, which manifests in uncomfortable physical symptoms when the body begins to crave the substance. Milligan, Pleasures and Pains, 23.
386 The space is a “handsomely-decorated saloon – not a saloon of garish show – that would never suit the customers; but a saloon rich and luxurious, crimson silk hangings, velvet lounges, chairs cunningly devised to support the small of the back, marble tables….” (BC 16).
387 First and third emphases my own; second emphasis in the original.
may not be drinking, to drive men away with their gaze. The female customers are not discussed in terms of active looking, whether at men or at each other. They are therefore easily objectified by the author.

The “exhibitionary complex,” according to Tony Bennett, describes the transfer of objects and bodies from “enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed…into progressively more open and public arenas.” Bennett aligns the exhibitionary complex with institutions such as museums and expositions. In his discussion of the Great Exhibition of 1851, he argues that the men and women who went to view the objects on display were also on display; the architectural design for the Crystal Palace allowed for optimal viewing, and “while everyone could see, there were also vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance.” This architectural design was related to that of department stores in both France and England, where the consumption of commodities was often overshadowed by the spectacle of consumers, and it also recalls the dynamic enacted at the department store and the theatre during this period. Both the Crystal Palace and department stores, therefore, had panoptic qualities; the men and women who circulated in these spaces were aware of being watched, so their self-surveillance was highly attuned while they performed naturalness, affecting the appearance of not realizing they were objects of others’ gazes. An image published in *Punch* in 1851 reveals anxiety about women’s presence, and more importantly, their power within the Crystal Palace (Fig. 4.4). Four women are shown lined up, aggressively facing a gentleman in a top hat who leans back with his hands raised in a gesture of surrender. The women hold their umbrellas as weapons and their doll-like

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389 Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” 78.
390 See, for example, Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
faces frame large staring eyes. Entitled *The Ladies and the Police. – The Battle of the Crystal Palace*, the illustration points to the power of women’s desire. The accompanying text reads in part: “Nobody doubts the courage of the Police; but the gallantry of the body is being every day severely tested at the Great Exhibition...they find it almost impossible to clear the Crystal Palace, when resisted by the powerful band of ladies who oppose the civil power at the point of the parasol....Who could stand against a battery from the fire of the flashing eyes of angry ladies...?”391 The women’s desire in this image is not for alcohol, but for the right to be present, to move, to look, to see, and more specifically, to see the things on display. As I noted earlier in

![Image](image.png)

Figure 4.4. *The Ladies and the Police. – The Battle of the Crystal Palace*, from *Punch*, 17 May 1851, National Art Library, London.

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391 *Punch*, vol. XX (1851), 202.
this chapter, anxieties were rampant in the nineteenth century regarding women “filling” themselves, whether through the consumption of drugs, alcohol, novels, or objects.392

The “exhibitionary complex” can, in part, illuminate the dynamic that is being described in *Babylonian Cups*. A man enters a “ladies’ pub,” not in order to drink, but rather with the intention to observe and to categorize the women who enter the space. The customers include female university students, actresses, and young girls from the country. However, many of the women have entered the establishment with the precise intention of *not* being seen, thus complicating the application of the exhibitionary complex as a theoretical framework for interpreting this particular kind of space. According to the author of *Babylonian Cups*, the women enter and withdraw into “semi-privacy” (BC 16), pointing to the fact that they do not want to be observed in the act of consuming alcohol. As should be apparent by now, I believe that this desire to drink in semi-privacy within an ostensibly public space is motivated by shame. Although the “special commissioner” observes that women of the upper classes continually roll up to the doors in their carriages (BC 21), thus emphasizing that they are not skulking in or concealing their identities, the fact remains that the space under discussion is *not* a public house in the traditional sense. It is a space where women go, “unaccompanied,” to drink in semi-privacy away from the prying eyes of men. The women who enter the ladies’ pub are part of a community because they have all entered with the same intention and the same object of desire. The barmaids’ stares are clearly a feeble mechanism for controlling who enters the space, but

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this example of the attempt to harness the power of the gaze destabilizes the dichotomy that positions men as privileged viewers and women as passive objects.\footnote{For a discussion of the gaze that has been fundamental for feminist theorists, whether they agree with the argument or not, see Laura Mulvey, \textit{Visual and Other Pleasures} (London: Macmillan, 1989).}

\textbf{Feminist theory, Addiction and Space}

In \textit{Space, Time, and Perversion} (1995), Elizabeth Grosz remarks that a feminist theorist “might take many different approaches in exploring the theme of women and architecture.”\footnote{Elizabeth Grosz, \textit{Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies} (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 111.} Lynne Walker, for instance, discusses female consumers of urban space in relation to pleasure.\footnote{See Lynne Walker, “Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-1900,” in \textit{Women in the Victorian Art World}, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 70-85.} Jane Rendell has argued that “consumption can be seen as important in the lives of women and the constitution of femininity,” and that “Consumption, by virtue of the fact that it is neither production nor reproduction, runs against the grain of the separate spheres ideology, and so such spaces [as markets] were represented as sites where social codes were transgressed.”\footnote{See Rendell, \textit{The Pursuit of Pleasure}, 17.} In \textit{The Pursuit of Pleasure}, Rendell traces the male figure of the rambler, but reads him through feminist theory that is particularly influenced by Luce Irigaray. Meaghan Clarke has focused on art journalism written by women in order to argue that female art critics “transformed aspects of public space” in late-Victorian London by crossing the imaginary boundaries between private, domestic spaces into public venues such as art galleries and artists’ studios. The fact that she refers to “bribery with sherry” in her title is only an interesting coincidence in relation to my own study of women, addiction and public space. The quotation that provided Clarke with her title comes from art critic Elizabeth Pennell’s diary, in which she wrote that the Honorary Secretary of the New English Art Club, Francis Bate, had “bribed [her] with sherry,” presumably because
he hoped for a good review. The diary entry positions a woman’s alcohol consumption safely in the realm of the socio-professional.\textsuperscript{397} The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to a reading of women’s presence in, and movement towards, public drinking spaces. My theoretical framework draws from both feminist theory and addiction theory. The latter allows me to speculate on the embodied experience of a woman’s actions, decisions and movements motivated by addiction.

In Griselda Pollock’s important essay “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” she examines nineteenth-century French modern art with the intention of denaturalizing and deconstructing the ideology of the separate spheres. In order to do this, Pollock breaks down the primary themes and subjects represented in modern art. What becomes apparent from this list – namely leisure, consumption, the spectacle and money – is that in the “myth” of modernism, space is gendered so that men are represented in public spaces and women are represented in private or domestic spaces. This leads her to question whether female artists could have entered the public spaces that male artists frequented, thus pointing out that the ideology of separate spheres that was constructed and maintained in nineteenth-century France had a material impact on what male and female artists represented. Significantly for my purposes in this chapter, Pollock identifies the bar as one of the masculine “territories of modernism,” which was not only painted almost exclusively by male artists, but was also deemed a “masculine” space that possessed imaginary, ideological boundaries that only women of questionable sexual identities could or would cross.\textsuperscript{398}

\textsuperscript{397} Meaghan Clarke, “‘Bribery with Sherry’ and ‘The Influence of Weak Tea’: Women Critics as Arbiters of Taste in the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Press,” \textit{Visual Culture in Britain}, vol. 6, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 139-56.

\textsuperscript{398} Pollock, \textit{Vision and Difference}, 54.
Feminist theorists concerned with visual and material culture have built on Pollock’s discussion of the separate spheres by focusing on women’s careers, such as art journalism, and motivations, such as the pleasure of viewing urban space, in order to argue that women did transgress certain gendered spatial boundaries and move through public space. This is where addiction theory comes in, because, as I will argue, addiction would have been a powerful, overwhelming, desperation-inducing motivator for women’s mobility and consumption. Addiction, according to the disease model that began to be accepted by many, though not all, physicians in the late nineteenth century, was a disease of the mind (or will) that created an obsession with alcohol that would only subside if alcohol or drugs were consumed. The problem was that once alcohol entered the body, the thirst was exacerbated rather than satiated. The result was drunkenness, and indeed, addiction is a self-perpetuating cycle, because once drunkenness begins to wear off, the obsession can start again immediately. Addiction, then, is two-fold: it resides not only in the mind, but also in the body, and the mental obsession guides the movement of the body’s limbs towards a source of alcohol, just as pain or distress in the limbs (delirium tremens, for instance) guides the mind towards the needed object, alcohol.

When I speak of motivation, I mean just that: the mental obsession motivates an alcoholic or addict to not only think constantly of how to attain alcohol or drugs, but also motivates mobility towards the source that the mind has struck upon. In the nineteenth century sources for alcohol included alehouses, gin palaces, gin shops and grocers’, among other possible sites (such as a friend’s house, for example). Individuals concerned with addiction, such as Kerr, were concerned about the Grocer’s Act because it provided another site that women could go to in order to obtain alcohol. The Act also allowed women to avoid ostensibly “masculine” drinking spaces because they could buy alcohol and then return home to drink in private. Despite this
possibility, women continued to enter public drinking spaces. I do not wish to suggest that all of the women who entered these spaces were addicted to alcohol, but clearly there were women willing to ignore the ideology of separate spheres, which dictated that only women of questionable virtue drank in public drinking spaces. Certainly, during any given period, there will be people who deliberately ignore spatial ideologies regardless of the social consequences. This must be taken into consideration. Ideological boundaries are strong, but if they were impenetrable there would be no social change from one generation to the next. Accepting that some of the women who drank in alehouses and gin palaces could be considered early feminists who wanted the right to enter public space, I maintain that other women who entered spaces accepted as “masculine” in the nineteenth century did so because they needed to feed a craving that surpassed, in terms of urgency, the desire for food. The craving would have overtaken the mind so everything else – responsibilities, social norms, reputation – was crowded out, and only one thing remained: the thought of alcohol. Money, of course, was an issue, and women who had money did not have the added complication of determining how to obtain alcohol without it.

The path from initial obsession to final consumption was therefore mentally exhausting; more exhausting, certainly, than the actual physical trip from the place where the craving took hold and the spot where the alcohol was consumed, unless the woman had to travel to multiple places, which surely occurred more often than not for women who did not want their faces to become too familiar at any one location. As the author of Babylonian Cups indicates in his description of the ladies’ pub, mobility of drinking women could be classed: “For these sherry-women of ours are the precise counterparts of the ‘gin-crawlers,’ and will go from [pub] to [pub] – a glass here, a glass there, a glass everywhere – in precisely similar fashion to the wretched men and women who spend the day ‘crawling’ from pub. to pub. for two penn’orths of Old
Tom” (BC 22). In this account, although sherry-women are described as the “precise counterparts” of gin-crawlers in that both groups travel from place to place, the very name “gin-crawlers” suggests desperate, degraded, low-to-the-ground people who are barely human. The sherry-women, according to the author, are not of the middle order or the working classes, nor are they cyprians.³⁹⁹ They are “ladies by birth, ladies of wealth and position, ladies about whose status in life there can be no question whatever” (BC 22). These women are not all addicted to alcohol, but the text unveils the fact that even ladies by birth can become “female drunkards” after too many visits to a ladies’ pub.

Conclusion

According to Pollock, space can be conceived of in several ways. The first is space as location.⁴⁰⁰ The bar, as well as the gin palace or public house, are locations in the sense that they are physical sites that can be identified on a map. Another way of saying this is “space as place,” that is, an actual spot located in the material world. The second method of thinking about space in this context is to consider the “spatial order within paintings.” Pollock identifies various structures of space in modernist art, but focuses on the spatial order in paintings by Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt, two women artists who were working at the same time as Manet and other male artists, in order to support her argument that Morisot and Cassatt used physical structures such as balconies in their paintings to mark the boundary between spaces of masculinity and of femininity, which are “inscribed at the level of both what spaces are open to

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³⁹⁹ In a reading of an engraving by Robert Cruikshank that appears in Pierce Egan’s The Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry and Logic in their Pursuits through Life in and out of London (1828), Jane Rendell notes that in the character of Corinthian Kate, “the cyprian body becomes increasingly more disorderly and porous, deformed by syphilis and alcohol.” Rendell, The Pursuit of Pleasure, 128.

⁴⁰⁰ Pollock, Vision and Difference, 56.
men and women and what relation a man or woman has to that space and its occupants.”\footnote{Pollock, Vision and Difference, 62.} I engaged in this kind of spatial reading in art when I discussed representations of the interior of gin shops by Cruikshank and Rowlandson. My objective was not to argue that these images necessarily reflected the reality, statistically, of male drinkers and female drinkers in public drinking spaces, but rather that in producing graphic representations that would have been widely circulated, and that clearly criticized the gin shops themselves, the artists portrayed women drinking alongside men, indeed, they represented more women drinking than men, because the reality of female drunkenness and women’s addiction was being blamed on the spaces in which they drank.

Pollock’s third and final approach to space in modern art revolves around not only the spaces represented in imagery, or the “spaces of representation, but the social spaces from which the representation is made and its reciprocal positionalities.”\footnote{Pollock, Vision and Difference, 66.} This approach, then, is concerned with the artist who represents the space, and the psychic pressures that have been placed on him or her from birth. The artist’s point of view, according to Pollock, is socially constructed. I have just discussed Cruikshank’s and Rowlandson’s position in relation to gin shops and women’s drinking; they were not so much concerned with the lived experience of women’s addiction, as with the destabilizing impact that women’s drunkenness had on the social order. But this is as far as I can go, for the moment at least, in considering artistic positionalities in relation to representations of gin shops and gin palaces. Other than graphic images like the ones I have discussed, the gin palace was not, apparently, deemed an appropriate subject for nineteenth-century artists. Furthermore, these structures were not widely photographed, which is
particularly interesting considering that inns, taverns and alehouses were almost obsessively photographed from the moment photography was invented. The transience of gin palaces has been largely enabled by an absence of visual culture. I have therefore relied on representations in graphic art, as well as on textual descriptions that provide us with mental images that are less defined than the images we have of the Crystal Palace. In reading public drinking spaces through a framework of addiction theory I have attempted to bring gin palaces and ladies’ pubs into focus as possible points on a map that traces the embodied experience of addiction in and through the streets of nineteenth-century London.

403 The Prints and Drawings Room at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, has an abundant collection of photographs of nineteenth-century inns and pubs.
Chapter 5
Closeting Addiction: Confinement, Punishment and Concealment

The Closet as Theory

This chapter is inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s important book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) in which she discusses the technologies of closeting that appear in nineteenth-century literature, while also addressing the lived reality of gay men and lesbian women in the 1980s. According to Sedgwick, “‘closetedness’ itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence – not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it.”404 Drawing on Sedgwick’s definition and discussion of closetedness, I examine nineteenth-century visual culture for evidence of a closeting impulse, that is, the desire to hide, erase, conceal, or obliterate evidence of addiction. I argue that this impulse was not only experienced by individuals and groups who wished to control alcoholics and drug addicts in order to eliminate the problem of addiction, but also by those individuals who self-identified as addicted to alcohol or drugs.405 In this way, nineteenth-century alcoholics and addicts shared the desire to remain closeted with many nineteenth-century homosexuals.406

I am concerned here not only with nineteenth-century images, but also with the lived experiences of alcoholics and addicts in our own time and culture. Furthermore, my objectives in this chapter are more wide-ranging than making the single argument that alcoholics and drug

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405 In late nineteenth-century Britain, the drugs that were most often discussed in relation to concerns about addiction were morphine, cocaine and opium. See, for example, T.S. Clouston, “Diseased Cravings and Paralysed Control: Dipsomania; Morphinomania; Chloralism; Cocainism,” *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, vol. 35, no. 2 (March 1890), 793-794.
addicts were closeted in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is too simplistic to state that addiction was closeted in Britain during this period, which implies that alcoholics and drug addicts remained completely concealed either by choice or by force. The frequent references to drunkenness and intemperance in periodicals, fictional accounts of addiction, and visual representations of excessive alcohol consumption belie the notion that addiction was successfully closeted in nineteenth-century Britain. In fact, the ubiquity of representations of addiction suggests that there was a desire for narratives (whether textual or visual) about addiction to see the light of day. Of course, there was also a desire to eliminate addiction in the nineteenth century, just as there is a desire to do so in twenty-first-century western culture. Certainly legal measures such as the 1898 Inebriates Act, which was predicated upon compulsory confinement in asylums and inebriate homes for men and women charged a certain number of times for drunkenness, point to the desire for people with alcohol problems to be removed from public view. Significantly for my objectives in this chapter, G.W. Bacon wrote in the early 1880s,


408 My thanks to Susan Zieger for illuminating this point for me.

“The asylum is confessedly nothing more than a closet in which that which is objectionable is most safely concealed.”

The theoretical concept of the closet was a twentieth-century invention, thus making Bacon’s use of the term closet in relation to inebriate asylums noteworthy because it illuminates a point of intersection between contemporary theory and the lived experience of addiction in the nineteenth century. Art historians John Potvin and Michael Hatt have both used the term “closet” in their readings of Aesthetic interiors, but they do not arrive at the same conclusion about these spaces in relation to the theory of closeting. Potvin argues that Aesthetic spaces were closets where gay men could, and did, conceal their sexuality and sexual interactions, while Hatt suggests that “these interiors were not closets, that is, they were not spaces where a true homosexual self resided apart from the world, retreats where the homosexual could be himself uninflected by worldly pressures…. They were, rather, attempts to create spaces where private desire and public self were integrated, where all one’s experience could be invoked and unified.” One of the spaces that Hatt examines is Oscar Wilde’s home at 16 Tite Street, which was designed by E.W. Godwin. Although there are no photographs or other visual records of Wilde’s house, Hatt speculates about the role that this space – in which Wilde lived with his wife and two children – played in his “open secret” of experiencing same-sex desire. If his home

was not a closet, then Wilde was certainly closeted in prison for two years after his conviction for gross indecency with other men in 1895.  

Hatt’s and Potvin’s disparate interpretations of space and the requirements of a space to be read as a closet point to the fact that the closet is a subjective theoretical tool for interpretation, as well as a psychic space that one can either choose to inhabit or exit through action and speech. Potvin rejects the all-encompassing conclusion that the closet was “a dark imprisonment of isolation and fear.” Contrary to this negative theorization of the closet in relation to homosexuality, he proposes “instead that, unlike our post-Freudian and post-Stonewall rituals of coming out, staying in the closet offered to the Victorian queer an aesthetic and social agency unattended to in current scholarship.” Potvin’s argument is relevant for my own purposes because the decision to remain closeted as an alcoholic or drug addict was, and is, ultimately a choice, and therefore a possible source of agency, which in the nineteenth century was often removed under the auspices of legal action and medical treatment.

In nineteenth-century Britain the closeting impulse could be enacted by both external forces (the state, the medical profession, etc.) or by alcoholics and drug addicts themselves because of the moral, social, medical and legal ramifications that they faced if labeled as alcoholics and addicts by others. Because of the various facets of what I am calling the closeting impulse, this chapter will cover a broad range of images. I begin with a discussion on confinement. In that section I briefly discuss representations of architectural structures built specifically for involuntary confinement on the one hand (Fig. 5.1), and voluntary confinement on the other (Fig. 5.2). I then discuss H.W. Diamond’s photographs of two women identified as

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inebriates who were, we can assume, involuntarily confined in the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum (Figs. 5.3 and 5.4).

So far in “The Desire to Fill” race has not figured prominently in my discussion of addiction and visual culture. Examining practices related to the closeting impulse opens a productive space for the examination of non-white individuals’ relationship with alcohol and drugs, because, like white alcoholics and addicts, non-white individuals were both hypervisible and invisible in nineteenth-century Britain. Furthermore, because addiction was regarded as unacceptable for white British citizens, they were sometimes racialized as either black or Asian. In the section on confinement, I briefly analyze an image from Punch that portrays an Asian man who is linked with both insanity and opium use (Fig. 5.5). The poem that accompanies the illustration satirizes the tendency to confine white British citizens in asylums for a broad variety of reasons including insanity, hysteria and addiction.

In addition to the issue of confinement, I discuss images of punishment as another facet of the closeting impulse. Specifically, I examine engravings produced in the 1830s depicting the punishment of black African slaves in the West Indies (Figs. 5.6 and 5.7). One engraving represents two slaves in bed-stocks being punished for drunkenness. The other portrays an androgynous slave with a metal mask over his or her mouth as punishment for dirt-eating, and facing this figure is a female slave wearing a metal collar as punishment for intoxication. Drunkenness, of course, is not synonymous with addiction, but these images speak to some of the ways in which bodies that were identified as excessive in relation to alcohol were controlled.

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I argue that covering slaves’ faces with metal masks was an act of silencing, a verbal closeting related to the orality of both speech and alcohol consumption. Feminist art historian Rosemary Betterton has noted the orally-focused punishment of vocal women, such as early twentieth-century suffragettes, including force-feeding, which she identifies as “a form of psychological torture which is also a physical violation of the female body.”\textsuperscript{418} The metal masks would have also had a psychological impact on African slaves who were forced to wear them. Like force-feeding, the masks enacted a violation of the black body by not allowing anything to enter or exit the mouth, thus highlighting and extending the control that white slave owners had over slaves’ bodies.

In a subsequent section that is concerned with death as punishment, I address Marcus Wood’s comparison between George Cruikshank’s representation of a black female slave committing suicide (Fig. 5.8) and the image of a gin-mad woman committing suicide in \textit{The Drunkard’s Children} (Fig. 5.9). Wood suggests that, whereas the latter is aesthetically successful, the former is an artistic failure. His reading of both images seems to be based on an assumption that Cruikshank was more sympathetic towards the female alcoholic than he was toward the female slave, and based on Cruikshank’s own temperance writings, I suggest that this was indeed the case. I also argue that death was regarded as an appropriate end for both fallen women and alcoholics in the nineteenth century, and the threat of inevitable death was used as a controlling tactic for both demographics. In the final section of this chapter I discuss the alcoholic’s or addict’s own choice to remain closeted, both in the nineteenth century and our own time.

Whereas Sedgwick’s source material is textual, mine is visual, and the challenge of teasing out evidence of the closeting impulse in visual culture is that, unless the image represents an obvious state or space of confinement (for example, an asylum or prison cell), the interpretative work must expand more broadly, sensing for indications of veiling and silencing, often entering the realm of speculation. Although visual representations of closeting practices such as confinement, punishment and concealment in relation to addiction are not plentiful, they do exist, and they illuminate the materiality of the alcoholic and addict bodies that were controlled by external forces in the nineteenth century. As I have noted, I am also interested in the choice made by nineteenth-century alcoholics and drug addicts to stay closeted. Their silences speak volumes about what it must have felt like to be addicted in Victorian Britain, and this holds implications for why alcoholics and drug addicts choose to remain closeted today.

Maurizio Viano has argued that the twenty-first century drug addict is the last taboo identity, and therefore the last identity that has the “need” for a closet: “In the case of drug addicts, we can pretty much adopt the notion of closet without worrying too much: drug addicts are (perhaps) the last minority to be forced, legally, morally, and culturally, into the closet, without really having the option of coming out.”419 Viano’s bracketed “perhaps” signals that he is aware that this is a contentious claim. Although the fields of queer studies and gay and lesbian studies have been consistently growing over the last few years, the reality of living openly, as opposed to in the closet, as gay or lesbian is still a dangerous, or at least socially and politically

precarious, existence in most cultures. To state that drug addicts are the “last minority to be forced, legally, morally, and culturally, into the closet” is a divisive argument because there are still gay men and lesbian women who feel the need to remain in the closet. Viano’s statement is limited to drug addicts, I think, because unlike alcohol, certain drugs (heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, speed, etc.) are illegal, thus making the statement “I am a drug addict” a performative utterance that simultaneously enacts a confession of breaking the law. I do not accept Viano’s argument without qualification, as I have said, because of the continued prejudices and violence against gay men and lesbian women. And yet, Viano is on to something here. I believe that, in contemporary western culture, the vast majority of both drug addicts and alcoholics (whether active or recovering) feel the need to stay in the closet, choosing silence rather than informing their co-workers, employers, relatives, friends and neighbors of their addictions. I will return to Viano’s essay at the end of the chapter, as – like myself – Viano is concerned with how a scholarly examination of visual culture (film in his case, art and various still images in mine) can simultaneously be a passionate, not to say angry, statement about the continuing problems associated with addiction.

**Confinement: Lunatic Asylums and Inebriate Homes**

Visual representations of confinement are most striking when they evoke the physical and psychological feelings of being confined, unless, of course, the intention of the artist is to communicate that the space of confinement is not really that confining at all. There were three very different spaces that an alcoholic could be confined within in the nineteenth century. The

420 For example, Uganda’s parliament is currently considering legislation that will make homosexuality punishable by the death penalty, and will make it legally mandatory that straight citizens report their gay neighbors to the police.

first was the prison cell, which was a solution dependent on the criminalization of drunkenness. The second was the asylum, which evolved through the medicalization of drunkenness. Under the Inebriates Act of 1898, criminalization and medicalization intersected, as in the case of Jane Cakebread, who was convicted 240 times of public drunkenness before being committed to an asylum in the last years of the nineteenth century. The third possible space of confinement for alcoholics and drug addicts in Victorian Britain was the inebriate home, which I discuss below.

The history of British laws established in order to deal with alcoholics is a convoluted one. The Habitual Drunkard’s Act was introduced in 1879, but many commentators regarded it as a toothless act because it depended on alcoholics volunteering to be confined in order to be treated. One anonymous report makes this critique very apparent:

> The Habitual Drunkard’s Act comes into force at the commencement of the coming year. It will be an interesting fact to determine whether intemperance, now at the head of the causes of insanity in the Commissioners’ Lunacy Report, during the past year, will still hold its sway, or whether it will be of any service in checking the spread of the vice. The Act is, in our opinion, a very feeble one, and quite inadequate to what was required. It is hardly to be assumed that any one will be found who will of his own accord present himself to a magistrate, sign a petition that he is an uncontrollable drunkard, and place himself under control for one year. What is required is a compulsory Act, not a voluntary one, on the part of the individual. And we state emphatically that until this is passed, all legislation to legally deal with drunkards will be of no satisfactory avail. The present Act is worse than useless, and time will show that such is the case.

Similarly, E.D. Daly remarked: “Can there be anything more against common sense than to base the treatment of an [alcoholic] lunatic upon the condition of procuring his own consent to it?”

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The Habitual Drunkard’s Act Amendment Bill became law in 1888 as the first Inebriates Act, which was also regarded as a failure because of its lack of emphasis on compulsory confinement. Ten years later the second Inebriates Act was introduced. As George Blackwell observed in 1899: “The Act creates entirely new law for the compulsory curative treatment in inebriate reformatories of habitual drunkards guilty of crime and offences against public order, and also amends and extends the two earlier Acts relating to the voluntary curative treatment of habitual inebriates in retreats.” According to the 1898 Act, criminal inebriates were only to be committed if they pleaded guilty to drunkenness or were tried and convicted four times in one year. The Inebriates Acts, like the Gin Acts in the eighteenth century, ultimately had little impact on people’s alcohol consumption. If anything, they highlighted the fact that people addicted to alcohol would continue to drink despite having been arrested for drunkenness and despite the prospect of forced confinement in asylums. Jane Cakebread is a prime example of this characteristic of addiction, namely the continuation of drinking in the face of legal consequences.

The inebriate home was invented as a more inviting, “homey” alternative to the asylum. Lunatic asylums were full of people suffering from different mental disorders, while inebriate homes were limited to the treatment of addiction to alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, the architecture of the asylum and the inebriate home differed dramatically, the former usually a

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428 In the nineteenth century, “asylum” usually signified “lunatic asylum,” although some asylums were created specifically for the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction. For a discussion of an American inebriate asylum, see John W. Cowley and William L. White, *Drunkard’s Refuge: The Lessons of the New York State Inebriate Asylum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004). There are reproductions in this text of the interior of the New York State Inebriate Asylum, originally published in *Harper’s Weekly* on 25 Dec. 1869, which show the gymnasium, a patient’s room, chapel, dining room, kitchen, billiard room and bowling alley (64-65).
large, austere structure both inside and out, while the latter was intended to have all the comforts of “home” as part of the treatment. Bethlem Royal Hospital was the most famous lunatic asylum in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Fig. 5.1). It was the setting for one of the images in Hogarth’s *The Rake’s Progress* (1732-33), which likely influenced George Cruikshank’s decision to portray the last scene of *The Bottle* (1847) in a Bethlem cell (Fig. 3.5). Early nineteenth-century engravings of Bethlem Hospital show a long building with a flat white front perforated by rows of tiny windows. The neo-classical columns, portico and pediment lend an air of grandeur and gravitas, and the structure is surrounded by a thick wall that keeps the healthy citizens out and the (invisible) patients in. According to Andrew Scull, those deemed “mad” in the nineteenth century “found themselves incarcerated in a specialized, bureaucratically
organized, state supported asylum system which isolated them both physically and symbolically from the larger society.”

Inebriate homes were often inhabited by the middle and upper classes, despite the popular belief that drunkenness was a problem restricted to the lower classes. Indeed, there were conflicting reports about the relationship between class and drunkenness, and the issue of class was often raised in relation to the treatment and confinement of alcoholics. According to James Stewart, “The inebriate whose manner of life and daily occupations make him familiar, from his earliest years, with squalor and wretchedness has a physical constitution very different from that of the squire, who has been nursed in the lap of luxury from his infancy. What in the former case might be most suitable and effectual treatment would be in the latter simply absurd.”

Dr. William B. Carpenter asserted that “in Pauper Lunatic Asylums, the proportion of those who have become insane from Intemperance, is usually much larger than it is in Asylums for the reception of Lunatics from the higher classes, among whom Intemperance is less frequent, while causes of a purely moral and intellectual nature operate upon them with greater intensity.”

Yet Dr. Kate Mitchell observed a little over thirty years later that “The great majority of women of the richer classes drink to the same extent as those of the poorer classes, perhaps even more.” That this was indeed the case is indicated by an 1886 article written by a female temperance advocate who noted that, although several homes for inebriate women of the poorer

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classes had been established in Britain by that time, many of the homes were “to a great extent filled up with the richer classes.”

Confinement and treatment of alcoholics was not only classed but gendered as well. J. Muir Howe wrote in 1885 that the ideal space for women being treated for alcoholism was “a small cottage with a kind-hearted strong-willed matron, assisted by a stout serving-maid….” Regarding men, Howe remarked: “Their place of detention must have all the strength of a prison, with abundant means of recreation and amusement. Women rarely try to escape, and they are

Figure 5.2. Pamphlet for Tower House, A Private High-Class Home for the Cure of Ladies, after 1864, Wellcome Library, London.

easily occupied with housework or fancy work…” 434 Engraved representations on pamphlets advertising inebriate homes emphasize their hominess, even their “femininity,” especially for those homes restricted to female inhabitants. A pamphlet for Tower House in Leicester (Fig. 5.2), states that it is “A Private High-Class Home… intended for Ladies of the higher and middle classes who may be suffering from the effects of alcoholic indulgence, and maladies of a kindred nature, requiring care and supervision.” On the cover of the pamphlet is a representation of the exterior of the home: a two-story white building with windows along both floors, some with shutters and curtains. The materiality of these small details, absent from the engraving of Bethlem Hospital, evoke the physical act of opening the windows in order to access light and fresh air at any time. The implication is that the women living at Tower House have the power to choose when they want to open the windows, whereas the small black squares and rectangles that signify windows in the Bethlem engraving imply a lack of control over access to the outside world. Likewise, in the pamphlet image there are two ladies (who I read as patients) walking along the path near the house, again emphasizing that the tenants of Tower House are not really confined in the space, but are, rather, free to enjoy light exercise (often recommended for those suffering from alcoholism) on the grounds. In the Bethlem engraving the only mobile bodies are those of the healthy British citizens out for a walk in St. George’s Fields, while the patients of the hospital are notably absent.

Inebriate homes ostensibly offered more benign surveillance than that offered within prisons and asylums. 435 Of course, once a man or woman entered an inebriate home, whether by

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434 Quoted in Berridge, *British Journal of Addiction, Special Issue*, 1000.
435 For further discussion see Edward M. Brown, “‘What Shall we do with the Inebriate?’: Asylum Treatment and the Disease Concept of Alcoholism in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1985): 48-59.
choice or by force, their bodies entered a panoptic system of surveillance that centered upon the naming of their body as addicted. Nineteenth-century responses to the confinement of those named as inebriates or alcoholics were mixed. While some writers argued that the only solution for addiction (whether under the name of drunkenness or inebriety) was compulsory confinement, Dr. Forbes Winslow commented that “the so-called inebriate establishments are a delusion and a sham.” Winslow’s view was that attendants at these homes supplied drink to the patients, and that the directors were often “dipsomaniacs” themselves, “who have ultimately to seek a shelter” (or a closet?) “for themselves.” He was also adamant that alcoholics not be placed in lunatic asylums. Although Winslow believed that legal measures resulting in compulsory confinement was the best path to pursue for dealing with drunkenness, which he identified as a mental disorder, his position on the ultimate goal of confinement is significant in terms of the changing vision of addiction as the nineteenth century progressed: “Treatment, and not punishment, must be aimed at.”

Another ambivalent response to the confinement of alcoholics comes to us directly from art history, and more specifically, from Victorian art criticism. It is no coincidence that the critique is of The Bottle (Figs. 3.4 and 3.5) by George Cruikshank, whose life and art became so completely tangled with alcohol that his critics could no longer distinguish the artist’s temperance from the art’s excesses. The Bottle documents in eight plates the crumbling of a family due to the alcohol consumption of both the wife and the husband. The first plate

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437 L. Forbes Winslow, *On Uncontrollable Drunkenness Considered as a form of Mental Disorder, with the Only Possible Means of Legally Dealing with Such Cases* (London: Henderson Spalding, 1892), iv.
represents the husband offering his wife a glass of gin, according to the print’s title, for the first time, and she appears to accept it with pleasure. This scene sets up a dynamic that unfolds in the following few images, that is, the companionate drinking of the man and the woman, thus squelching any attempt to read the couple as drunkard husband and “redeeming woman.” In subsequent plates their youngest child dies, the mother pawns her children’s clothes, and the father is shown quickly degenerating into a body that can be read as alcoholic in nineteenth-century terms: ragged clothes, unshaven face, hunched shoulders, pinched and haggard physiognomy. In the sixth image, the man murders his wife in a drunken rage. Frances Power Cobbe wrote in 1878 that men who killed their wives usually did so because they were drunk, although she also observed that many women of the lower classes were often “madly addicted” to alcohol. The seventh plate depicts the aftermath of the murder. Neighbors have entered the cramped space (indeed, the entire series revolves around the narrowing of the domestic space until it seems quite confining – the home could be a space of confinement too, as women well knew in the nineteenth century), and the man appears to be stricken with remorse. Cruikshank concludes the narrative with the man confined in a cell in Bethlem Hospital, which is now home to the Imperial War Museum. The man in Cruikshank’s engraving sits on the floor of the cell with his arms around his knees. He seems oblivious to the presence of his children who have entered the cell, both already showing tell-tale signs of debauchery and vice. The girl wears a new dress, hat and shoes, and we might recall the connection that Ruskin made between “fatal newness” and sexual immorality. With her mother dead and her father confined in an asylum,

her new clothes signal her descent into the ranks of fallen women, a narrative Cruikshank portrayed in the sequel to *The Bottle, The Drunkard’s Children* (Fig. 5.9). The presence of the children and other figures shown outside the cell door underscores the psychological distance between inside and outside when power of mobility is lost.

As I indicated in Chapter 2, frequent drunkenness was often regarded as a form of madness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as a cause of insanity. It is not clear in *The Bottle* whether the man murders his wife because he is insane from drink, or if he goes insane because of a combination of alcoholism and remorse. Regardless of Cruikshank’s position on alcohol and insanity, at least one critic disliked the way the artist concluded the narrative. George Augustus Sala argued that the series would have been more realistic if the man had been hanged for his crime. In the same year that Cobbe wrote her essay on wife torture, Sala wrote that “In the actual drama of life he would have inevitably swung. In such cases the plea of insanity is scarcely ever admitted, and intoxication is judicially held to be rather an aggravation than a palliation of the act committed.” Sala’s argument is founded on a fundamental distrust of the idea that an alcoholic can ever safely re-enter society: “It is in the highest degree expedient to hang men who have murdered while under the influence of strong drink,” because if a man is sent to Bethlem, he “is apt, under the careful treatment and with the nourishing diet of the asylum, not only to get physically hale and strong, but recover his senses again, and the country is thereby saddled with the maintenance of a hearty man, who is honest, sensible, and industrious enough, so long as the gin which sets his brain on fire is kept from him.”

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treatment of alcoholism that results in physical and mental recuperation) is possible, he believes that it is ultimately advantageous for the state to kill a person who has killed under the influence of alcohol, because there is no guarantee that a recovered alcoholic will not drink again and in doing so return to destructive behaviors. With this kind of opinion circulating about people addicted to alcohol, is it any wonder that alcoholics, even those who had never murdered anyone, would choose to remain closeted in Victorian Britain?

While many of those concerned with alcoholism in the nineteenth century believed that confinement was the only solution to the problem, or at least a means to an end because it removed alcoholics from public (exterior) spaces and public vision, Dr. George Wilson questioned the efficacy of confinement for people who appeared to be unable to control their drinking: “Most cases of drunkenness are not benefited by a prolonged residence in an institution where the patient lives a life which cannot be described as free and independent. The atmosphere of an institution is not one best calculated to restore the positive side of character. It is too much a life of negation.”445 In the following section I discuss representations of two women identified as intemperate who were confined in the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum due to this diagnosis. There is no record of their lives beyond what doctors wrote about their excessive alcohol consumption and their resulting mental illnesses, though it would not be too much of a stretch to speculate that their lives within the asylum walls were indeed lives of negation. While their photographs were carried around London for various lectures, there is no evidence that the women themselves ever left the asylum after entering it. The photographic images that represented their bodies ultimately became more mobile than they were.

445 George R. Wilson, *Clinical Studies in Vice and in Insanity* (Edinburgh: William F. Clay, 1899), 44. Although in this passage Wilson refers to drunkenness, he also refers specifically to “alcoholism” on other pages (see for instance p. 3).
H.W. Diamond’s Psychiatric Photography: Reading the Alcoholic Body

The visual culture of addiction points again and again to the desire for the legible addicted body, which parallels the desire for the legible homosexual body in the nineteenth century. Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond’s photographs of patients at the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum are indicative of this, and I personally experienced the dangers of trying to read the alcoholic body from one of Diamond’s photographs, which I will describe at the end of this section.

Diamond’s photographs represent confined bodies detached from their spatial context, that is to say, they are not represented within a cell, nor is it explicitly obvious that they are patients at an asylum. Instead, each patient was placed in front of a curtain, which served as a neutral backdrop. Diamond (1809-1886), who was Resident Superintendent of the Female Department at the Surrey Asylum from 1848 to 1858, believed that psychiatric photography had three functions: first, to be used in order to study mental patients’ appearances in relation to theories of physiognomy; second, as a means of identification for readmission; and third, as an accurate portrait that the patient could recognize as him or herself. The issue of self-recognition or self-identification has particular resonance for the discourse of addiction. Whereas previous to the early twentieth century, “alcoholic” (or “drunkard” or “inebriate”) was an identity that was most often projected upon an individual by another individual who had the

446 See Andrew Stephenson on the anxieties that resulted from the fact that the homosexual body was not reliably legible in the nineteenth century. Andrew Stephenson, “Precarious Poses: the Problem of Artistic Visibility and its Homosocial Performances in Late-Nineteenth-Century London,” Visual Culture in Britain, vol. 8, issue 1 (Summer 2007): 73-104.


power to do so, usually a person with legal or medical authority, self-identification as an alcoholic or drug addict is one of the first, if not the first, requirements of membership for Twelve-Step programs.

In the Diamond archives at the Royal Society of Medicine there are two photographs representing women who Diamond identified as intemperate. The subject of one of the photographs is a woman with curly blonde hair, a plump face half turned away from the viewer and eyes that peer distrustfully at the camera (Fig. 5.3). The other photograph shows a woman with disheveled brown hair who faces the camera more directly but whose eyes are downcast. Significantly, an unknown artist, likely at Diamond’s request (although it could have been Diamond himself) produced an engraving that places these women side by side in order to juxtapose their physical appearances (Fig. 5.4). Slight changes were made in the engraved representation of the women, I suggest, because of contemporary beliefs regarding the treatment of intemperance. For instance, the blonde woman’s hands, which in the photograph are pressed awkwardly against her chest as though she does not know what to do with them, have been transformed into a very deliberate gesture of prayer. This difference is significant, as Dr. John Connolly described in a lecture on these photographs how he imagined the blonde woman having kind “religious thoughts…gradually introduced” as part of her treatment at the Surrey Asylum.449

When Connolly, a doctor of medicine at the University of London, discussed these photographs in a lecture on the “physiognomy of insanity” in 1858, he described both the

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Figure 5.3. W.H. Diamond, photograph of a woman identified as intemperate, c.1856, Royal Society of Medicine, London.

Figure 5.4. Engraving after photographs by W.H. Diamond, *Insanity Supervening on Habits of Intemperance*, 1858, Wellcome Library, London.
women’s bodies and their drinking in terms of class.\textsuperscript{450} He noted that the women had “fallen into habits of intemperance, on which derangement of the mental powers has ensued to a great or less extent.”\textsuperscript{451} According to Connolly:

The two portraits represent different patients, of different character and of different history. The poor creature on the right [the woman with brown hair] having been nurtured in low life, almost brought up in early acquired habits of drinking, left to do their sure and uninterrupted work on body and mind until both have acquired the impress of a misfortune unavoidable, and slowly ripened into vice, and bringing the whole creature into a sort of chronic and indelible appearance of sottishness. In the left-hand portrait is represented another patient [the blonde woman], of a respectable station in life, but also ruined by drink; but by drink so gradually indulged in, however, that her altered state bewilders her, and fills her, fallen as she is, with distressful remorse.\textsuperscript{452}

Connolly’s interpretation of the women’s intemperance is coloured by their respective classes. For instance, the woman “nurtured in low life” is linked with the term “vice,” suggesting deliberate immoral action, while the more respectable woman is “ruined by drink,” making her the passive party in her own self-destruction. Moreover, she is “bewildered” and filled with “distressful remorse.” Remorse, which was closely linked with shame in nineteenth-century discussions of addiction, was one of the only socially acceptable responses for a respectable woman who drank to excess in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{453}

Photography was often described as “nature’s pencil” during the years following its invention, suggesting that there was no human intervention, and thus photographs were perceived as representing empirical truth. This was particularly important for photographs produced in order to categorize certain types of people, such as criminals and non-white

\textsuperscript{450} Diamond also gave lectures using his photographs as visual evidence supporting the thesis that insanity was legible from physiognomy. One of these lectures was given on 22 May 1856 at a meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine in London.

\textsuperscript{451} Connolly, “Plates 16 & 17,” 67.

\textsuperscript{452} Connolly, “Plates 16 & 17,” 67.

Indeed, the full-frontal pose of both women in Diamond’s photographs was typical of both mug shots and ethnographic photography during this period. Usually accompanied by a profile shot, full-frontal photographs of this sort were used to identify “types,” as well as physical signs of criminal tendencies and racial difference. That photography was interpreted as representing truth is indicated by a nineteenth-century text, *Street Life in London, with permanent photographic illustrations taken from life expressly for this publication*. The authors, John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, write in the Preface: “…we have also sought to portray these harder phases of life, bringing to bear the precision of photography in illustration of our subject. The *unquestionable accuracy of this testimony* will enable us to present true types of the London Poor and shield us from the accusation of either underrating or exaggerating individual peculiarities of appearance.”

Diamond’s psychiatric photography relied on an acceptance by both Diamond and his colleagues that the images were unquestionably accurate, and further, that truth about insanity (and in this case intemperance) could be drawn from the photographs themselves. The photographs stood in for and flattened the actual bodies of the blonde woman and the brown-haired woman in Connolly’s lecture. Without names I must flail for ways to describe the subjects of the photographs, and I have rather unimaginatively settled on differentiating them by their hair colour. Should I call them “the alcoholic women,” a term that would have been accepted at the end of the nineteenth century, but that would not have been widely used in 1856 or 1858? Should I call them “the intemperate women,” which is how Connolly and Diamond described them? This raises, once again, the problem of naming in relation to addiction. Was

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intemperance the same thing as alcoholism? I would suggest that both of these women were alcoholics based on the fact that they, according to Connolly’s description at least, drank alcohol to the point of harming themselves physically and mentally. I believe that one symptom of addiction is the act of doing something that we at least partly do not wish to do, because it has caused pain, whether to ourselves or someone else, at a previous instance of doing that very thing.\footnote{The many different definitions of addiction and the various symptoms or signs attributed to addiction reveal the complicated nature of trying to find a precise definition for this condition. I include this “symptom” here because it is, according to my own understanding of addiction, a significant indication that a person has lost the power of choice over a particular behavior.}

I wish to return to my point that Diamond’s photographs stood in for the women themselves, who, we might assume, were both confined in cells within the Surrey Asylum while Diamond and Connolly were pointing at the photographs during lectures and moving freely in the world. Whereas my previous chapter was concerned with the mobility of women who craved or desired alcohol, my present discussion is preoccupied with the immobility of the closeted addict or alcoholic. For every alcoholic confined to a cell in the nineteenth century, there was an alcoholic drinking in the privacy of her own home to hide her addiction.\footnote{This, of course, is a classed as well as a gendered point. Drinking at home to hide alcohol consumption was, and remains, a practice associated with women more than men, and having a home where private drinking can occur was, and is, dependent on having a home big enough for privacy in the first place. See Cheryl Krasnick Warsh on Canadian women concealing their drinking in the nineteenth century. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “‘Oh, Lord, pour a cordial in her wounded heart’: The Drinking Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada,” in Drink in Canada: Historical Essays, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 70-114.}

I noted earlier that I had personal experience in the dangers of reading the addicted body, and I will describe it now to underscore the fallibility of trying to read addiction from a body or from an image. In my case, the image was one of Diamond’s photographs, but it was not what I thought it was. Elaine Showalter discusses Diamond’s photographs in her excellent book The
Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980 (1985), and she reproduces two of them: one represents the blonde woman I have been discussing, and the other shows a young woman with a long black dress that covers her arms to the wrist, severely pulled-back hair, and a necklace with a cross on it. The only problem is that in Showalter’s book the blonde woman’s photograph is labeled as “A Religious Melancholic,” and the woman with the cross’s photograph is labeled as “An Alcoholic.” It appears that this was simply a case of mixing up the captions. (It is notable here that Showalter reads “intemperance” as “alcoholism.”) Yet this labeling error has resulted in readers of Showalter’s book seeing the blonde woman as a religious melancholic and the brown-haired woman as an alcoholic, which is exactly what I did when I first read The Female Malady. Furthermore, I brought the image of the brown-haired woman into a first-year undergraduate class, labeled as “An Alcoholic,” and proceeded to discuss the visual culture of addiction, never knowing that the body we were all looking at, consciously or unconsciously, for signs of alcoholism, was not, in fact, the body of an alcoholic woman. I did not realize my error until I read Sander Gilman’s book The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origins of Psychiatric Photography (1976), which reproduces the photograph of the blonde woman as well as Connolly’s lecture on the two women who had “fallen into habits of intemperance.” The engraving that juxtaposes the two intemperate women, which is in the Wellcome Library in London, proves that the blonde woman was diagnosed as intemperate rather than as a religious melancholic, as along the bottom of the engraving are the words “Insanity Supervening on Habits of Intemperance.” As I argue throughout “The Desire to Fill,” identifying an addict or alcoholic by his or her body alone, or, alternatively, from an image,  

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is a perilous enterprise, and sometimes ends with a realization that, even with the aid of text, identifying addiction from visual evidence is never a sure thing.

The final image I discuss in this section humorously underscores the unreliability of reading the body for signs of insanity, while also pointing to anxieties about race (particularly Chinese immigrants to London), opium and the always gaping asylum. *An Asylum for the Sane* (Fig. 5.5), published in *Punch* in 1886, combines the image of an Orientalized man with a poem that begins:

I’m the Emperor of China, though, for reasons of my own,
I desire that the fact should not be generally known.
It might injure my position – for perhaps I should explain
That I keep an Institution for the Treatment of the Sane.
If my estimable patients should discover who I am,
And find out that all my claims to be demented are a sham,
They might deem me an imposter, and adopt the silly fad
Of believing me incompetent to drive them raving mad.

This first stanza points up the total unreliability of the physical body to provide infallible evidence of insanity (or sanity). 459 Although the “Emperor of China” is not linked directly with addiction, he does mention a particular drug that was frequently associated with anxieties about the East, as well as with Chinese immigrants to Britain. 460 After describing some of the inmates he has successfully driven “raving mad,” the narrator notes:

When I think of these successes, and of all the good I’ve done,
I feel certain that my mission is indeed a blessed one;
Yet I yearn in opium ecstasies my consciousness to whelm,
And to toy with Golden Lilies in my own celestial Realm,


Where, by signing a death-warrant with my gay vermillion scrawl,
I could cure the sanest person of his troubles for all.
But no matter! Hence, in exile, I propose to end my days;
For the English climate suits me, and – my Institution pays!

Figure 5.5. An Asylum for the Sane, from Punch, 6 March 1886, Stauffer Library, Queen’s University, Kingston.

The man’s yearning “in opium ecstasies my consciousness to whelm” indicates a desire to alter his mind (thus the phrase “mind-altering substances”), the desire to fill his consciousness with beautiful visual images. As I have attempted to show throughout “The Desire to Fill,” the language of art and addiction often intersect. Max Nordau, the author of Degeneration (1892), identified art as an asylum (that is, a site of escape from controlling forces) in a discussion that links artists, addiction, decadence and insanity. Criticizing the lack of confinement and
punishment for criminals, Nordau laments: “Ought art to be at present the last asylum to which criminals may fly to escape punishment?”

The _Punch_ cartoon portrays the man with an Orientalized vest over a long white robe covered with decorative bugs. Whether the artist knew it or not – and if he did not it is certainly an interesting coincidence – one effect of intense drug use is the hallucinatory impression that bugs are crawling on or under one’s skin. The man is, not surprisingly, portrayed in a stereotypical manner. His finger nails are long, almost like talons, and his slanted eyes, protruding ears and leering mouth combine Victorian visual signifiers of imbecility and racial inferiority. The point of the poem, combined with the image, is that perhaps there is no great gulf between the sane and insane. The Irish critic George Bernard Shaw wrote that “An asylum for the sane would be empty in America,” and one could have easily said the same thing about Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century, considering the increasing anxieties about hysteria, neuralgia, neurasthenia, addiction, homosexuality, masturbation, and so on.

Race, like sexuality, mental illness and addiction, was consistently read from the body in the nineteenth century. However, according to Sedgwick, the argument that I have made about reading addiction from images or the body – that it is never a sure thing – does not hold up under pressure in relation to race: “Vibrantly resonant as the image of the closet is for many modern oppressions, it is indicative for homophobia in a way it cannot be for other oppressions. Racism, for instance, is based on a stigma that is visible in all but exceptional cases (cases that are neither

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462 This phenomenon is described, for instance, in Gabor Maté, _In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction_ (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008), 14.
463 Neuralgia was the term used to describe a state of nervousness linked with urbanization, industrialization and the fast pace of modernity. See S. Weir Mitchell, _Wear and Tear, or Hints for the Overworked_, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1887), 23. See also Robson Roose, _The Wear and Tear of London Life_ (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886).
rare nor irrelevant, but that delineate the outlines rather than coloring the center of racial experience); so are the oppressions based on gender, age, size, physical handicap.”464 Her point is that whereas a gay man or lesbian woman can, by choosing silence, stay closeted, it is not possible for, say, an Asian man to stay closeted as an Asian man. In contrast, I propose that because addiction is not reliably legible merely from the body, an addict or an alcoholic can remain closeted with regards to their own addiction.

However, as Sedgwick indicates, there are exceptions in relation to the visibility of race, and these instances are sometimes described as “passing,” for instance, when a light-skinned black woman can pass for a white woman. In a discussion on slavery as a metaphor for addiction in nineteenth-century literature, Susan Zieger cites Gretchen Murphy’s argument that the notion of “passing” had a threatening implication, namely “that no difference separates the bodies of black chattel slaves and white ‘slaves’” (that is, slaves to alcohol). Zieger continues: “With respect to addiction, Murphy’s observation points us toward a principal anxiety, namely that addicts’ bodies might not differ from non-addicted ones. As with race, this anxiety operates according to the panoptic logic of visual modernity….”465 Thus the fear that addicts and alcoholics could be walking amongst the British citizenry undetected, and the resulting desire to not only be able to identify addicted bodies, but also to confine them and treat them.

In the next two sections I examine representations of African slaves being punished for drunkenness, as well as a representation of a white female “slave” to alcohol whopunishes herself through suicide. I will argue that the impulse to punish the female alcoholic was related

464 Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 75.
465 Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 114.
to the desire to punish prostitutes for spreading venereal disease.\textsuperscript{466} I conclude with a return to black women, alcohol and the notion of excess as embodied by Saartje Baartman who was exhibited under the name “the Hottentot Venus.”\textsuperscript{467}

\textbf{Drunkenness, Slavery and Punishment}

By including the subject of slavery in my discussion of closeting I am conscious that there are three distinct experiences of suffering being woven in this chapter, and I want to be clear that I do not wish to compare, or identify as equivalent, the experiences of African slaves, homosexuals and alcoholics. Zieger has shown how nineteenth-century writers used slavery as a metaphor for addiction, and she notes that this was viewed by some Victorians as a problematic strategy because it was seen as diminishing the suffering of African slaves.\textsuperscript{468} Indeed, Victorian British commentators warned against comparing drunkenness with slavery, because of the vast difference in mortalities caused by each. One writer remarked in 1895, “Drunkenness is considered to cost us sixty thousand lives annually; the African slave-trade, at a very low estimate, sacrifices six times that number of lives.”\textsuperscript{469} In this section I am not proposing that the suffering of alcoholics in the nineteenth century was, or could be, the same as that of African slaves. Likewise, the suffering of persecuted nineteenth-century homosexuals, say, for instance, Oscar Wilde, was not the same as the suffering of people identified as alcoholics.

\textsuperscript{467} Michael Hatt has observed that “Embodiment is, strangely perhaps, a dehumanizing gesture. The body is not measured, probed, and analyzed in order to animate the object of anthropology, but to petrify it in ideological rock.” Michael Hatt, “‘Making a Man of Him’: Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture,” in \textit{Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History}, ed. Kymberly N. Pinder (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 201.
\textsuperscript{468} See Zieger, “‘Mankind has been drunk’: Race and Addiction in \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin},” in \textit{Inventing the Addict}, 61-97.
\textsuperscript{469} “Drink and the Slave-Trade,” \textit{Reporter} (1 Jan. 1895), 55.
Despite the vast differences between the lived experiences of addiction and slavery, there were certain parallels. One of these was punishment in the form of confinement. Marcus Wood has observed: “If the slave body was property, the slave personality was not, and the majority of torture inflicted on slaves grew out of the desire to break down the personality of the subject/victim, to generate and then enforce a consciousness of disempowerment and anti-personality. The slave power was consequently an unending network of torture. Psychological methods of abuse permeated day-to-day existence.”\(^{470}\) It is perhaps naïve to state that physical punishment might not be psychological, and certainly the physical punishments (or tortures) invented and adapted to punish African slaves for drunkenness very deliberately controlled the body so as to exercise control over the mind as well.\(^{471}\)

According to Kay Dian Kriz, after abolition, illustrations concerned with slavery “could not maintain credibility without addressing in some way the violence associated with slavery, while maintaining the moral superiority of the local plantocracy. One solution was to resort to an empirical or ethnographic representation in order to present the violence directed against newly freed slaves as necessary restraint.”\(^{472}\) The engraving *Bed-Stocks for Intoxication* (Fig. 5.6), produced by Richard Bridgens for his book *West India Scenery, with Illustrations of Negro Character* (1836) shows two slaves, a man and a woman, painfully confined to a bed, a site and symbol of rest for white Westerners of certain classes in the nineteenth century, but here it has


\(^{471}\) My discussion of representations of slaves in this chapter is influenced by postcolonial theory. See, for example, Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). Tobin writes that postcolonial theory “seeks, in part, to reconfigure modes of cultural analysis and even academic disciplines to accommodate questions concerning the operations of imperial power, particularly its deployment within state repressive and ideological apparatuses, and questions concerning the constitution of the subjectivities of both colonizer and colonized. Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 8.

\(^{472}\) Kay Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1700-1840* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 129.
been transformed into an object of torture. I use the term “confined” deliberately here, because Bridgens himself uses it when he describes the bed-stocks:

This is one of a series of plates, in which it is proposed to exhibit the various kinds of stock directed by Government to be used in the Crown Colonies before the Abolition Act was passed. It may be seen, from the care taken for the ease of the prisoner, that no punishment is attempted in the Bed-Stock beyond confinement of the person. They are generally placed in some of the out-houses belonging to the estate, where the offender may be denied the society and encouragement of his friends or accomplices. The Bed-Stocks are usually, indeed, employed in cases of drunkenness; when the individual is callous to the shame of exposure. […] A tin mask, such as is put on the heads of Negroes addicted to the unaccountable propensity of dirt-eating, is seen hanging against the wall. 473

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473 Richard Bridgens, West India Scenery, with Illustrations of Negro Character, the process of making sugar, etc. from sketches taken during a voyage to, and residence of seven years in, the Island of Trinidad (London: Robert Jennings & Co., 1836), unpaginated (plate #34).
Bridgens adds that an Order of the Council dated 2 September 1831, restricted the use of the bedstocks in these terms: “only provided, that for each offence the period of confinement shall not exceed six hours.”

I wish to underscore Bridgens’s reference to the tin mask hanging on the wall, which, he writes, is placed on the heads of slaves “addicted to the unaccountable propensity of dirt-eating.” Marcus Wood identifies eating dirt as one way that slaves attempted to commit suicide.474 Bridgens’s curious use of the term “addicted” to refer to the act of dirt-eating is significant for my purposes here, and it indicates three interconnecting assumptions. First, that eating dirt was a harmful activity; second, that slaves knew that this was a harmful activity; and third, that despite knowing that it was a harmful activity, and not wanting to do it, did it anyway. What I am attempting to illuminate here is the distinction between choice and the loss of choice. Sedgwick frames this issue as the “addiction/voluntarity” binary, which points to her conception of addiction as the act of doing something that a person does not wish to do, but does anyway.475 The word “addicted” was originally a legal term that referred to acknowledged servitude,476 later evolving to signify that the addicted person was enslaved to something, thereby implying that there was a lack of choice and agency in relation to the activity in question. If slaves were, hypothetically speaking, addicted to eating dirt, it would mean (in Sedgwick’s vision of addiction as well as my own) that although they knew that eating dirt was harmful to them, and despite having the desire to not eat dirt, they did it anyway. However, Wood’s assertion that eating dirt was in fact a voluntary action with specific intentions, indicating cognition, conscious choice, and power over body and decision-making faculties, negates Bridgens’s diagnosis of

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474 Wood, Blind Memory, 225.
475 Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 11.
addiction. In fact, although suicide is ultimately the destruction of self, it was also, for slaves, a powerful (though tragic) statement of ownership of their own bodies. As I attempted to show in Chapter 2 when I discussed women’s alcohol consumption as a possible (though problematic) strategy for achieving agency over their own bodies, self-destructive measures aimed at empowerment are complicated.

Returning to Bridgens’s engraving *Bed-Stocks for Intoxication*, we will recall his remark that “from the care taken for the ease of the prisoner, [it is apparent] that no punishment is attempted in the Bed-Stock beyond confinement of the person.” This statement seems to suggest that there is no psychological component to the punishment, and yet further on he notes that the offender is “denied the society and encouragement of his friends or accomplices.” The enforced lack of human contact (although the engraving shows two slaves in the bed-stocks), even if slavers complied with the Order of the Council and limited the confinement to six hours, would have a psychological impact. It would not have been the length of confinement so much as the removal of choice, and of course the physical discomfort that Bridgens shows quite clearly on the faces of the two slaves. As Marcus Wood has discussed regarding other nineteenth-century texts that are ostensibly sympathetic to slaves, the visual representation of punishment and torture are often problematic because of the ways the slaves themselves are represented.477 In Bridgens’s engraving it is, not surprisingly, the slaves’ physiognomy that functions as the prime visual signifier of racial inferiority, placing the black slaves below the white British individual whose face, in the nineteenth century, was conceived of in the popular imagination due to scientific racism as more vertical than that of the African individual. The ideal white face, deriving from Greek sculpture, was characterized by a gently curving aquiline nose, small eyes

and fine bone structure. Interestingly, although the tin mask on the wall was meant for slaves to wear, it is not far from the ideal white face, especially the nose. The black woman’s nose, of course, is not the ideal nineteenth-century nose, and Bridgens has drawn her face in such a way as to give the impression that gravity is pulling relentlessly at all of her features, including her mouth, eyes and eye brows; they all have the same down-turned shape, thus giving her a heavy, weighted appearance. This might have been a strategy to evoke sympathy in his readers, emphasizing the woman’s deep frown, but it strikes me that her nose is so flattened and spread out that it literally echoes the shape of her mouth, effectively distancing her from white English womanhood. Her male companion, likewise, is distanced from white British manhood as represented in Victorian art in his apparent state of corporeal fragmentation. Strangely, only one of his feet is in the stocks, and what would seem to be his left leg, bent at an angle under the blanket, floats in an impossible space disconnected from his torso.

When slaves were punished for drunkenness, what state of drunkenness did they have to achieve in order to be punished? Bridgens does not say, nor does he say what specifically about drunkenness was deemed punishable by white slaveholders. Was it that drunkenness interfered with labour? Or was it that drunkenness signified the act of seeking either (mental) escape or pleasure, thus once again pointing to a slave’s power over his or her own body? The desire to drink, and the fulfilling of that desire, was theoretically impossible if a slave was not in possession of his or her own body, unless the slaver specifically directed the slave to consume alcohol, but even then: how to control how much is consumed? How to control the physiological effects of the alcohol?\footnote{Zieger notes that slave masters sometimes encouraged drunkenness in slaves in order to induce physical illness, thus turning the pleasure of “freedom” (to drink) into ambivalence: “Since masters attempted to stage slaves’ nausea}
consumption of alcohol? It is likely that slave owners were fearful that, when drunk, a slave would be more likely to resist, rebel, run away or turn violent. This anxiety parallels discourses about race and drug use in the twentieth century, when the image of the cocaine-fueled, murderous black man was constructed and circulated. It is because this mythical figure became so real and so threatening to white Americans that policemen began to carry bigger guns, based on the belief that anything smaller would be ineffective when fired into the body of a black man high on cocaine.479

In some of the nineteenth-century literature in which abolition concerns intersected with those related to temperance, there was talk of how Europeans had introduced alcohol to Africa and were therefore responsible for African drunkenness.480 For instance, Ralph Grindrod wrote: “The history of other countries shows, that intemperance is not peculiar to Great Britain and Ireland. The inhabitants of many countries in a semi-barbarian state, previous to their connexion [sic] with the Christian world, had discovered the art of producing intoxicating substances, in various ways. Others learned the trait of inebriation from European nations, who at the same time supplied them with these pernicious articles for consumption.” He continues: “The inhabitants of Ashantee, Congo, and other African nations, are described by travelers as indulging freely in the use of strong drink, for which they are doubtless more or less indebted to their intercourse with European nations; and, especially to their accursed trade in human

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Some texts, sympathetic though they were to the plight of slaves, often framed Africans as savages who knew no better than to become addicted to the alcohol that white Europeans had brought amongst them, needing to be saved from both slavery and drunkenness by other white Europeans. Grindrod remarks: “The heathens were much addicted to intemperance at the time when the Gospel was introduced to their notice,” thus suggesting that with the Gospel came temperance for the poor heathens who had become addicted through simple ignorance.\(^{482}\)

Other writers emphasized the universal desire for intoxication, thus diminishing European responsibility for African drunkenness. At the end of the nineteenth century one writer asserted:

> In every part of the world, man will make for himself an intoxicant of some kind, whether it be from the milk of mares, from honey, from the sap of palms, the juice of countless fruits and roots, and almost every kind of cultivated grain; consequently it does not make so much difference as some people imagine whether or not European forms of alcohol are kept from being placed within the reach of uncivilized races, for savages of almost every grade, if determined to have an intoxicant, will speedily find means to manufacture one from the natural products of their own country.\(^{483}\)

Like Grindrod and the writer responsible for the above statement, I understand the desire for intoxication to be a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon. Aldous Huxley also adhered to this belief, observing: “That humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with Artificial Paradises seems very unlikely. Most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principal appetites of


\(^{482}\) Grindrod, *Bacchus*, 41.

\(^{483}\) “Native African Drunkenness,” *Reporter* (1 Nov. 1890), 292.
Huxley’s reference to “the urge to escape” has particular resonance for slaves, of course, who did indeed try to escape from the constant state of psychological confinement through various means, including running away, eating dirt in an attempt to commit suicide, and, it goes without saying, drinking alcohol for a brief respite from reality.

This returns us to the punishment of slaves for drunkenness, while also crystallizing further our understanding of why slaves might have been punished for drunkenness. If, as Huxley suggests, intoxication is the manifestation of an urge to escape, then according to the peculiar logic of plantation slavery, slaves had to be punished for drunkenness, because it must have been seen to be akin to physically trying to run away. Thus the bed-stocks effectively immobilized the slave, psychologically underscoring the fact that the slaver owned his or her body, and that escape, in whatever form, was absolutely prohibited. Other forms of punishment for drunkenness sent different psychological messages to slaves, no less destructive, but focusing on other aspects of humanity that were not permitted for slaves. One of these was speech, or more generally, orality, that is, control over what enters and exits the mouth.

Bridgens’s engraving Negro Heads, with Punishments for Intoxication and Dirt-eating is comprised of six representations of slaves from the shoulders up, but only the bottom two are shown being punished. These slaves wear, on the left, a tin mask similar (but not identical) to the one hanging on the wall in Bed-Stocks for Intoxication, and on the right, a metal collar with a large padlock hanging from the front (Fig. 5.8). While the figure on the right is clearly a woman, the figure on the left is androgynous. Interestingly, this slave has the close-cropped hair of the male slave in the bed-stocks image, but wears the same necklace as the female slave in that engraving. In a discussion of an 1805 image in which an African slave wears a different kind of

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metal mask, Wood points to the androgyny of the figure as an important factor to take into consideration: “The fragments of the face, the chest cropped at bust length, could belong to either sex. This enforced androgyny is doubly significant in view of the fact that the slave mask was one of the many punishment devices devised in the West for the punishment of women and then re-adapted for use on both sexes in the colonial slave plantations.”485 The androgyny of the figure wearing the mask in Bridgens’s engraving functions to do de-sexing (and de-humanizing) work, much as the actual object did in lived experience. It either emasculated the male slave or defeminized the female slave. What is also important to note about the mask was its silencing function, its removal of the power to speak, as well as the choice to be silent. Enforced silence eliminates the power to choose silence, and we will recall Sedgwick’s emphasis on the role of

485 Wood, Blind Memory, 226.
silence (that is, the choice to be silent) in what she calls “closetedness.” With the slave mask, then, the slave is closeted within his or her own mind, unable to speak, laugh, sing, eat, kiss, yawn, and so on, turning the mind into a prison unto itself.

Although the title of the engraving is *Negro Heads, with punishments for Intoxication and Dirt-eating*, and the slave with the mask is shown on the left (corresponding to the first offence, intoxication) and the slave with the collar is shown on the right (corresponding to the second offence, dirt-eating), Bridgens’s text suggests that the mask was used to punish dirt-eating (as did his text for the bed-stocks engraving), and that the collar was used exclusively for the punishment of intoxication. He writes: “The tin collar is a punishment for drunkenness in females. The mask is used as a punishment and preventative of the practice of dirt-eating, a disease peculiar to the Negro, and for which no satisfactory cause has been hitherto assigned.”

Again, Bridgens links not drunkenness but dirt-eating with addiction, identifying it as a “disease,” just as compulsive drunkenness was identified as a disease by Dr. Norman Kerr and his colleagues under the term “inebriety” at the end of the nineteenth century. Also interesting is the fact that the collar is supposedly reserved for female drunkenness. Why might this be? Male slaves certainly were forced to wear metal collars as punishment, usually for attempting to run away. It may have been that Bridgens’s knowledge was either limited or incorrect, but it seems too significant a statement to dismiss out of hand. Likewise, Bridgens seems to suggest that the slave mask was only used for dirt-eating and never for drunkenness. I would argue that it is highly unlikely that the mask was never used to punish intoxication – although I have no evidence to support my belief – simply because of the obvious orality of drinking and the

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486 Bridgens, *West India Scenery*, non-paginated.
488 See Wood, *Blind Memory*, 221.
concealment or confinement of orality that the mask enacts. The collar punished by way of its weight and its resulting discomfort, and perhaps it was used more often on women than on men because it was thought that it would be more painful on women’s bodies than on men’s. Sometimes collars also had bells on them, which were intended to keep slaves from running away. The weight of the collars was also meant to have this function. It cannot pass without comment the fact that in Bridgens’s engraving the collar looks suspiciously like a necklace, with the padlock as a sort of pendant. The rims along the top and bottom of the collar, the sheen of the metal, and the curve of the padlock where it slides through the collar all work to aestheticize the object, complementing (if I can use that term) the earrings that the woman wears and mirroring the actual necklace worn by the androgynous slave facing her. The aestheticization of a device of torture effectively empties it of its weight, both literally and symbolically, as the white nineteenth-century reader would not have felt a weight around her own neck looking at this image, thus eliminating any possibility of empathetic viewing.489

While the metal collar cloaks the throat down which alcohol slides upon consumption, the slave mask covered the very orifice through which alcohol entered the body. Therefore I cannot help but think that the mask would have been regarded as a logical punishment for drunkenness, although clearly logic as we know it today did not play a very large part in anything even remotely related to the institution of slavery. As I have already argued, for slaves the act of drinking alcohol may have been one way of exerting control over their bodies. Female slaves could be raped over and over again by their white male owners (female slaves were punished for resisting the sexual advances of slavers), and their children became the property of

489 Wood makes a similar argument about objects related to slavery that are exhibited in museums. See Wood, Blind Memory, 220-21.
the men who raped them. They could only control this kind of invasion of their bodies to a very limited extent. With alcohol, in theory, they could decide when it would enter their bodies. This, again, was likely at least part of the reason that drunkenness was regarded as punishable in the context of transatlantic plantation slavery.

**Death as Punishment**

In the nineteenth century both female sexuality and female intemperance were regarded as punishable, and in visual culture the punishment for both was often represented as death by suicide, thus pointing to not only a self-recognition of vice but a self-punishment of the same. As Judith Walkowitz has shown in a discussion on narratives of sexual danger in nineteenth-century London, the overarching Victorian belief about fallen women, and specifically prostitutes, was that the “wages of sin was death.”

In George Cruikshank’s *The Drunkard’s Children*, the sequel series to *The Bottle*, a girl is shown leaping to her death in the eighth and last plate (Fig. 5.9). This “gin-mad” girl is the same girl who stood at the door of her father’s cell in the last image from *The Bottle* (Fig. 3.5). Heredity was regarded as one cause alcoholism in the nineteenth century. It simultaneously functioned as a distancing tactic, for if an individual has no family history of addiction, then they are at once removed a safe distance from the possibility of some day developing an addiction. Heredity as a distancing strategy was limiting, however, because of the prevalence of addiction, whether acknowledged or hidden.

It was remarked that most people had some addiction in their family history, even if the fact was concealed from public scrutiny (a skeleton in the closet, as it were). Dr. Norman Kerr observed:

490 This phrase, which is from Romans 6:23, was often used in nineteenth-century texts concerned with prostitution. See Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Figure 5.8. George Cruikshank, *Lucy’s Suicide*, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852, wood-engraving, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Figure 5.9. George Cruikshank, *The Poor Girl, Homeless, Friendless, Deserted, Destitute and Gin Mad Commits Self Murder*, Plate VIII from *The Drunkard’s Children*, 1848, glyphograph, 21.9 x 17.5 cm, The Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.
“there are very few families in the United Kingdom which have not had at least one relative who has been the subject of inebriety.”

It is apparent from earlier images in *The Drunkard’s Children* that the gin-mad girl had been making a living by prostitution, and that her suicide is motivated by shame and/or insanity. Only a year after Cruikshank published this series, Rev. Henry Worsley wrote that “Prostitution, occasioned as it too often is in the first instance, by a parent’s intoxication and its consequences, is afterwards nurtured, and the feelings of nature are stifled by recourse to dram-drinking.”

Art historians concerned with the fallen woman in Victorian British art have not discussed alcohol consumption as either a contributing factor to the fall, or as a coping mechanism for women who made their living as prostitutes, even though many nineteenth-century writers on prostitution aligned it with drunkenness. In her essay on fallen women in nineteenth-century art, Linda Nochlin discusses the trope of the drowned prostitute who was represented in many prints and paintings, including George Frederick Watt’s *Found Drowned* (Fig. 5.10). I suggest that this painting can be considered as part of the visual culture of addiction. Victor Horsley and Mary Sturge wrote in 1907 that “Alcoholic suicide is more impulsive and occurs at an earlier average age than suicide from other causes…. A large proportion of those reported ‘found drowned’ are ‘chronic alcoholics,’ the tragedy being due either to melancholia or often simply

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inability to avoid an accident because of the narcotic effect of alcohol on the brain centres.”

Whether or not Horsley and Sturge were familiar with Watt’s painting, the phrase “found drowned” had clearly become part of the language revolving around women and alcoholism by 1907.

Figure 5.10. George Frederick Watt, *Found Drowned*, 1848-50, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 213.4 cm, Watts Gallery, London.

I do not wish to stray too far from my previous discussion of slavery and punishment. Indeed, I have introduced Cruikshank’s engraving of the gin-mad girl in order to address Marcus Wood’s comparison between that image and another by Cruikshank that represents the suicide of a black female slave. In a chapter concerned primarily with illustrations for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Wood compares Cruikshank’s last plate from *The Drunkard’s Children* with the representation of the scene in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* when Lucy,

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a slave whose children have been sold without her knowledge, commits suicide by leaping from a boat and drowning (Fig. 5.8). This illustration, as Wood notes, came only four years after The Drunkard’s Children, and both images share the same basic subject: a woman committing suicide by jumping into water. However, according to Wood’s analysis, whereas the image of the white woman is artistically successful, the image of the black woman is an artistic failure. As he writes about the earlier representation: “Everything in this image works. The vertical fall of the girl is exaggerated by being set off against the parabolas of the bridge arch behind her, which sweep from top to bottom right. […] Her terror is expressed in the pathetic gesture of covering her eyes with a handkerchief so that she won’t see the approaching impact, or the distance she must fall.”496 Wood continues: “In the Lucy plate for Uncle Tom’s Cabin everything has gone wrong. There is no imaginative empathy with the subject. There is far too much going on, and it is all going on at the same clumsy graphic pitch. […] [T]he woman’s gesture of clasped hands is melodramatic. Lucy’s arms, shoulders and breasts form a perfect diamond but this framing device serves only to call attention to the caricatural extremity, the travestying, of the facial expression.”497 I do not dispute any part of Wood’s visual analysis, which is insightful and well-argued based on the evidence visible in both images. What I find most interesting about Wood’s discussion is the conclusion that he draws from his analysis: “Where Cruikshank could accomplish the task of depicting the solipsistic despair of a young white female alcoholic, unable to endure the misery of her own life, he was incapable of empathy with the despair of a black slave mother unable to endure an enforced and final separation from her child.”498

496 Wood, Blind Memory, 178-79.
497 Wood, Blind Memory, 179-80.
498 Wood, Blind Memory, 181.
into “alcoholism” in her discussion of Diamond’s photographs, so too does Wood translate “gin-mad” into “alcoholic.” I note this not because I disagree – indeed, as should be apparent by now, I have been doing precisely that throughout “The Desire to Fill” – but only to show that this is a widespread tendency when looking at historical images; that is, to read addiction into them when the viewer is given verbal clues such as “intemperance” and “gin-mad.” I note this in order to highlight the fact that scholars who are not concerned primarily with addiction have been doing this, and while I am engaging in that very practice in this text, I do so with this qualification: while artistic conventions have certainly been developed to represent alcoholics and drug addicts in different historical moments, it is not possible to categorize an individual as an alcoholic or addict, whether in an image or in the flesh, with complete certainty.

Second, I wish to flag the fact that of course it makes sense that Cruikshank, a white, middle-class man, would have had more empathy for a white Englishwoman than a black African woman, because the white Englishwoman’s experience – though very different in many respects – would have been closer to his own than a black female slave’s. Furthermore, Cruikshank’s empathy may well have been even more intense than even Wood suggests, considering – as I do in a previous chapter – that Cruikshank himself struggled to stop drinking, experiencing the shame and remorse associated with relapse. Third, although Wood begins with a comparison between two images, his conclusions about Cruikshank’s relative successes and failures in these images seems to me to be based on a comparison of suffering in addition to visual analysis. Whereas Wood is primarily concerned with the suffering of slaves – that is the undercurrent of Blind Memory – my concerns obviously lie elsewhere, that is, with addiction, and therefore the suffering of alcoholics and addicts could be said to be the undercurrent of my own text. Although Wood does not explicitly compare the suffering of slaves with alcoholics in
his examination Cruikshank’s two images (although by using the term “solipsistic” to describe the white alcoholic woman’s despair he effectively frames her as self-absorbed), I perceive an implicit assumption in Wood’s critique that Cruikshank believed the suffering of (white) alcoholics exceeded that of black slaves. And perhaps Wood is correct. Indeed, I believe he is correct, based on one highly significant sentence in Cruikshank’s book *The Glass and the New Crystal Palace* (1853), which I discussed in Chapter 4. In comparing drunkenness to slavery, Cruikshank writes, “the horrors” of the former are “quite as revolting, the sufferings more universal, and the consequences upon the whole more dreadful.”499 Wood’s assumption about Cruikshank and the artist’s views on slavery and drunkenness would seem, therefore, to be correct.

**Conclusion: On Concealment**

Although never a slave, Saartje Baartman (who was exhibited in Paris and London under the name “the Hottentot Venus”) was a black woman whose body and life were characterized as excessive by white European men who exhibited her, drew her, studied her and ultimately diagnosed her cause of death.500 Baartman was brought to England in 1811, and died in 1815 or 1816. Georges Cuvier, the French naturalist who had examined her body not long before she died, officially claimed that the cause of death was “an excess of drink to which she gave herself over during her last illness.”501 Rosemary Wiss has pointed out that Cuvier’s emphasis on Baartman’s “excessive” drinking effectively positioned her as responsible for her own death (“gave herself over”), thus eliding the responsibility of her white male doctors. It seems that one

of the quickest ways to disempower a woman of any race in the nineteenth century was to identify her as an excessive drinker. According to Zieger, nineteenth-century opponents of feminism “invoke[d] the plight of the female habitual drunkard” in order to portray women as lacking the kind of will power and self-control necessary for self-representation and self-possession. This, like the force-feeding of suffragettes mentioned at the outset of this chapter, is an example of controlling and silencing the female body deemed as excessive in speech, sexuality or in terms of the space it occupies in life or imagination.

As Sander Gilman has shown, both white prostitutes and black women were generally regarded as excessive in the nineteenth century. Baartman was specifically singled out in the British popular imagination as the embodiment of excess because of the size of her buttocks, which quickly became fodder for cartoonists including George Cruikshank. Her drinking, as I note above, was also identified as excessive, and this was often the case for other non-western and non-white drinkers. For instance, Grindrod asserted: “The untutored savage, restrained by no principles of shame or propriety, abandons himself to insatiate and unbounded excess.” According to Grindrod, “savages” drink to excess because they are not restrained by the principles of shame or propriety, which were, as we know, principles by which many Victorian British citizens believed they should live and die by. But Grindrod adds an important qualification to the above statement when he observes: “The drinking practices, however, of civilized nations, in some respect, differ materially from those of the unpolished and unguarded

502 Zieger, “How Far am I Responsible?,” 76.
504 For a discussion on nineteenth-century representations of Baartman, see Julia Skelly, No Strangers to Beauty: Black Women Artists and the Hottentot Venus (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008), chapter 1.
505 Grindrod, Bacchus, 14.
savage. The object of an intemperate member of the former class, is not how he can attain the readiest method of intoxication, but how he can attain the highest degree of animal and pleasurable excitement, without the exhibition of any visible signs of what is commonly denominated intemperance." Grindrod’s point, of course, is not that non-white individuals drink more excessively than white individuals, but rather, that because of the principle of shame, white individuals attempt to hide the “visible signs” of intemperance. Building on this point, then, it seems clear that Grindrod believed that shame was the key factor in white alcoholics’ desire for invisibility, that is, the desire to stay closeted.

A related, and equally important, point was made by Lawrence Kolb in an article on narcotic addiction from 1925. According to Kolb:

There is a widespread belief that addiction to opium leads rapidly and inevitably to moral deterioration. This belief has arisen through a failure to appreciate that the psychopath who was originally a murderer, thief, drunkard, or social offender of one kind or another is more susceptible to addiction than stable people and during the past thirty years the public psychology with regard to drug addiction has been such that normal addicts have concealed their addiction whereas the delinquency of the psychopathic addict has kept

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506 Grindrod, Bacchus, 15. Emphasis in the original.
507 Shame and remorse were often linked with relapse in the nineteenth century, as it still is today in many accounts of addiction. For example, James Stewart observed in 1889: “I am addressing to-day some west-end physicians. Let me suppose then that one of you gentlemen has before you an intelligent drink-craver who recognizes that he is suffering from a degeneration of nerve tissue. Let me take for granted that he has come to you of his own accord – that he has driven up to your hall-door in his own brougham – that while sitting in your consulting room he has detailed to you how he has, over and over again, resolved to loose himself from his enemy, and over and over again failed in the attempt; how he feels ashamed of himself when he recovers (temporarily) from the result of his yielding to temptation to take what is ruining his healthy, destroying his prospects, alienating his friend….” Stewart, The Treatment of Inebriety, 5. I would add that the term “relapse” is not new in the literature of addiction. It was used in the early twentieth century. Lawrence Kolb wrote in 1925: “After the first stage of addiction, when supplies of opium are irregular, the addicted individual passes through periods of comfort and discomfort to which is added the anxiety arising from police activities and the fear that the next dose will not be available. He is restless, discontented and unhappy, and more and more of the drug is necessary to maintain comfort, until a point is reached where pleasure is overshadowed completely by pain. At this point frequently addicts seek treatment and when, after this, their health improves, the fundamental psychic distresses for the relief of which the drug originally was taken again assert themselves and with the memory association of the pleasure opium once gave relapse is almost certain, with a recurrence of the former cycle of events.” Quoted in Terry and Pellens, The Opium Problem, 240. According to David Courtwright, “Addiction is a chronic relapsing brain disease.” Courtwright, Forces of Habit, 94.
him in the public eye. The consequence has been that practically all addicts with whom
the public has been acquainted have been deservedly despised, and the inference that the
addiction was solely responsible for their antisocial behavior and useless lives was
inevitable.508

Here again we have the suggestion that a certain type of person deemed “normal” (in Grindrod’s
vision of addiction “civilized” equals “normal”) who conceals his or her addiction, and as a
result, the larger population does not realize “normal” people could be addicted to alcohol or
drugs. The invisibility of these alcoholics and addicts, by extension, results in the concealment
of others who identify as alcoholics or drug addicts, because they believe that if they admit to
their addiction people will assume that they are “abnormal.” Ignoring for the moment the
problematics of identifying a category of “normal addicts” and another of “abnormal addicts”
(these being, as Kolb describes, people who were already violent and anti-social before they
became addicted to a narcotic substance), it is crucial to note that both Grindrod and Kolb are
fundamentally describing the closeting of alcoholics and addicts. For Grindrod, white British
alcoholics choose to remain closeted because of the principles of shame and propriety.
According to Kolb, normal addicts (that is, white North American or Europeans who have not
committed any crimes prior to becoming addicted) remain closeted because they believe that if
they were to “come out” of the closet, they would immediately be labeled as “abnormal” because
of the high visibility of “abnormal addicts.”

And so it continues today, which returns us to Viano’s suggestion that “drug addicts are
(perhaps) the last minority to be forced, legally, morally, and culturally, into the closet, without
really having the option of coming out.” That Viano italicizes the “are,” thus giving force and

508 Quoted in Charles E. Terry and Mildred Pellens, The Opium Problem (New York: The Committee on Drug
Addictions in Collaboration with the Bureau of Social Hygiene, Inc., 1928), 244. See also Lawrence Kolb,
“Pleasure and Deterioration from Narcotic Addiction,” Journal of Mental Hygiene, vol. 9, no. 4 (Oct. 1925): 699-
724. Emphasis my own.
emphasis to his claim, followed swiftly by a bracketed “perhaps,” which tempers his claim down to something like hesitation, reveals Viano’s own mental struggle with his argument, based, I would think, on the issue that I have mentioned throughout this chapter: the comparison of one group’s suffering to another group’s suffering. Writing in the late 1980s, a period that was rife with fear and contention about homosexuality because of the recent discovery of the AIDS virus, Sedgwick is very clear when she identifies the closet and the act of coming out as issues related specifically, if not totally exclusively, to homosexuality.509 Addiction does, however, enter her discussion when she addresses the parallels between people with HIV or AIDS and drug addicts (specifically addicts who use hypodermic needles to inject their drug of choice).510 Addiction also appears in Sedgwick’s examination of same-sex desire in Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886).511 According to Sedgwick, “The two new taxonomies of the addict and the homosexual condense many of the same issues for late nineteenth-century culture: the old antisodomitic opposition between something called nature and that which is contra naturam blends with a treacherous apparent seamlessness into a new opposition between substances that are natural (e.g., “food”) and those that are artificial (e.g., “drugs”).”512

Although Sedgwick never says that the closet and the notion of “coming out” of said closet should only be used in relation to homosexuality, her book does tend in that direction.

509 Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 72.
511 Like Sedgwick, Elaine Showalter uses the concept of the closet in a discussion of male same-sex desire in nineteenth-century literature including The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. See Showalter, Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle (New York: Viking, 1990), chapter 6.
512 Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 172.
(despite the fact that she admits that she gave an MLA talk “purporting to explain how it’s possible to come out of the closet as a fat woman”).\textsuperscript{513} Twenty years have passed since \textit{Epistemology of the Closet} was first published. Viano made his emphatic/hesitant statement about drug addicts in 2002. According to Thomas Szasz (1974), “In its present popular and professional use, the term ‘addiction’ refers not to a disease but to a despised kind of deviance. Hence the term ‘addict’ refers not to a bona fide patient but to a stigmatized identity, usually stamped on a person against his or her will. Addiction (or drug abuse) thus resembles mental illness and witchcraft, and the addict (or drug abuser) resembles the mental patient and witch, inasmuch as all of these names identify categories of deviance and their occupants.”\textsuperscript{514} I believe that the identities of “alcoholic” and “drug addict” are still generally off-putting to people, and so those individuals who identify as either alcoholic or addicted to drugs (or both) choose to remain closeted. In the introduction to this chapter I referred to the “active” and “recovering” alcoholic and addict. By active I mean actively drinking or using drugs, whether with or without the desire to stop or curb consumption. By recovering I mean that the person in question has either stopped drinking or using completely (if that is their desire), or has successfully decreased the amount of alcohol or drugs they consume to the amount he or she feels is acceptable or manageable (emotionally, physically, and mentally). Both in the past and in the present there seems to be a paradox in relation to alcohol consumption that manifests as follows: a person who enjoys drinking and gets drunk regularly, even daily, is quite comfortable with the general public knowing this about him or her (British polemicist Christopher Hitchens is a prime example of this). Conversely, a person who has self-identified as an alcoholic or addict and is no longer

\textsuperscript{513} Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology of the Closet}, 72.

consuming amounts of either alcohol or drugs that may cause them to harm themselves or others, remains closeted about their addiction, even though they are no longer actively engaging in the addictive behavior. One possible reason for this is if the person is in a Twelve-Step program, which encourages its members to remain anonymous. Anonymity in this context, of course, is closeting pure and simple, but closeting within a group. I do not believe anonymity is the only reason that recovering alcoholics and addicts remain closeted, however. As we have seen in this and other chapters, the view of addiction as morally wrong and fundamentally degrading has long, strong roots. Whereas homosexuality is gaining wider (though not complete) acceptance as a state of being that has absolutely nothing to do with morality or disease, addiction remains tainted by notions of weak will power, criminality and immorality. Thus, while fewer gay men and lesbian women are choosing to remain closeted, many alcoholics and drug addicts choose to remain closeted, because the nineteenth-century beliefs about addiction that resulted in many men and women being confined, punished and concealed still endure today.\textsuperscript{515}

\footnote{As I have previously noted, I believe shame plays an integral role in any decision to stay closeted. For a discussion of the “queerness” of shame, see Sally R. Munt, \textit{Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 4.}
Chapter 6
Masking Masculine Vulnerability: Cocaine and Cigarettes after World War I

Soldiers returned from the First World War with amputated limbs, facial disfigurations, and deep wounds in their psyche.\textsuperscript{516} They had suffered incomprehensible trauma to both mind and body, and the people waiting at home for them – mothers, fathers, wives and children – were not prepared in any way to cope with the altered, sometimes unrecognizable, beings who came back to them. Some of these men turned to addictive substances to cope. Some of them had begun to use cocaine and alcohol during the war to deal with their nightmarish experiences. Others simply sunk into the more socially acceptable routines of alcohol and tobacco use following the war, finding ease and comfort in these products that were widely advertised in newspapers and periodicals in the months following the Armistice.

This chapter examines Royal Academician Alfred Priest’s (1874-1929) painting Cocaine (Fig. 6.1), produced and exhibited in 1919, and how that artwork compares with an advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes (Fig. 6.2), which was published in The Graphic only a month before Cocaine was reproduced in that same art magazine. While there are important differences between the painting and the advertisement, there are also striking similarities. In both images a man and woman lounge together on a couch in a domestic interior; in both there is the suggestion, one implicit and one explicit, that the man is a soldier who wants to forget his traumatic memories of the war; and in both, I will argue, the man is using an addictive substance to obliterate, or at least temporarily repress, memory. Both images also point to issues of gender and power in relation to the war: in Cocaine the woman, who wears a fashionably short bobbed

Figure 6.1. Alfred Priest, *Cocaine*, 1919, oil on canvas, 54 x 44 cm, location unknown. Photograph from *The Graphic*, 10 May 1919, National Art Library, London.

Figure 6.2. *You’ve Seen it Through!*, from *The Graphic*, 12 April 1919, National Art Library, London
haircut (a deliberately boyish style that was popular after the war), sits upright and stares directly at the viewer while her male companion – we do not know if he is her husband, lover or client – lies, apparently unconscious, with his head in her lap. One possible reading positions the woman as a prostitute or seducer, thus linking her with the dangerous seductive powers of cocaine, which was sometimes gendered as feminine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus the suggestion is that this man, possibly a so-called decadent, has been emasculated, if not rendered impotent, by both the woman and the drug.  

Martin Green has shown how decadence was embraced by men after the First World War as a form of rebellion against pre-war values such as marriage and “manliness.” Significantly, the woman in Cocaine has her left arm draped protectively over the man’s shoulders, thus positioning herself as his protector, a role traditionally identified as masculine.

In the advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes, on the other hand, the man sits vertically, leaning against the back of the couch, while the woman – more easily read as his wife – leans into his body. This more traditionally Victorian positioning of the strong man with his loving wife is complicated by the text that accompanies the image, which points to the man’s vulnerability following the war. His cigarette, a small white vessel that had become a prop, as well as a symbol, for both male aesthetes and New Women at the end of the nineteenth century, is here a symbol of masculinity, security and home. Yet it does not entirely erase the man’s

fragility, for we know, and viewers in 1919 knew, what soldiers had experienced during the Great War.

Drug and addiction scholars have written many histories of both cocaine and tobacco, and while I draw on their work in this chapter, space does not permit me to give complete histories of the two drugs from the moment of their discoveries to the year, 1919, with which I am preoccupied. Rather, I highlight relevant facts and historical moments that shed light on both Priest’s painting and the Kenilworth advertisement. These histories also inform my reading of the images, which I approach with what I have been calling “addiction theory.” In addition to social histories of drugs and addiction, my discussion draws on masculinity studies, or men’s studies, histories of the First World War, early twentieth-century art criticism, and trauma theory. Writing about the latter, Dominick LaCapra has noted the tendency in the 1980s and early 1990s to regard history and theory as mutually exclusive approaches to traumatic social events. In response, he remarks: “Critical of the unmediated application of such a stark opposition in defining research as well as of its implications for understanding history, I insist instead on an active, sustained, and critical interaction between theoretical reflection and historical investigation, and I try to bring this insistence to bear on the problem of representing the Holocaust.” As I have attempted to show throughout “The Desire to Fill,” research and theory intersect in my approach to visual representations of drug use and alcohol consumption. I am concerned here with two images – one considered “art” because of its medium (oil on canvas) and its site of exhibition (the 151st Royal Academy Summer Exhibition at Burlington House in


London), the other considered “visual culture” or “popular culture” because it was mass-produced and circulated in periodicals – that were produced in the same highly significant year. They are both historical, cultural artifacts, and they function as visual evidence of how cocaine and tobacco use were conceptualized at that time. Addiction, too, is here considered historically, that is, in light of how addiction to both cocaine and tobacco were regarded in the historical moment following the First World War. Historicizing addiction requires research into the discovery or production of an addictive substance, its circulation and consumption, as well as beliefs percolating about the substance and the individuals who used it in a particular period, location or context. Theory demands responsible handling from its human agents, but it offers more room for speculation, which can potentially add insights to historical research and, in this case, interpretations of visual material.

I am interested in masculine vulnerability unleashed by both war trauma and addiction, so I have drawn on masculinity studies to widen my vision of how gender discourse is both constructed and deconstructed by drug use. There have been many texts published in the last few years that address the First World War within the framework of masculinity studies. These include Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives (2009) by Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer, Meyer’s “Separating the Men from the Boys: Masculinity and Maturity in Understanding Shell Shock in Britain” (2009), and Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History (2004), edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hageman and John Tosh. According to Ellis and Meyer, masculinity studies originated in the 1980s as a response to, or reaction against, the increasing presence of feminism in scholarship, which they argue, usually focused on men as the

oppressors of women. Ellis and Meyer point out that “despite the variety of men whose identity has been deemed ‘other’ to the hegemonic norm at various times, the centrality of the gender binary to such definitions remains.” Like Ellis and Meyer, John Tosh argues that the notion of a monolithic Masculinity and the black-and-white vision of man as oppressor and woman as oppressed need to be revised. Furthermore, Tosh’s argument that masculine insecurity has had wide social ramifications is relevant for my discussion of masculine vulnerability in relation to war and addiction. He argues that the very infrastructure, or discourse of masculinity, is itself insecure. According to Tosh, “Masculinity is insecure in two senses: its social recognition depends on material accomplishments which may not be attainable; and its hegemonic form is exposed to resistance from both women and subordinated masculinities.”

My arguments in this chapter are founded on an acceptance that reading masculine vulnerability in images of men after the war disturbs early twentieth-century gender discourse that positioned men as unshakable pillars of strength. This allows for a more nuanced vision of how men and women relate with each other, and I believe that the issue of masculine vulnerability may have important implications for a more empathetic approach to envisioning addiction.

**Alfred Priest, Cocaine and Art Criticism**

Very little is known about Alfred Priest. Although his paintings were reviewed favourably in the art press when they were included in Royal Academy exhibitions in the early

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twentieth century, he appears to have been completely forgotten by art historians after his death in 1929. No monograph has been published about him, and he does not appear in books and articles concerned with British interwar art. Priest’s obituary, published in The Times on 28 November 1929, reads: “After an illness of only nine or ten days, Mr. Alfred Priest, the artist, has died at his Chelsea home, at the age of 55. Mr. Priest was perhaps known for his ‘problem’ picture, entitled The Strike Weapon, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1920. It showed a workman sitting on a hill with works buildings in the distance. The workman was dropping ‘the strike weapon’ from his bloodstained hands, and the idea was that in using the weapon he had hurt himself.”

The writer’s suggestion that Priest was “known,” rather than “best known,” for The Strike Weapon indicates that even in 1929 his fame for his “problem pictures” had passed. However, only ten years earlier, Cocaine was named in The Fine Art Trade Journal as one of the “pictures of the year.” According to the article’s author: “Opinions as to which is the distinctive picture of the year oscillates between Sargent’s Gassed, Shannon’s Miss Lohr as Lady Babbie, and Alfred Priest’s Cocaine. The majority of the votes will doubtless go to Sargent, whilst Mr. Priest may be accorded the honours of the problem picture.”

Whereas John Singer Sargent’s painting Gassed now hangs prominently in the Imperial War Museum in London, the location of Priest’s painting is currently unknown. Although Cocaine clearly drew attention when it was displayed at the Royal Academy’s annual Summer Exhibition, its subsequent fate remains unknown.

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526 “Obituary: Mr. Alfred Priest,” The Times, 28 Nov. 1929, 19. The obituary’s author notes that Priest went to King Edward’s School in Birmingham, followed by Cope and Nichol’s art school, and that he received the Turner gold medal and scholarship at the Royal Academy schools. He studied etching under Sir Frank Short, and was a student at Julian’s in Paris. Cocaine is included in a list of Priest’s paintings at the end of the obituary, along with Out of It (1913); apparently it was in the collection of the Sunderland Art Gallery in 1929, but the painting does not appear in an online search of Sunderland’s current collection; Mother, Mother; Got ‘im; The Old Maid; The Oubliette and Rima, all of which were exhibited at the Royal Academy.


528 The reproduction of Cocaine that appears in my text is a photograph of a photograph that appeared in The Graphic on 10 May 1919, p. 607.
in May 1919, there is no evidence in auction records that it found a buyer that year or in subsequent years. Nor is it in any of Britain’s national museums or galleries, as is indicated by the catalogues for these institutions’ permanent collections. I therefore suspect that it is now in a private collection. This leaves us with the obvious question: if both Sargent’s *Gassed* and Priest’s *Cocaine* were regarded as pictures of the year in 1919, why is Sargent’s painting still discussed, reproduced and displayed, whereas Priest’s painting appears to have vanished into thin air? Surely part of the answer lies in the fact that in 1919 Sargent was the better known artist. Yet that conclusion seems insufficient to explain the disparity between the two paintings’ biographies. Priest’s works were consistently described as “problem pictures.” Was *Cocaine* just too problematic a picture for British art consumers and art historians to deal with? What do you do with a problem like *Cocaine*?

The art criticism about Priest’s painting begins to point to certain assumptions that may explain, in part, why *Cocaine* ultimately lost its appeal, which will in turn lead into my discussion of masculine vulnerability, addiction and the war. A journalist for the *Daily Mail* wrote in May 1919 that there was “only languid interest in Mr. Alfred Priest’s *Cocaine*, this year’s Academy’s topical picture. Perhaps the sleek, fat young man in evening dress, with his coat off, whose head reposes on the lap of a woman, is not degenerate-looking enough for a ‘dope-fiend.’ ‘It looks much more,’ said a woman gazer, ‘as if they had both broken down in an attempt to spring-clean without servants in the house.’” The author’s use of the term “languid” links the painting’s subjects, especially the man, to the kind of languor embodied by late nineteenth-century “decadents” such as Oscar Wilde, who I will refer to again when I

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530 *Daily Mail* (6 May 1919), 4.
discuss cigarettes later in this chapter. George L. Mosse has pointed out that languor, in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was a gendered state of being; it was “that state of near
exhaustion which symbolized opposition to true manliness.” The description of the man as
“sleek” and “fat” also suggests a body slippery with excess, a sensuality that brings to mind cat-
like satisfaction or satiation resulting from over-indulgence. This too links the painting with the
discourse of decadence, which was aligned very closely, if problematically, with degeneracy by
the likes of Max Nordau in his book *Degeneration* (1892). Nordau, who famously criticized
Wilde for his decadence, wrote that “A race which is regularly addicted, even without excess, to
narcotics and stimulants in any form (such as fermented alcoholic drinks, tobacco, opium,
hashish, arsenic)…begets degenerate descendents who, if they remain exposed to the same
influences, rapidly descend to the lowest degrees of degeneracy, to idiocy, to dwarfishness,
etc.” The connection made between addiction and degeneracy was characteristic of much
medical writing at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, as was
the belief that physical signs of both could be read on the body. Indeed, this belief carried
over into art criticism, as is apparent from the journalist’s comment that Priest’s painting
ultimately fails in that the man is “not degenerate-looking enough for a ‘dope-fiend.’”

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531 George L. Mosse, “Masculinity and the Decadence,” in *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The
History of Attitudes to Sexuality*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1994), 260.

532 Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 34.


534 The *Daily Mail* also commented on viewing “deportment” at the Royal Academy’s summer exhibition in 1919:
“It is still a display of artistic ignorance to stand nearer to a canvas than five feet. It is quite proper, however, when
the five-foot survey is done to dash up to the picture and scrutinise its technique with one’s nose almost touching the
picture.” The image of viewers pressing their noses up to a painting called *Cocaine*, close enough to “sniff” it, as it
were, is too good to pass by without being noted. Quoted in Pamela M. Fletcher, “Consuming Modern Art:
Metaphors of Gender, Commerce and Value in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Art Criticism,” *Visual Culture in
Britain*, vol. 6, issue 2 (Winter 2005), 167.
In The Times the tone was similarly dismissive: “Mr. Alfred Priest paints one of Mr. [John] Collier’s pictures for him in his Cocaine (248). Here we see the dreadful effects of the fashionable drug upon a gentleman in dress clothes, whose wife does nothing for him but sits for Mr. Priest. The picture is neither drama nor realism; the excitement is only in the title.”535 Indeed, the title is the only indication that the painting is related to drug use at all. Without the title, Priest’s painting may have been interpreted simply as a representation of a man and woman in an Aesthetic interior without the moral undertones that the title Cocaine infused it with.536 However, Aestheticism – the pursuit of beauty above all else encapsulated in the phrase l’art pour l’art537 – was infused with its own problematic morality, and some early twentieth-century viewers of Priest’s painting might have linked the interior with the decadence and ostensible degeneracy of the Wilde years.538 Nonetheless, the woman quoted in the Daily Mail seems to have seen a household turned upside down not by drug use and addiction, but by a lack of domestic help. The important thing to note about the title’s influence on viewers’ interpretations – including my own – is that there is no actual physical evidence of cocaine use in the painting. There is no white powder visible on the little table behind the couch, as there might be if the drug had been “sniffed,” and there is no drug paraphernalia, such as a hypodermic needle, which was

536 For a discussion on the “overtly ethical implications of the title” of Degas’s L’Absinthe, which had a similar effect on viewers’ interpretation of the painting, namely the assumption that the subject matter was related to degeneration, see Kimberley Morse-Jones, “The ‘Philistine’ and the New Art Critic: A New Perspective on the Debate about Degas’s L’Absinthe of 1893,” The British Art Journal, vol. 9, no. 2 (Autumn 2008), 54.
a common method of consuming cocaine starting in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{539} Although artistic representations of drug consumption with a hypodermic syringe are admittedly rare, Swiss artist Eugène Samuel Grasset (1841-1917) produced a lithograph entitled \textit{Morphinomaniac} (Fig. 6.3) in 1897 that portrays a white woman with thick black hair injecting morphine from a hypodermic syringe into her left thigh. Grasset’s lithograph represents the very moment of drug consumption, when the pain of withdrawal is still clearly apparent on the woman’s face, and before the drug has entered her circulatory system resulting in a brief period of pleasure, or at least lack of pain. The woman bares her teeth and grimaces, her brow is deeply furrowed, and her left hand, which holds the flesh of her thigh at the ready, looks mangled, almost arthritic, in its strained position.\textsuperscript{540} Another engraving points even more dramatically to the dangers of hypodermic injections. \textit{Result of Subcutaneous Injection} (Fig. 6.4), from the late nineteenth-century text \textit{Drugs that Enslave: The Opium, Morphine, Chloral and Hashisch Habits} (1881) shows an emaciated man lying on his back with deep wounds on his arms, torso, hips and legs where he has injected himself with a hypodermic syringe. Ostensibly an objective medical engraving, this image functions very deliberately as a warning against both hypodermic injections and the drugs that can be injected. Comparing it to Priest’s painting only illuminates the extent to which \textit{Cocaine} does not communicate an explicit warning against drug use, suggesting that Priest had a different intention from that of H.H. Kane (whose real name was Harry Hubbell) when the latter produced \textit{Result of Subcutaneous Injection}. 


\textsuperscript{540} Susan Zieger has shown how morphine addiction was regarded as a largely female problem at the end of the nineteenth century. See Susan Zieger, “Needling Desires: Women, Morphinomania, and Self-Representation in Fin-de-Siècle Britain,” in \textit{Inventing the Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 127-54.
Figure 6.3. Eugène Samuel Grasset, *Morphinomaniac*, 1897, lithograph, 41.3 x 31.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Figure 6.4. H.H. Kane (Harry Hubbell), *Result of Subcutaneous Injection*, from *Drugs that Enslave: The Opium, Morphine, Chloral and Hashisch Habits*, 1881, Wellcome Library, London.
Likewise, the moment Grasset chose to depict in *Morphinomaniac* differs dramatically from that shown in Priest’s painting, indicating that the two artists had disparate objectives. The absence of any visible evidence of drug use in *Cocaine* only adds to the problem of its interpretation, and demands yet another question: if Priest intended his viewers to see the painting as a representation of drug use, giving us the title with which to do so, why would he choose not to include the actual drug or its consumption in his painting? Priest’s title appears to have been sufficient cause for the art critic for *The New Illustrated* (formerly *The War Illustrated*) to write of *Cocaine*: “Art lends powerful aid to spread knowledge of the fact, lately evidenced even more, that the consequences of the sordid habit of using this drug are disease, depravity, crime, insanity, and death for the victim, and for those who love them with disillusionment, disappointment of all fair hopes, and utter tragedy.”541 Yet there is no evidence of disease, depravity, crime, insanity or death in Priest’s painting. The art critic suggests a very specific kind of male-female relationship, using gendered language such as “fair hopes” to suggest a male addict and a sad woman (this narrative, of course, was repeatedly used in temperance fiction),542 but the woman in Priest’s painting does not appear disillusioned or tragic. Rather, she sits upright and stares assertively back at the viewer with her right hand against her face in a gesture of chilly condescension. The man, on the other hand, is shown bent over sideways, his feet still on the floor and his rather large head in the woman’s lap, as if he had been sitting upright but has tipped over. His expression is not an unhappy one. In fact, he appears to have a small, peaceful smile on his lips, very unlike the woman in Grasset’s lithograph. His lethargy and recumbent position speak to the physiological effects of heroin, morphine or opium.

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not cocaine, which stimulates mental excitement and results in jittery nerves and sleeplessness. Why, then, would Priest represent a prostrate, lethargic man in a painting titled *Cocaine*? We cannot know Priest’s views on cocaine, whether he was sympathetic towards addicts, whether he used the drug himself, or whether he knew of its effects from reading medical texts on the subject. Even reading about cocaine would not have necessarily resulted in an accurate representation of its use and subsequent physiological effects, as some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, who had clearly never used the drug themselves, described cocaine’s effects as similar to narcotics such as opium and morphine. For instance, Charles B. Towns wrote in 1915 that “The most harmful of all habit-forming drugs is cocaine,” but he appears to mix up the withdrawal symptoms of cocaine and opium, writing that withdrawal from the former results in an “intense and horrible depression” – which by all accounts is true – as well as a “physical languor which results in a sleepiness that cannot be shaken off. Opium withdrawal, on the other hand, results in sleeplessness and extreme nervous and physical disorder.”\(^{543}\) Although Towns identifies cocaine as “an extreme stimulant,” sleeplessness and nervous restlessness, not languor, are symptoms of cocaine withdrawal. If Priest read an erroneous source, it would explain why he painted the image the way that he did. An alternative possibility is that Priest deliberately chose to portray the period after withdrawal when the man has finally fallen asleep, which seems a remarkable choice considering the title. Because the actual moment of consumption or injection of the drug is not shown, and because there is no evidence of the drug itself, I would suggest that the painting is not solely about drug use or the negative consequences of addiction. Rather, I argue that the painting addresses gender role reversal and the psychic

aftermath of the First World War. Ultimately, this is a representation of masculine vulnerability caused by two interconnected elements: the traumas of war and the use of cocaine as a way to cope with those traumas.

*Cocaine* was sufficiently noticed to merit a satirical *Punch* cartoon published not long after the annual Royal Academy Summer Exhibition opened at Burlington House in May 1919. Included in a section entitled “Royal Academy – Second Depressions,” the cartoon is a crudely drawn version of Priest’s painting with the man and woman both in basically the same positions. The only major change is that the artist has added one tear on each of the woman’s cheeks, thus making her what was perceived to be a more traditionally emotional female in contrast to the cold, impassive woman in *Cocaine*. The text in *Punch*, like the title of the original painting, makes all the difference in terms of our interpretation of the image’s meaning. The cartoon’s title is *The Profiteer’s Wife* (Fig. 6.5), and the woman is shown saying (sadly): “Poor William hasn’t been himself since Armistice Day.”544 *Cocaine*, according to the *Punch* artist’s joke, represents not so much a drug addict as a drug dealer or “peddler,” which was the more common term around 1919, one who had profited from soldiers’ desire for cocaine during the war. The suggestion is that once peace was declared, the market for cocaine – and it has been argued that drugs, including tobacco, are the ultimate commodity because they increase desire rather than decrease it upon consumption545 – disappeared. However, my interpretation of *Cocaine*, bolstered by research on drug use and addiction after the First World War, tends in a different direction. That is to say, I read *Cocaine* as a representation of repressed trauma, and the title points to the fact that the drug, although not visible in the painting, is being used to aid the

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Figure 6.5. *The Profiteer’s Wife*, from *Punch*, 21 May 1919. Reproduced by permission of Punch Ltd.

Figure 6.6. C.R.W. Nevinson, *War Profiteers*, 1917, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 71.11 cm, Russell-Coates Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth. Photograph courtesy of Russell-Coates Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.
repression. Furthermore, while Stanton Peele (1985) has argued that Vietnam veterans who had been addicted to heroin during the war were able to stop their consumption without any trouble once they returned to the United States, the majority of addiction scholars, myself included, believe that if a soldier becomes addicted to a substance, whether tobacco or cocaine, during a war, they will return home addicted to that substance, and the change of environment and sudden removal of the external stressors will not necessarily eliminate the addiction. As Richard Davenport-Hines has observed, “The stunned and blank condition of people after an ugly, savage war is familiar. They have confronted in their immediate experience the evil and nihilism of which humankind is capable. Narcotics relieve the pain of this recognition.”

C.R.W. Nevinson’s painting War Profiteers (Fig. 6.6) represents two fashionably dressed women who Sue Malvern identifies as prostitutes. If a war profiteer was anyone who profited, economically or otherwise, from the war, then prostitutes whose main source of income were soldiers, and drug peddlers whose clientele were made up mostly of soldiers, would have been categorized in this way. Nevinson’s painting also points to the possibility I mentioned earlier of reading the woman in Cocaine as a seducer or femme fatale, a figure that was popular in advertisements for addictive substances such as absinthe in the nineteenth century. During the First World War there were reports of women selling cocaine to soldiers on leave in London, and this continued to be a concern after the war had ended. For example, in an article in The

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550 See Kohn, Dope Girls, 34.
The Times published on Wednesday, 5 March 1919, it was reported that two women were arrested in Leicester Square for unlawful possession of cocaine. 25-year old Violet Fawdon, who was apparently known as the “Dope Fiend Queen” in her neighborhood of Piccadilly, was found to have three packets of cocaine in a matchbox hidden in her muff. The journalist noted that she had been observed talking to both women and men, including a naval officer, but Fawdon was quoted as saying: “The [police] officer never saw me pass any packets to anyone….I bought three packets of cocaine yesterday afternoon, which I am allowed. Those were the three packets the officer found in my muff. It was for my own consumption, and would have lasted me until Friday.”

Fawdon’s statement points to the fact that the possession of small amounts of cocaine was not illegal at this time. Often women who were charged with drug peddling were also identified as prostitutes, and fears of soldiers catching sexually transmitted diseases and fears about drug addiction therefore intersected in the body of the female prostitute/drug dealer. L.L. Stanley asserted in 1918 that “fully fifteen percent” of addicted soldiers “were induced and educated to this addiction by women of the underworld, who perhaps took a fancy to the young man and persuaded him to go with her to indulge in this insidious vice.”

Stanley (1918) was primarily concerned with morphine addiction in the military, but as Timothy Hickman (2007) has remarked, this kind of commentary helped contribute to the “construction of a masculinity that was threatened as masculine by a power that was often depicted as feminine and was, crucially, transmissible through the agency of women.”

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551 “Cocaine in a Muff. Two women arrested in Leicester-Square,” The Times (5 March 1919), 5.
553 Hickman, Secret Leprosy, 90.
as a seductive, feminine substance, as was tobacco, for instance in J.M. Barrie’s poem “My Lady Nicotine.”

Cocaine before, during and after the war

In *White Mischief: A Cultural History of Cocaine* (2001), Tim Madge traces the history of cocaine from the sixteenth century, when European travelers in ancient Peru first noted the constant chewing of coca leaves by the natives, through to the nineteenth century when medical practitioners in Europe and the United States were experimenting with the alkaloids in the coca leaf. In the 1870s, British scientists were attempting to extract cocaine from the coca leaf to see if it could be used for medical purposes. Cocaine began to be used as an anesthetic around this time, and it was also prescribed as a cure for morphine addiction, which usually just resulted in a substitution of cocaine addiction. According to Madge, “If there is a single year in which cocaine may be said to have made its full mark on a first startled and then rapidly delighted world, it is 1884.” Madge makes this argument because 1884 was the year that Sigmund Freud, still a struggling medical student at the time, took up the cocaine cause and became the drug’s champion. Freud’s initial interest in cocaine was peaked by an article published in 1883 by Theodor Aschenbrandt on his experiments in giving cocaine to soldiers, which resulted in increased alertness, ability to go without sleep and enhanced energy levels. Freud took cocaine for the first time on 30 April 1884, and in July 1884 he published “Über Coca,” which promoted cocaine for its effects on mental concentration. Controversy ensued in 1885 when various writers attacked Freud’s article for portraying cocaine as harmless.

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article “Craving for and Fear of Cocaine,” which Freud wrote in 1887 in order to finesse his former arguments regarding cocaine, he remarked: “The most fantastic descriptions of the night side of life, the sketch of Hogarth representing a party of punch drinkers and like works…cannot equal in horror the picture of degradation presented by such an assembly in the throes of cocaine.” Like Dr. Thomas Trotter, who I quoted in Chapter 2, Freud’s vision of drunken debauchery was informed by Hogarth’s art, showing again how visual culture has influenced the perception of addiction as an intrinsically visual and visible phenomenon.

According to David Courtwright, “Cheap cocaine fed a global epidemic that lasted from the 1890s to the mid-1920s, with peaks in different nations at different times.” During the First World War, the issue of cocaine abuse by soldiers was raised in the British House of Commons. It was reported that “Some time ago, an order was issued forbidding the supply of drugs to soldiers and also the repetition of medical prescriptions containing drugs of the dangerous type. This is not enough. The whole trade requires regulation, for smuggling is profitable when the demand is imperative. Very heavy penalties should be attached to the unlawful possession of cocaine….” Both Tim Madge and Marek Kohn have noted that it was Canadian soldiers who were thought to be primarily responsible for bringing cocaine to the front, although Kohn comments that while “laying the blame for cocaine at the Canadians’ door had the appeal of simplicity, it was an inadequate explanation, and in any case lacked supporting evidence.” After the war ended cocaine addiction was still regarded as a problem. In March 1919 an article in The British Medical Journal commented on the increase in prosecutions during

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560 Courtwright, Forces of Habit, 50.
562 Madge, White Mischief, 129; Kohn, Dope Girls, 35.
the previous six months for illegal sale and possession of cocaine.\textsuperscript{563} W.E. Dixon wrote in 1925: “In the early days of the war a change occurred. Cocaine users became plentiful in Paris; the alkaloid could be purchased from some of the habituées of the cafes and music-halls, and the cult of sniffing came into existence and quickly spread to London.”\textsuperscript{564} He also commented: “It is sometimes said that the addiction epidemic in America, which is such an outstanding social problem there to-day, started after the war, or after the prohibition law. This is not the case; it had been growing steadily for many years, though, no doubt post-war conditions greatly augmented the numbers.”\textsuperscript{565}

Cocaine was a desirable product for soldiers because it gave them a fleeting sense of euphoric well-being, which many men continued to chase after the war. A “medical correspondent” for \textit{The Times} wrote in 1916: “The drug [cocaine] has a most astonishing effect. Its victim is exalted to heaven and then cast down to hell.” Because of the heavenly ascent, the correspondent remarked, “to the soldier subjected to nervous strain and hard work cocaine, once used, must become a terrible temptation. It will, for the hour, charm away all his trouble, his fatigue, his anxiety; it will give him illicitus strength and vigour. But it will also, in the end, render him worthless as a soldier and a man.”\textsuperscript{566} The discourse of “worthless men” in the context of the First World War has been discussed by Gerard Oram, and is highly significant for Priest’s painting.\textsuperscript{567} Although \textit{Cocaine} makes no direct reference to the war we will recall that the illustrator for \textit{Punch} explicitly linked it with the war in \textit{The Profiteer’s Wife}, and because of the year it was exhibited the painting was perhaps inevitably linked with the recently ended

\textsuperscript{565} Dixon, \textit{Cocaine Addiction}, 5.
\textsuperscript{566} “The Cocaine Habit. Ruinous Results of a Drug, A Soldier’s Temptation,” \textit{The Times} (12 Feb. 1916), 3.

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conflict. A writer for *The Studio* wrote that the Royal Academy’s 1919 Summer Exhibition was “distinctly a war exhibit, and the bulk of the works included in it have been produced while the war influence was still affecting strongly the thoughts and the feelings of the people.”

Why was *Cocaine* identified as the “topical picture” of the year by at least one art critic? I suggest, again, that although neither cocaine use nor the aftermath of the Great War are explicitly represented in Priest’s painting, both lie surging beneath the surface of the image. Combined they frame the man as “worthless”: unconscious, prostrate, he lies passively on the woman’s lap while she sits bolt upright and self-possessed. This representation of gender role reversal would have been perceived as threatening to many viewers in 1919, when an unprecedented number of women were working outside the home and soldiers were returning to Britain shell-shocked, mutilated and disfigured. In the next section I discuss an advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes that very explicitly reasserts the traditional gender roles that *Cocaine* subverts. I argue that, like *Cocaine*, the advertisement veils a narrative involving the use of an addictive substance to repress memory. The masculinity portrayed in the Kenilworth advertisement is very different from that represented in Priest’s painting, but I believe that both images point to anxieties about the shell-shocked and fragmented soldier.

**Forgetting the war: trauma and memory**

A reproduction of *Cocaine* appeared in *The Graphic* in May 1919. A month earlier an advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes had appeared in the same publication that also represented a man and woman sitting silently together on a couch in a domestic interior (Fig. 6.2). *The Graphic* was filled with advertisements and images referring to the end of the Great War in 1919. What stands out about the Kenilworth advertisement published in the April issue is

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568 *The Studio*, vol. LXXXVII, no. 315 (June 1919), 3.
that there is an explicit message in the text that alludes to a soldier’s desire to forget, or at least suppress, memories of the war. A man sits with a woman who the early twentieth-century viewer was likely meant to assume is his wife. The couple is obviously upper class based on their clothes. He wears a black dinner jacket, white shirt, bow tie, nice slacks and expensive-looking shoes. She wears a white dress with long sleeves and shoes that also look expensive due to their sheen. The man’s dress clothes are similar to those worn by the man in Cocaine, except that the man in Priest’s painting has removed his jacket, giving him a more rakish look. The couple’s poses in the Kenilworth advertisement are fundamentally the reverse of those held by the man and woman in Cocaine. In the Kenilworth image the man’s body is upright with his head tilted back over the top of the couch, while the woman leans into him with her right hand pressed against his arm. Below the image the text reads: “You’ve seen it through!” In smaller letters a narrative of domesticity, repressed memory and the comfort offered by an addictive substance unfolds: “You don’t want to talk about it. You don’t want to think about it. You just want to lean back and feel that the day you’ve been dreaming of since that first August of 1914 has come at long last. It’s good to be alive. It’s good to be with her. It’s good to sit at home, lazily watching the smoke curl up from your Kenilworth Cigarette, and enjoying the flavour of that wonderful golden tobacco that suits the hour so well. Peace finds Kenilworth Cigarettes unchanged, in size.”569 Note that the war is never explicitly mentioned. The Great War has been replaced here by three tiny “its,” mirroring the way that the ex-soldier in the advertisement is attempting to erase the memory of the war with a small white tube of tobacco, or the “little white slaver” as the cigarette was sometimes called.570 It is unlikely that anyone in 1919 could have

569 The Graphic (12 April 1919), 341.
missed the fact that this advertisement was referring to the war and was selling ease, comfort and stability. The last sentence – “Peace finds Kenilworth Cigarettes unchanged, in size” – recalls the observation with which I opened this chapter. That is, the fact that so many soldiers returned from the war, if they returned at all, irrevocably changed both mentally and physically. The advertisement’s promise that Kenilworth cigarettes are “unchanged” offered a sense of familiarity in a world that had been grotesquely altered. Another Kenilworth advertisement, published in The Graphic in March 1919, played on this same desire for permanence. A man and woman are sitting in stuffed easy chairs in front of a fireplace. The man leans toward the woman slightly, with his elbows on his knees and his head tilted up to her, and says: “You haven’t changed a bit!” The suggestion, of course, is that the man has returned from war, and is relieved to find his lover or wife unchanged. Thus the desire for sameness – in a person or in a cigarette – is underscored as a characteristic of returning soldiers.

The desire to forget was another characteristic perceived in veterans of the Great War. Jay Winter has written of Europeans’ attempts to “comprehend and then to transcend the catastrophes of war.” “Transcendence,” however, “was not a privilege, not a commonplace experience. To remember the anxiety of 1,500 days of war necessarily entailed how to forget.” The prevalence of shell shock, or post-traumatic stress disorder as it is now known, indicated the inability of the human mind to cope with what occurred during the war.

571 The Graphic (8 March 1919), 321.
Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell-Shock convened in 1919.\textsuperscript{574} Susan Kingsley Kent calls shell shock both the experience of, and a metaphor for, the “traumatized psyche as shattered.”\textsuperscript{575}

In \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory} (1975), Paul Fussell observes that “Everyone who remembers a war first-hand knows that its images remain in the memory with special vividness. The very enormity of the proceedings, their absurd remove from the usages of the normal world, will guarantee that a structure of irony sufficient for ready narrative recall will attach to them.”\textsuperscript{576} Fussell explains the tenacity with which memories of the war stuck in the mind by observing, “When a man imagines that every moment is his next to last, he observes and treasures up sensory details purely for their own sake.”\textsuperscript{577}

Yet this vividness of memory was regarded by some as detrimental to a soldier’s mental health. In 1918 Arthur Hurst wrote in \textit{Medical Diseases of the War} that “The emotion produced by a very horrible incident, such as seeing a friend killed whilst talking with him, is sometimes sufficient to give rise to nervous symptoms. More commonly, however, such an event is only the culmination of a long series of emotional storms.”\textsuperscript{578} Hurst observed that hysterical symptoms were so common in soldiers that in two years he had seen more cases in the military than he had seen in men, women and children in the previous ten.\textsuperscript{579} His recommended treatment for hysterical symptoms (Hurst spoke of hysterical symptoms rather than hysteria because he believed that there was no such thing as hysteria apart from the symptoms\textsuperscript{580}) was complete physical and mental rest. In addition, he wrote, the soldier “should not talk about his

\textsuperscript{574} Oram, \textit{Worthless Men}, 88.
\textsuperscript{575} Susan Kingsley Kent, \textit{Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.
\textsuperscript{576} Paul Fussell, \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 326.
\textsuperscript{577} Fussell, \textit{The Great War}, 327.
\textsuperscript{578} Arthur F. Hurst, \textit{Medical Diseases of the War}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1918), 12.
\textsuperscript{579} Hurst, \textit{Medical Diseases}, 25.
\textsuperscript{580} Hurst, \textit{Medical Diseases}, 21.
war experiences, but should try to forget the scenes he has passed through.”

Hurst’s suggestion that soldiers should not talk about their experiences during the war in order to forget them recalls the Kenilworth advertisement, which, addressing the veteran reading it, notes “You don’t want to talk about it. You don’t want to think about it.” Hurst’s recommended treatment of silence for soldiers was contradicted by Captain P.D Hunter’s comments in The Practitioner in 1919:

If emotion is aroused and not expressed and further repressed emotion is added, there comes a point at which it begins to overflow; and, moreover, whatever be the new emotion aroused, it will largely be coloured by the preceding repressed emotion. We see this fact well illustrated in cases of shell-shock, where the sufferer trembles, sweats, turns dizzy, palpitates, and develops severe headache, whatever emotion he experiences; the pleasure of music, sudden noise, bad news, good news, love, hate, anger, all lead to an overflow of his predominant and oft-repressed emotion, fear.

Captain Hunter regarded speech as the best treatment for trauma after the war. However, many soldiers chose silence over speech, believing that this would help them to forget faster.

Although tobacco does not have properties that erase memory, it does have the ability to physiologically impact the processing of anxiety caused by unpleasant thoughts, and therefore became one of the most desired products during the war.

**Tobacco during the Great War**

Hurst also remarked in his book on medical diseases of the war that “Many soldiers, especially those under twenty years old, smoke much more than they did before they joined the army, and the custom of giving cigarettes to convalescent soldiers, whilst they are in hospital recovering from various infections, is responsible for much subsequent trouble, as the heart and nervous system, already poisoned by the toxins produced by the infection, are particularly liable

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581 Hurst, *Medical Diseases*, 43.
to be further damaged by the toxins inhaled whilst smoking.\textsuperscript{584} Tobacco was the number one
request of soldiers during the First World War. Family members, friends, wives, lovers, and, for
those poor men who had none of these, kind-hearted individuals back home in Britain, sent
soldiers tobacco throughout the war. Courtwright has commented that “The biggest problem
with cigarettes and other tobacco products during World War I was simply getting enough of
them – and enduring the consequences when it proved impossible to do so.”\textsuperscript{585} Soldiers’ letters
are full of gratitude for tobacco and cigarettes sent to them by family and friends. (Soldiers were
also sometimes sent packets of cocaine to give them energy, but I did not find any letters
thanking loved ones for cocaine in the Imperial War Museum’s archives.)\textsuperscript{586} For example, Harry
Stepney wrote to thank Mr. J. Calcroft for the cigarettes, “which I receive[d] quite safe, and they
are a great comfort to me.”\textsuperscript{587} In another letter Stepney wrote: “I think a nice smoke puts fresh
life into one who is about all hours.”\textsuperscript{588} In yet another note, Stepney commented that he had
received a parcel after returning from “a very dangerous job,” and that “after smoking dry leaves
and then having a nice cigarett[e] in me mouth, it was quite a treat.”\textsuperscript{589}

This last remark proves Jordan Goodman’s assertion that there are two confirmed facts
about nicotine, the addictive component in tobacco: first, that people will consume tobacco in
whatever form in order to administer nicotine to their body, and second, that nicotine is highly

\textsuperscript{584} Hurst, Medical Diseases, 284-85.
\textsuperscript{585} Courtwright, Forces of Habit, 142-43.
\textsuperscript{586} For a discussion of amphetamine use during the Second World War, see Nicolas Rasmussen, On Speed: The
military officially sanctioned amphetamine use by British soldiers around 1941. The reason for this was “that
complex set of psychological factors that, in military thinking, mingle in the deceptively simple term ‘morale.’
Morale has always worried military leaders, but the terrifying new killing technology in traduced in the First World
War created an unprecedented morale crisis. Vast numbers of men were falling out of action with no sign of
physical harm, casualties of mental trauma on the battlefield” (55).
\textsuperscript{587} Letter dated 7/4/17, Misc 215, item 3111, Imperial War Museum.
\textsuperscript{588} Letter dated 11/5/15, Misc 215, item 3111, IWM.
\textsuperscript{589} Letter dated 22/8/15, Misc 215, item 3111, IWM.
addictive, in the sense that “tobacco use is regular and compulsive, and a withdrawal syndrome usually accompanies tobacco abstinence.”

British soldier A.H. Settenham commented in a note to his mother, “So I hope you will write soon and please send something to smoke in the way of fags or some tabacco [sic] and fag papers as I was two days without a smoke and in the line at that, so just see what you can do for me.” In another letter he wrote: “The pipe too is an enormous success. It really is a beauty & I find it very consoling.”

Because nicotine is addictive, soldiers were miserable when they did not have sufficient cigarettes or tobacco to last between distributions of rations. Sergeant John A. Grahl wrote in his diary in 1915: “No cigarettes left and no means to get them.” On 1 October 1915 he remarked: “Would like if we got some pay as I cant [sic] get a smoke, and its [sic] rotten without a fag.”

Five days later Grahl wrote again: “Smokes are terrible hard to get. Some have got hold of some shag, and are using pieces of brown and printed paper to wrap their shag in, and making what is supposed to be ‘fags.’” And on 15 October he opined: “The ‘fag’ issue this morning was a cigarette a man its [sic] getting worse. Its bad enough the poor meat rations we get, but surely they could manage to give us more smokes.”

Indeed, cigarettes were often regarded as more crucial to a soldier’s survival than food. General John J. Pershing, Commander of American troops in the First World War, allegedly said to the Minister of War in 1918: “You ask what we need to win this war. I will tell you; we need tobacco, more tobacco – even more than food.”

The prioritizing of tobacco over food can be explained by both the cigarette’s symbolic and physiological power. Rosemary Elliot has remarked that “The experience of the First World War accelerated the trend towards cigarette smoking among men. For soldiers, cigarettes and

590 Goodman, Tobacco in History, 5.
591 A.H. Swettenham (83/31/1), IWM
592 J.A. Grahl (97/16/1). The Diary of 7886 Sergeant John A. Grahl, 1st Highland Light Infantry, IWM.
other forms of tobacco were regarded as a necessity of survival. Smoke was linked with the ideas of military masculinity, the ultimate expression of civic responsibility. Returning to the Kenilworth advertisement, the man is represented as reassuringly masculine. In his positioning next to a well-dressed wife and in relation to the accompanying text he bears traces of the Victorian ideals of husband, patriarch and soldier-hero. This portrayal of masculinity contrasts with the decadent, languid, even effeminate man in Priest’s painting. Arthur Symons, who wrote “The Decadent Movement in Literature” (1893), identified excess, self-absorption, chaos and effeminacy as characteristics of the decadent male. The Kenilworth man, like the more recent Marlboro man, was a very specific type of man: a heteronormative man’s man whose masculinity is not in question, who has the love of a good woman, but who is strong and silent, thus hiding his own vulnerability, the very reason for his silence.

Blindness was another terrible consequence of the Great War that many men experienced. The Kenilworth man’s eyes are closed signifying both pleasure and self-willed blindness to memories of the war. Richard Klein (1993) observes that “The condition of day dreaming appears to be forgetting, and tobacco smoke becomes a metaphor for the power of cigarettes to mask the cruel reality of war, to veil pain with mist, and to smoke over the mirror of negative experience, obliterating even the privation and misery of war.” He continues:

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596 Tim Madge has noted that cocaine was largely regarded as an “effeminate” drug. Madge, *White Mischief*, 127.
“Smoking cigarettes promotes forgetting, and forgetfulness is the soldier’s patron saint.”

Klein, a former smoker, explains that “Physiologically, the cigarette is an extraordinary device for controlling anxiety.” According to Klein,

Whenever, feeling anxious, one takes a cigarette, the nicotine produces two distinct physiological effects, which have a coordinated role. In the first moment it enters the blood stream, nicotine suddenly and often dramatically raises the pulse and arterial pressure, paradoxically acerbating the feeling of tense displeasure that the cigarette was supposed to counter. Taking a big drag of the cigarette, inhaling deeply, actually worsens the physiological symptoms associated with anxiety. But the advantage of that worsening is that it binds those physiological effects to a specific, determined cause – this cigarette I am smoking. Whereas, before, anxiety was caused by a vague anticipation of indeterminate danger, now the feelings of discomfort produced by the cigarette are punctual and pointed. Lending those feelings a single, determined origin is the first step in mastering them, in taking them out of the realm of anxiety and locating them in something ready to hand or present to hand – in the hand.

Klein, Cigarettes are Sublime, 138.

Cigarettes, then, were useful both during the war and following the war to alleviate anxiety. Matthew Hilton has noted that during the First World War the threat of constant shelling in the trenches led to many men taking up smoking to steady their nerves. In 1919 one journalist observed that “The compilation of the nation’s consumption and expenditure on tobacco for the years 1917 and 1918, just published by the British Anti-Tobacco League, affords interesting reading. It shows, at all events, a remarkable increase in tobacco indulgence through a period when the shadows of war were darkest, and this in spite of a decided advance in the cost of the commodity.”

Klein’s description of the physiological effects of nicotine makes it clear why tobacco use increased in 1917 and 1918, considering the state of constant apprehension that soldiers must have felt waiting for shells to fall. The anticipatory anxiety could be attached to the cigarette, which functioned as a tangible object and mental anchor. Similarly, for the

599 Klein, Cigarettes are Sublime, 138.
600 Klein, Cigarettes are Sublime, 142.
Kenilworth man, free-floating anxiety caused by painful memories could be directed into a cigarette that was, unlike him, unchanged.

**Smoking, Gender and Domesticity after the War**

Cigarettes have been linked with both femininity and masculinity during different historical moments. In the nineteenth century tobacco consumption was regarded as a primarily masculine pursuit in Britain. Men smoked pipes and cigars in the company of other men, and it became part of a masculine social ritual that functioned upon the exclusion of women. Cigarettes were a later invention, becoming popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Penny Tinkler has argued that cigarettes were not widely smoked by men prior to the 1890s, and were therefore not associated specifically with masculinity. However, according to Rosemary Elliot, “The cigarette was cast as a powerful symbol of the male privilege which women desired access to. It was an immediate visual sign of action and intent, precisely because smoking discourse had so long precluded women.” This changed in the late nineteenth century when women very deliberately began smoking cigarettes to harness their symbolic power, and, no doubt, the physiological effects that resulted in pleasure and controlled anxiety. John Thompson remarked in the 1890s: “Yet smoking is fashionable! Even some of the ‘highest’ ladies in the land do a little at it, (a large proportion of fast women, moving in ‘fashionable’ society, smoke), and are able to make cigarettes better than the most ingenious gentleman.” This last comment refers to the use of “roll-ups,” cigarettes that are made by the smoker herself with cigarette papers and tobacco. Thompson’s assertion that tobacco was

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603 Tobacco cultivation began in West Africa in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. For a brief history of tobacco, see Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, 14-19.
becoming “fashionable” recalls one art critic’s review of Cocaine that referred to the drug as “fashionable.” In both cases, the word appears to be a coded term pointing to a certain decadent class of people whose actions were morally questionable and linked with a perverse or degenerate sexuality. Like the vote, cigarettes were largely regarded as a masculine possession at the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, it is no coincidence that as suffrage gained ground, cigarette smoking went from being a masculine pastime to a symbol of female emancipation.\textsuperscript{607} Furthermore, smoking by women evoked a confusion regarding female sexuality in the British masculine imagination. On the one hand, it was linked with lesbianism, and women who smoked were often framed as “mannish” because they had taken up what was largely perceived as a masculine kind of consumption.\textsuperscript{608} On the other hand, cigarettes are phallic in shape, and when a woman, perhaps dressed in masculine clothes and riding a bicycle, was seen in public with one between her lips, sucking and blowing, the orality of the act could be regarded as overtly sexual.\textsuperscript{609} It is not clear which of these would have been more threatening in the 1890s, but it goes without saying that women’s smoking caused confusion in the minds and loins of British heterosexual men.\textsuperscript{610}

Tinkler has noted that “visual themes were central to the history of women’s smoking in three main ways.”\textsuperscript{611} First, there was an increase at the end of the nineteenth century in the visibility of women of different classes smoking in public, which resulted in a shift in the belief that women of the lower classes were more vulnerable to the lure of addictive substances.

\textsuperscript{607} For an excellent discussion of the suffrage movement from the vantage point of visual culture studies, see Lisa Tickner, The Spectacle of Women: Images of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{608} Elliot, Women and Smoking, 15.

\textsuperscript{609} Regarding the link between New Women, smoking and bicycles, see Elliot, Women and Smoking, 24.


\textsuperscript{611} Tinkler, Smoke Signals, 2.
Second, smoking was used by women for self-representation. In both lived and visual culture, such as photography, women smoked to communicate something about their own status and identity. Third, in the twentieth century there was a sharp increase in visual images representing women smokers in print media, film, and after 1950, on television. The increase of visual images of female smokers began in the 1890s. Starting in around 1895, the New Woman was consistently represented in *Punch* with a cigarette between her fingers and thoughts of the vote between her ears.\(^{612}\) 1895 was also the year that Oscar Wilde was convicted of gross indecency. Like images of New Women, visual representations of Wilde rarely left out his cigarette.\(^{613}\) Textual representations, too, often referred to Wilde’s smoking habit, as in an interview with the author upon his arrival in New York for his tour of America in 1882. The journalist noted that Wilde “puffed a Russian cigarette while he talked with an air of utter unconcern regarding what was written.”\(^{614}\) The geographic source of a cigarette was often read symbolically. For instance, über decadent Dorian Gray and his friend Lord Henry smoke “opium-tainted” Egyptian cigarettes, thus linking decadence, addiction and the East.\(^{615}\) (Egyptian cigarettes were popular in the nineteenth century because of the British occupation of Egypt.)\(^{616}\) In another article Wilde is described as the journalist imagines him: lying in the clouds “reclined like an ambrosial god, regardless both of men and critics. From beneath, after the production of one of his pieces,


\(^{613}\) For a discussion of caricatures that link Wilde with opium, see Curtis Marez, “The Other Addict: Reflections on Colonialism and Oscar Wilde’s Opium Smoke Screen,” *ELH*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 257-87.


might rise a dim and distant hum and murmur, and through a gap in the wreaths of cigarette smoke, he might lower a languid eyelid and bestow a glance upon the world – figuratively speaking – thousands of feet below, with its swarming and scurrying myriads, like the inhabitants of an enormous ant-hill."\(^{617}\) The article, published the same year as Wilde’s trials, indicates with its sarcastic tone how happy certain British citizens must have been to see Wilde fall from his heights. But it is the reference to the author’s reclining position and his “languid eyelid” that are most relevant for my purposes here, recalling as they do the man in *Cocaine*. Significantly, both of the articles that reference Wilde’s smoking focus on his disregard or “unconcern” for both what is written about him and the doings of mere mortals. It is the conscious desire for unconcern, the desire to not remember or care, that I see in both *Cocaine* and the advertisement for Kenilworth cigarettes. Wilde was called many things in the 1890s: decadent, effeminate, Aesthetic, degenerate.\(^{618}\) Smoking by so-called effeminate decadents further complicated the gendering of cigarettes, placing them somewhere in the no man’s land between a certain kind of problematic femininity and a certain kind of idealized masculinity.

Not everyone in the nineteenth century regarded smoking as a positive form of enacting masculinity. Elliot has observed that “Prevailing discourses of smoking and masculinity were inverted: tobacco was seen to hinder intellectual prowess as well as affecting physical fitness, central tenets of masculinity.”\(^{619}\) But then the First World War exploded onto the European scene, and among the many symbols that were evacuated and filled with new meaning during the war the cigarette flickered and then was concretized again as an important anchor for

\(^{617}\) “Mr. Oscar Wilde and his Critics,” *The Era* (Feb. 1895).

\(^{618}\) Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff and Matthew Potolsky have questioned the link that was consistently made between decadence and degeneracy in the late nineteenth century, and which, they argue, has continued to be made in critical scholarship on decadence and decadent literature. Constable, Denisoff and Potolsky, “Introduction,” in *Perennial Decay*, 3.

masculinity. Military masculinity was both symbolized by and enacted through cigarette smoking.620 “The popularity of cigarettes at the front,” Elliot writes, “was recognized in the press and in campaigns to collect cigarettes and tobacco to send to troops. This had the effect of increasing the visibility of cigarettes back home and enhancing their reputation as a solace and a comfort in times of stress.”621 Richard Klein and Matthew Hilton have both argued that cigarette smoking during the First World War was often regarded as a patriotic duty.622 Although women continued to smoke throughout the war, cigarettes as symbols served an ideological function that was largely related to men and masculinity. As the war progressed “political and social positioning of tobacco reinforced traditional gender roles. The cigarette was established as central to masculine identity, arguably changing pre-war constructions of cigarette smoking among women.”623 This is significant for my reading of the Kenilworth advertisement, because whereas in Cocaine traditional gender roles are subverted by and in relation to cocaine, in the advertisement tobacco is positioned as a drug that helps to realign gender roles that had been upended during the war. By smoking Kenilworth cigarettes, the man is portrayed as restoring the natural order of things.

According to Tinkler, “Tobacco advertising, which proliferated in newspapers around 1900, raised the profile of the cigarette and male smoker, but it did little to raise the public profile of the woman smoker before 1919.”624 Indeed, 1919 was a significant year for advertising, because in addition to selling products, advertisements were doing ideological work directed at re-establishing traditional gender roles. As Elliot observes, “The cigarette’s position

620 Elliot, Women and Smoking, 29.
621 Elliot, Women and Smoking, 45.
622 Klein, Cigarettes are Sublime, 3; Hilton, Perfect Pleasures, 30.
623 Elliot, Women and Smoking, 5.
624 Tinkler, Smoke Signals, 26.
as the tobacco product of choice for men was consolidated by advertising and marketing which located cigarette smoking within masculine identity and gendered social relationships.”⁶²⁵ In the Kenilworth advertisement the man is depicted with a very visible cigarette, while the woman is not. This decision on the advertiser’s part points to a desire to link smoking with men but not with women, which supports Elliot’s argument that during the war cigarettes were being taken from the mouths of New Women and returned to the lips of soldiers, thus re-gendering tobacco as a masculine substance and smoking as a masculine activity. Furthermore, the Kenilworth man, as I have previously argued, is portrayed as the one with power in this relationship, whereas in Cocaine it is the woman who is the more powerful of the two. Advertisements in 1919 were attempting to give traumatized veterans their power back. Thus, as Deirdre Beddoe has observed, in the months after the Great War ended, advertisements “rapidly changed their images of women from workers to stay-at-home wives and mothers.”⁶²⁶

The representation of a man and a woman in a domestic interior is the most obvious parallel between Cocaine and the Kenilworth advertisement. But the interiors are very different aesthetically, the one in Cocaine speaking of exoticism and decadence (for instance, there is a leopard-print rug on the floor), and the one in the Kenilworth advertisement exhibiting conservative restraint with its white sofa and lack of obtrusive decor. The interiors are intended to mirror the relationships between the men and women represented in each image. The leopard rug, the satin pillow next to the woman’s body and the decorative wall paper in Cocaine are representative of one type of decadent interior, but the influence of the Aesthetic movement is

⁶²⁵ Elliot, Women and Smoking, 53.
also apparent. With his choice of interior design, Priest deliberately frames the man in his painting as something of an aesthete, as well as a decadent. The Aestheticism of the interior, combined with the decadence of cocaine use and the man’s languid pose, all held implications about both his masculinity and his sexuality for early twentieth-century viewers. Anne Anderson has argued that “the heightened emotionalism of the aesthete connotes an erosion of masculinity, while the transference of affections to objects and an insatiable appetite may be read as a subversion of sexual desire.”

Here, rather than a transferring of affections to a specific object in the room, the suggestion is that the man in Priest’s painting has transferred his “natural” affection for a woman to an addictive substance. Although he is shown lounging with a woman, there is no explicit suggestion that they are together for romantic, sexual or reproductive purposes. The woman is shown wearing a white satin dressing gown, but it covers her quite conservatively from neck to feet, and her protective arm positions her as more maternal than sexual. Like cocaine, the Aesthetic interior was regarded as threatening to a man’s masculinity, thus making Priest’s painting a double representation of emasculation.


One reactionary response after the war’s upheaval was a desire to return to traditional British ways of life, traditional values, and traditional gender roles. This objective is encapsulated in the Kenilworth advertisement. As Elliot has observed: “For some, the First World War inspired change: a greater social responsibility, emancipation for women, and greater labour consciousness, although these developments arguably continued pre-war trends. Others saw a retrenchment of traditional class and gender values at the end of the war: new points of tension emerged between the classes during the Depression, and women moved back into the domestic sphere, voluntarily or otherwise.” This return to domesticity was both a symbolic and embodied return to the home. As Tosh has remarked, the setting up of a heteronormative household – an idea that includes the physical home as well as a husband, wife and children – was fundamental for a man’s sense of his own masculinity in the nineteenth century, and it continued to be so in the twentieth century. Like cigarettes, and even like cocaine, the return to domesticity offered the promise of solace and comfort after the war. It offered a space for forgetting. In Joanna Bourke’s words, “The individual man retreated to familiar spaces of desire and empowerment.” Therefore, the fact that both Priest and the illustrator behind the Kenilworth advertisement chose a domestic interior to represent the consumption of an addictive substance was highly significant. Susan Kingsley Kent has noted that “The peaceable flight to domesticity” after the war “offered one way to address the question of national belonging.”

This may have been true for some, or true in part, but to withdraw into one’s home after a war

630 Martin Green has argued that another form of reactionary response after the First World War was a rejection of traditional British values such as marriage and the home, and a return to the decadence of the 1890s. Green identifies this kind of rebellion as a “rejection of the fathers” by certain types of men: the dandy-aesthete, the rogue and the naïf. Green, The Children of the Sun, 6.
631 Elliot, Women and Smoking, 53.
632 Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities, 36.
633 Bourke, Dismembering the Male, 252.
634 Kent, Aftershocks, 8.
fought by Nations with the blood of individual men seems like deliberate isolation from the world. One gets the sense from both Cocaine and the Kenilworth advertisement that these couples could be the last people on earth, and they would be satisfied with this. They do not want to “belong”; they want to be left alone. Drugs, including tobacco, can bring people together, but they can also isolate them. The man and woman who are using cocaine together do not need anyone else until their supply runs out. The Kenilworth man needs only the love of a good woman and his cigarettes. There is a smokescreen between this man and the world that sent him to war, and he is content to stay hidden within it, hoping his memories will not penetrate. In a discussion on trauma, Kent observes that “Most often, victims and observers of or participants in unspeakable incidents attempt to suppress them, to bar their entry into consciousness, but such is the horrific nature of traumatic events that they cannot be fully denied.” What is the Kenilworth man doing if not suppressing his memories of the war? He is attempting to fill the space that those memories reside with new memories of domestic bliss and the physiological effects of tobacco. Although art historians have often linked women with private, domestic spaces and men with public spaces, both Cocaine and the Kenilworth advertisement reveal that for some men following the First World War, addictive substances, privacy, and domesticity all went hand in hand.

Significantly, both images also represent a male-female relationship within these private spaces. Marriage was a matter of much discussion after the war. For one, it, like domesticity, held the promise of tradition and stability for returning soldiers. There was also the question of reproduction. Because of the dramatic loss of life during the Great War, there was a desire to

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635 Kent, Aftershocks, 11.
repopulate Britain. One of the problems with this, however, was the “excess” or “surplus” of women after the war. Another was the significant increase in divorces immediately following the end of the war, due in part to rushed marriages at the beginning of and during the war. Those pushing the marriage agenda argued for companionship as “central to modern conceptions of heterosocial and heterosexual relations, and, in particular, to the modern ideal of marriage.”

However, men were not the only ones who had changed during the war, and it was not only women’s smoking habits that had changed. Havelock Ellis remarked in 1916:

> The Great War, which has changed so many things, has nowhere effected a greater change than in the sphere of women’s activities. In all the belligerent countries women have been called upon to undertake work which they had never been offered before. Europe has thus become a great experimental laboratory for testing the aptitudes of women. The results of these tests, as they are slowly realized, cannot fail to have permanent effects on the sexual division of labour.

So much change must have been overwhelming for the men returning from war. It resulted in a love-hate relationship with the old symbol of comfort and stability: the home. According to Susan Kingsley Kent, “The hostility and anger from soldiers directed toward the home – symbolized and epitomized by women – seemingly got played out after the war.” The desire for domesticity, then, was ultimately a desire for a return to the familiar, and that included gender roles. “Re-establishment of sexual difference,” Kent writes, was “the means to re-create the semblance of order,” an order that was ostensibly based on “natural biological categories.”

Returning once again to the Kenilworth advertisement, the text suggests that the man has

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638 Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 162-63.
639 Tinkler, *Smoke Signals*, 93-94.
successfully re-established order in his domestic kingdom. The message is that Kenilworth cigarettes are part of this order: that they are not only part of it, but that they contribute to it. In *How to Stop Time: Heroin from A to Z* (1999), Ann Marlowe describes how heroin, for her, was a way to stop life from speeding along and the world from spinning out of control.643 This is what the Kenilworth advertisement is selling: time that can be slowed down, or even turned back.

**Dismemberment, Emasculation and Impotence: Theorizing masculine vulnerability**

Theorizing masculine vulnerability through the framework of addiction theory and in the context of the First World War inevitably involves discussing male bodies and minds that have been, as Susan Kingsley Kent comments, shattered. One of the many parallels between cocaine, tobacco and the Great War was that all three were believed to cause male impotence. According to Freud, the fear of castration is the ultimate masculine fear because it means – in many men’s minds – the loss of potency, power and identity.644 The penis and the phallus, while not the same thing in psychoanalytic theory, are related in their linking of the man with power.

I suggest that there is a link between war, addiction and male vulnerability, which revolves around a sense of powerlessness. I have been approaching this point throughout the chapter: that both *Cocaine* and the Kenilworth advertisement are representations of masculine vulnerability, but whereas Priest chose to portray the man as visibly vulnerable in his pose and in comparison to his female companion, the Kenilworth advertisement is suppressing masculine vulnerability. Yet in doing so, and in using text to reveal that the Kenilworth man is himself attempting to suppress both his memories and his own vulnerability – that which is hidden is

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revealed. As Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg have noted, “The formulation of trauma as discourse is predicated upon metaphors of visuality and image as unavoidable carriers of the unrepresentable.”

Because masculine vulnerability had been so rarely represented before the First World War, Priest had to choose an appropriate visual metaphor in order to represent it. He chose cocaine addiction, or at least cocaine use, but by erasing the very presence of the drug itself, Priest points to the fact that, although there is a link between addiction and the war, cocaine is not the point, or at least it is not the only point. Similarly, in the Kenilworth advertisement, memory and trauma are anxiously erased – just as the drug is in Cocaine – and it is this anxiety that indicates to the viewer that while tobacco is the product being sold, the tobacco is only the cover story. The desire to evade vulnerability is underneath.

In Impotence: A Cultural History (2007), Angus McLaren observes: “Many worried that World War I had created a generation of shell-shocked and physically incapacitated males whose fate was uncertain. Obviously the war focused an unprecedented amount of attention on the sexually disabled. Nevertheless the conflict exacerbated rather than created a preoccupation with Western men’s declining virility.” Indeed, among the other medical diseases associated with the war, including shell shock, neurasthenia and hysteria, impotence was significant because it was so strongly associated with a man’s powerlessness. Joanna Bourke asserts that, “In war…the injured man was not disabled but mutilated. He was a fit man, the potent man rendered impotent.”

Bourke’s book Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War

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645 Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg, Trauma and Visuality in Modernity (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), xi-xii.
646 McLaren, Impotence 150.
648 Bourke, Dismembering the Male, 37-38.
(1996) points to both the actual, in the form of a battle wound, and the symbolic loss of the penis experienced by men during the war. Dis-membering – the loss of the male member – is a trauma to both the body and the psyche because of the place the penis has in a man’s sense of self. To re-member can sometimes be impossible, and thus many soldiers did not wish to remember the war and the cause of their impotence. This relationship between body, identity and memory is of course fundamental to the work that both Cocaine and the Kenilworth advertisement are doing. In Cocaine the man is unconscious, which indicates a lack of remembering, although many medical writers after the war noted that repressed memories could result in nightmares and insomnia. Tobacco and cocaine were also identified as causes of insomnia. The man in Priest’s painting has chosen cocaine as the way to escape memories of the war, therefore the viewer – whether in 1919 or today – identifies the man as, if not an addict, then at least a user of a “fashionable” but illicit substance. It goes without saying that whether in lived or visual culture, once a person is linked with drug use their identity is inextricably linked with that fact. As is clear from the art criticism, the man in Cocaine was regarded as a decadent, if not a degenerate, and although one viewer did not think he looked enough like a “dope-fiend” to merit that label, the painting’s title inevitably guides the spectator’s reading of both the man and woman’s bodies for signs of addiction. One might call this addict profiling, and it certainly still occurs in today’s culture of Wars on Drugs and Zero Tolerance.

As noted above, tobacco, cocaine and the war were all identified as possible causes of impotence in men. In 1915 Dr. Wilfred Harris wrote in The Practitioner: “Impotence acquired

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649 In Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises (1926) the central character, Jake, is impotent. He glosses his condition by saying “I got hurt in the war.” See McLaren, Impotence, 149.
651 Although cocaine was not officially illegal in 1919, the King made a proclamation in 1916 to prohibit the importation of cocaine and opium into the United Kingdom during the war. It was cited as the Cocaine and Opium (Prohibition of Import) Proclamation (28 July 1916).
as a result of the long continued taking of drugs, such as alcohol, morphine, or cocaine may be recovered from after cessation of the habit combined with general tonic treatment. Very often the taking of these drugs is but a symptom of a type of mental degeneracy, when the arrest of the habit will be found much more difficult, if not impossible of attainment.”  

Herbert H. Tidswell, writing in 1912, remarked that “There is a general belief that excessive smoking produces impotency in the male.” McLaren points out that “Psychoanalysts revolutionized the study of male sexual disabilities in declaring that almost everything that nineteenth-century doctors had targeted as the causes of impotence – masturbation, sexual excesses, addiction to drugs, drink and tobacco, even the lessening of desire associated with old age – might only be symptoms of deep seated psychic traumas.” Beyond a speculative reading, it is impossible to argue with any conviction whether the men in Cocaine and the Kenilworth advertisement are impotent. Certainly, the man in Priest’s painting is, for the lack of a better word, limp. In contrast, the Kenilworth man is sitting erect. Twenty-first-century smokers are now familiar with the compulsory warning against impotence with images of flaccid cigarettes on the side of cigarette boxes. This kind of warning, not surprisingly, does not appear in the Kenilworth advertisement. Indeed, the suggestion is that the man is virile and returning to a “normal” heterosexual life. As part of domesticity, a “normal” sexual relationship was regarded as a way

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652 Wilfred Harris, “Impotence in Men,” The Practitioner (July 1915), 3.
654 McLaren, Impotence, 163.
655 George Mosse has noted that decadence was linked with both addiction and a lack of virility: “Nervousness and hysteria lay at the centre of Decadence, whether symbolized by that lack of restraint, which, so it was said, had led to the fall of the Roman Empire, or to weakness and sterility brought about by ‘physical and moral poison’ such as alcoholism, the use of opium or debilitating disease.” Mosse, “Masculinity and the Decadence,” 254.
656 Virginia Berridge observes that “The concept of dependence or addiction (the two were distinct historically) had not been absent in the smoking field in the post-war period, or before then, but had not had any particular policy significance.” Virginia Berridge, “Post-War Smoking Policy in the UK and the Redefinition of Public Health,” Twentieth Century British History, vol. 14, no. 1 (2003), 79.
to fill the space where unpleasant memories of the war resided, and as a way to achieve a secure sense of masculinity.  

Like the war, drug addiction was regarded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a threat to masculinity both physically and symbolically. In the 1890s American “cure doctor” Leslie E. Keeley argued that addiction was “the threat of emasculation, the removal of an active, productive masculinity by a femininity whose aggressiveness lay in its seductive passivity.” Similarly, in 1918 Dr. C.B. Pearson asserted that the mental stress and depression resulting from narcotic addiction would inevitably “unman the addict to such an extent that he is in no condition to bear the physical suffering.” Unmanned men, of course, could not hope to reconstruct a shattered nation, so at the end of the war concerns about shell shock, impotence and addiction anxiously intersected. After four years of standing and fighting, Priest’s painting and the Kenilworth advertisement reveal the physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that men must have felt after the war.

Conclusion

In approaching visual culture produced at the end of the First World War using addiction theory to tease out narrative, subtext and meaning, I have consistently returned to the fact that addictive substances that alleviate pain, whether physical or psychological, are inevitably seductive to people in pain. Addiction is hardly ever the goal, unless the individual has

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657 See Bourke, Dismembering the Male, 163.
658 Hickman, Secret Leprosy, 89.
659 Quoted in Hickman, Secret Leprosy, 89.
idealized and romanticized another addict’s life, which sometimes is the case. There is always a starting point, usually innocent if not naïve. I would suggest that the starting point for addiction is often, if not always, characterized by pain, fear or vulnerability. In this chapter I have attempted to show how both the Great War and addiction unleashed masculine vulnerability. By this I mean that vulnerability, usually conceived of as a state of weakness, passivity and silence, was experienced in a violent, shattering way during and after the war. Men’s vulnerability was forced upon them, and it took up residence in their minds and bodies, triggered by external stimuli such as conversations and images, or by internal stimuli such as memories and emotions. Vulnerability was produced through violence, and it was experienced intensely and violently, although often in silence.

This chapter, like the other chapters in “The Desire to Fill,” has been an amalgamation of art history, addiction history and addiction theory that is informed by various methodological approaches. The theory is my contribution to the field of addiction studies, and it has guided my interpretation of visual evidence. Vulnerability and powerlessness are central to my readings of the images that I have been discussing. In Cocaine the power lies in the woman’s lap, as does the man whose pose and lack of consciousness speak to his vulnerability caused by the war and exacerbated by his use of cocaine. The Kenilworth man is represented as a man who enjoys the finer things in life (nice clothes, a pretty wife, cigarettes), but the fact that he smokes to forget what happened during the war, as is indicated by the accompanying text, suggests that whatever he wishes to forget is causing him psychological distress. Both of the men in these images have been conquered to some extent by the war. Furthermore, in the case of Priest’s painting, there is a suggestion that cocaine has usurped masculine power, if not the man’s virility, while in the Kenilworth advertisement there can be no such suggestion in relation to tobacco because it
would have undermined the intention of the image. However, we now know that addiction to nicotine, while perhaps not as socially destructive according to post-First World War estimations, can lead to impotence and death. In hindsight, then, the Kenilworth advertisement, if effective, would have sold more cigarettes, thus leading to more men suffering from the various diseases now linked with nicotine consumption. It is easy to look back at 1919 and see connections between the war, addiction and masculine vulnerability. The question is: what can we learn about our own time by recognizing those connections? What parallels are there between 1919 and our own culture? I can name a few. Addiction still exists. War still exists. Masculine vulnerability still exists and is still often masked by various means. If there is anything to learn from textual and visual representations of drug use and alcohol consumption, it is that no one really agrees about what addiction is or why it occurs, and despite this, people have always had, and still have, very strong beliefs about addiction. Perhaps regarding addiction as a state of vulnerability is a step towards a new way of picturing it.
Conclusion

Addiction Theory, Oscar Wilde and the Desire to Not Care

Throughout “The Desire to Fill” I have employed addiction theory in my analysis of visual culture in order to illuminate ongoing patterns of perception about alcoholics and drug addicts. By necessity I have had to be selective in the images that I have discussed, and there remain many works of art and other examples of visual culture that could be examined using this particular methodology. In the first section of the Conclusion I discuss work by scholars concerned with visual culture who exhibit an interest in addiction, although it is not their primary focus, and I suggest possible future uses of addiction theory in the study of visual culture. In the subsequent section I offer a speculative reading of Oscar Wilde’s long letter to Alfred Douglas, *De Profundis*, using addiction theory to tease out what I perceive as love addiction. I argue that love addiction, as well as codependence, are behavioral addictions that ultimately stem from the same place as addictions to drugs and alcohol: the desire to fill a void. In the final section I return to my argument for continuism, which I discussed in the Introduction, identifying parallels between eighteenth-, nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century experiences and perceptions of addiction. I conclude with a comparison between an early twentieth-century text concerning narcotic addiction and a recent book written by a Canadian doctor about the lived experience of addiction in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

Addiction Theory in Visual Culture Studies

Whereas addiction has been a frequent topic in critical literary studies, the subject has not received anywhere near the same amount of attention in art history and visual culture
Certainly in discussions of Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* and George Cruikshank’s representations of drunkenness the issue of addiction is often broached, but references are usually brief, and the issue of addiction itself is rarely scrutinized.

Despite the lack of art historical projects concerned with addiction, there is much potential for the use of addiction theory in future critical studies of visual and material culture. Indeed, I have noted that a few texts concerned with visual culture hint at the possibility of using addiction theory to examine images, as well as the perception and consumption of material culture. The first instance of this is Kate Flint’s *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (2000). Although a literary historian, Flint examines the Victorian preoccupation with vision and visuality in relation to art, science and the material world. She discusses Robert Martineau’s *The Last Day in the Old House* (Fig. 7.1), which represents, like one of the plates in Cruikshank’s *The Bottle* series (Figs. 3.4-3.5), the dismantling of a home due to an addictive behavior. At the centre of the painting is a man whose gambling has caused the financial ruin of his family. He has his foot up on a chair, striking a nonchalant pose, and is showing his young son the visual pleasure of wine or some other alcoholic beverage swirling in a glass in order to admire its legs. The man is represented in ignorant bliss, and his preoccupation with the beauty of an addictive liquid, which he shares with his young son, foreshadows trouble in the next generation. We can only assume that the pleasure the man associates with alcohol is not only visual.

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In her discussion of Martineau’s painting Flint notes that in the nineteenth century gambling “was seen as addictive.” She also cites Gillian Beer’s article “The Reader’s Wager: Lots, Sorts, and Futures” (1990) in which Beer argues that the act of gambling mirrors the act of reading in that both are predicated on attempts to predict the future based on a set of givens and information derived from the plot. While Beer, also a literary scholar, is concerned with the act of reading in relation to gambling, throughout “The Desire to Fill” I have indicated various instances when addiction has been linked with vision, painting, seeing and visual consumption. *The Last Day in the Old House* is ripe for the application of addiction theory not only because the subtext of the painting is that the man may be addicted to gambling, but also because of the emphasis on the visual pleasure (and, of course, desire) that swells up around the little glass of

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wine. Although Flint does not pursue what I would call addiction theory in her reading of Martineau’s painting, by drawing attention to the addictiveness of gambling she points to the possibility of just such a theoretical approach.

Allison Morehead has also addressed compulsive gambling (or “monomaniac” gambling) in her discussion of Edvard Munch’s painting *At the Roulette Table in Monte Carlo* (1892) in the exhibition catalogue *Munch Becoming Munch* (2008).\(^*\) A reading of a pictorial representation of gambling with addiction theory as the framework could address the writing on gambling that was published around the time the image was produced; a continuist reading would also take into account more recent writings on compulsive gambling, treatment for gambling addiction, and the reasons people compulsively gamble. A visual analysis of the image would indicate the kind of gambling that is taking place and the meanings that have been attached to that particular kind of gambling; the facial expression of the subject or subjects, which would indicate whether the behavior was causing them pain or pleasure (which would likely be based on whether they were winning or losing); and the intentionality of the image’s producer: is the artwork celebrating gambling as a masculine pastime, for example, or is it warning against the financial perils of the activity? These are only some of the questions that a scholar using addiction theory could ask while analyzing a representation of gambling.

As I discuss in Chapter 4 regarding the Crystal Palace, gin palaces and women’s desire for alcohol, there were anxieties in the nineteenth century, and to a certain extent in the previous

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\(^*\) Allison Morehead, “‘Are there Bacteria in the Rooms of Monte Carlo?’: The Roulette Paintings, 1891-93,” in *Munch becoming Munch* (Oslo: Munch Museum, 2008), 120-36.
century as well, regarding women’s consumption.664 During the Victorian period these anxieties attached, for instance, to women’s novel reading, alcohol consumption, and consumption of goods, including art objects. Anne Anderson’s article “‘Chinamania’: Collecting Old Blue for the House Beautiful, c. 1860-1900” (2009), speaks to this last anxiety, and the phrase “Chinamania” links the consumption of objects with manias associated with the consumption of addictive substances. “Morphinomania,” for instance, was one of the many terms that was eventually discarded for the more generalized “drug addict.”665 Anderson discusses how Aestheticism was associated “with excessive appetites leading the family into economic disaster or caused the suppression of maternal affection, corrupting women who now loved their china more than their children.”666 As was apparent in Chapter 2, there was great concern in the eighteenth century, which continued into the nineteenth century (and, indeed, persists in our own time) that women’s love of alcohol surpassed that of their children. Concerns regarding the negative financial impact of addictive behavior have also been a constant in the history of addiction. This was evident in Hogarth’s Gin Lane, and in Cruikshank’s The Bottle both parents’ alcohol consumption leads the family into economic disaster, as does the father’s gambling in The Last Day in the Old House. Nineteenth-century commentators concerned with women’s consumption of china were ultimately arguing that these women were the equivalent of today’s so-called “shopaholics,” but as I will discuss below, some addiction scholars recognize compulsive shopping as an addiction that is founded on an attempt to alter reality via

665 See Zieger, Inventing the Addict, chapter 4.
consumption (again, in order to “fill a void”), choosing to make purchases despite the risk of financial insecurity.

What is particularly significant about Anderson’s article for my purposes, beyond the possibility of seeing the lived experience of behavioral addiction between the lines of her discussion, is how “Chinamania” was in fact framed as an addiction in the nineteenth century, because of anxieties about women’s agency, mobility and independence. Certainly Anderson’s discussion points to parallels between the discourse of addiction and the discourse of Aestheticism in general and “Chinamania” in particular. For instance, she remarks that according to the anxious Victorian vision of china, the object could “transmit the idea that women are essentially surface, with no depth, aesthetically perfect but hollow and empty, perhaps waiting to be filled.”667 The belief that addiction fundamentally signifies a desire to fill an emotional void, to feel a rightness with the world, and to achieve an equilibrium that is lacking, has been identified by scholars such as Dr. Gabor Maté, who I will discuss at greater length at the end of this Conclusion, as the underlying factor of all addictions, whether to drugs, alcohol, gambling, shopping, TV, the Internet, sex or love relationships.668 Returning to the nineteenth century, the vision of women filling themselves through consumption was an anxiety-producing one because women had long been prescribed a very few things that they were allowed to fill themselves with. As I argued in Chapter 4, this anxiety about filling via vision and consumption was one of the things that critics of both the Crystal Palace and gin palaces, as

well as critics of novels and sex, were fearful of. If women started filling themselves with whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, what would happen to the family and to the nation?

According to Anderson, “This intense longing [for china] was likened to a disease, both body and mind exhibiting the ravages of the aesthetic malaise.” Although Thomas Trotter described drunkenness as a disease of the mind in 1804, addiction was more widely accepted as a disease after around 1884 when the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety was founded. The Society’s first president, Dr. Norman Kerr, has appeared several times in “The Desire to Fill,” and as I have already noted in an earlier chapter, Kerr is significant in the history of addiction because he was one of the first and most vocally sympathetic writers about people we would now identify as alcoholics and drug addicts. Although he was constrained by certain persistent stereotypes (such as the assumption that shame must necessarily follow addiction), Kerr’s vision of addiction carried over into the twentieth century. I would argue that the more sympathetic view of addiction espoused by Kerr and other members of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety had a significant impact on the ideas that eventually became the foundation of the first Twelve-Step program, Alcoholics Anonymous, which was formed in 1935, particularly the belief that addiction was a disease not a sin or a vice.

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669 Pamela Gilbert has shown how novel reading by women was linked with both illicit sexual intercourse and drug consumption in the nineteenth century. Pamela K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women’s Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18.
673 The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous regarded alcoholism as a two-pronged disease. According to the official text of Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholism involves a physical allergy to alcohol that results in the phenomenon of craving initiated by the “first drink.” In other words, they believed that as long as an alcoholic did not take a drink,
Kerr was insistent that because inebriety was a disease, it could not be regarded as sinfulness any longer, as drunkenness had been for centuries. The belief that addiction is a disease and therefore not a matter of weak will power or immorality has also continued to be promulgated through much current literature on addiction, although, as I argue in Chapter 5, the belief that alcoholics and addicts are fundamentally weak-willed and immoral has certainly persisted. Furthermore, while for some the vision of addiction as a disease comparable to diabetes – that is, a disease without a cure that can be maintained through vigilant self-care – relieves them of the guilt and shame associated with their addiction, others resist the idea that addiction is a disease, because disease, like addiction, is still tainted by certain stigmas. As Zieger has observed, disease served as a metaphor for addiction, “not because of its failure to describe a biological reality, but because it formed a discursive bridge from earlier nineteenth-century temperance discourses to early-twentieth-century models of criminality and eugenics.”

A forthcoming volume, Against Health, addresses the backlash against the normalizing of a monolithic notion of “health.” This resistance is founded upon the interpretation of the exploding market for healthy living (certainly including manifold Twelve-Step programs) that implicitly paints disease, disability and addiction as unacceptable. The volume, which stems from a 2006 conference at the University of Michigan (the keynote speaker was Richard Klein, whose book Cigarettes are Sublime I discussed in the previous chapter), revolves around a craving for alcohol would not be initiated. This is complicated, however, by the mental obsession, which, even though the physical state of craving is not in effect, keeps the alcoholic’s mind focused on the desire to drink, which would then lead to a person drinking. For Kerr and other nineteenth-century commentators who believed addiction was a disease, abstinence was believed to be the only “cure” for alcoholism. Likewise, in Alcoholics Anonymous, abstinence, in addition to taking certain suggestions and seeking the underlying reasons for the addiction, is regarded as the only solution. See Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), chapter 2.

Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 12.
fundamental resistance to “the invisible morality” inherent in the western preoccupation with health. 675

Despite the importance of this kind of critical project, my own concern in “The Desire to Fill” is not so much the “discursive spread of addiction,” 676 as Zieger has appropriately called the explosion of various kinds of addictions in recent years. My concern has been, of course, lived experiences of addiction, which, although certainly complex, complicated and perhaps even questionable based on recent developments in the representation of addiction in popular culture (these deserve a whole other book unto themselves), I have been arguing here that the experience of addiction is often one characterized by physical and mental suffering, self-judgment, judgment by others, and punishment in various forms, among other twists and turns. Although in “The Desire to Fill” I have focused on addiction to substances consumed by the body, as I note above there is vast potential for other kinds of addictions to be examined in relation to visual culture.

In the following section I discuss another kind of addiction that has only gained recognition relatively recently, and has already been questioned by some and dismissed by others. The medical concept of codependence was critiqued by many feminist writers in the early 1990s. 677 While not exactly the same, love addiction, sex addiction and codependence are similar in that the “object” of addiction is a person. 678 Some addiction scholars, such as psychologist Stanton Peele, have been more open to the possibility of addiction to love relationships, codependence, and the unhealthy need or desire for a specific person despite obvious consequences. According to Peele, “Any powerful experience can form the object of

675 My thanks to Valerie Traub for bringing the conference and volume to my attention.
676 Zieger, Inventing the Addict, 241.
677 Jane Lilienfeld, Reading Alcoholisms: Theorizing Character and Narrative in Selected Novels of Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 159.
addiction for people predisposed by combinations of social and psychological factors.679 Peele rejects the disease model of addiction, but he allows space for the possibility of addiction to various intense experiences, including love relationships.

Throughout “The Desire to Fill” I have analyzed both words and images in connection with lived experiences of addiction, based on my belief that words and images not only complement each other in analyses, but also that they interact as texts in constructing discourses and subjectivities. In the following section I read Oscar Wilde’s De Profundis as a textual representation of love addiction, specifically his addiction to Alfred Douglas. A photograph taken of Wilde and Douglas in 1892 shows the author standing to Douglas’s left leaning ever so slightly towards the younger man with his right hand on Douglas’s left shoulder, his finger tips just barely visible. Douglas stands squarely facing the photographer, his hands in his pockets and a pinched, insolent, even angry, expression on his face. As Dennis Denisoff has observed, in this photograph “Wilde is discreet and seemingly self-conscious in his display of affection.” He adds, however: “More than half-hidden, Wilde’s hand implies that his gesture signifies, for him, something less accepted than conventional friendship. So gentle, so tentative, the fingers connote not only the caution in Wilde’s effort to display same-sex erotic affection, but also the general fragility at this time of relations that undermined conventional family-based notions of love.”680 According to Denisoff’s reading of the photograph, there is a hint of affection, but it is veiled, or coded, because of the social norms of the time. Wilde and Douglas first met in 1892, so there may not have been any love addiction to speak of when this photograph was taken. Yet

the two men’s body language already indicates an imbalance in their relationship: whereas Wilde has his body turned towards Douglas and touches him, Douglas’s body is stiff and turned away from Wilde. As I will argue, in *De Profundis* Wilde reveals a desire to face his addiction involving Douglas, and to display it to Douglas as well. Whereas Wilde had previously been in denial about his addiction, after two years in prison the stakes had changed, and he had come to believe that to acknowledge his addiction was necessary in order to survive.681

**The addiction that dare not speak its name: Love addiction in Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis***

According to Richard Ellmann, Wilde’s relationship with Douglas began in 1892 after the latter had asked the author’s help in dealing with blackmail related to an indiscreet letter.682 Three tempestuous years later, Wilde sued Douglas’s father, the ninth Marquess of Queensberry, for criminal libel, egged on by Douglas, but when evidence was given of Wilde’s homosexuality during that trial he in turn was charged with gross indecency with another male person, and eventually went to prison for two years.683 During his imprisonment Wilde wrote a letter to Douglas describing their turbulent relationship, alternately blaming and forgiving Douglas for Wilde’s economic, legal and literary troubles. The narrative that Wilde constructs is one of addiction, but to a person, not a substance. He describes the initial intoxication of his relationship with Douglas, the negative consequences of the relationship, the attempts to end the relationship, and the relapses in taking up once again with Douglas, despite knowledge of the risks. Furthermore, throughout the letter Wilde alludes to the spiritual redemption that has come from his suffering, a facet of many addiction narratives that Robyn Warhol would identify as

681 Jane Lilienfeld has engaged in a similar project to mine in this section, examining Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* for indications of co-dependence. See Lilienfeld, “‘The Horrors of Family Life’: A Feminist Interrogation of the Politics of Codependence,” in *Reading Alcoholisms*, chapter 3.


“euphoric.” At the end of the letter the reader is left with the strong impression that Wilde has realized that he can never be with Douglas again, yet we know from Ellmann’s biography, as well as letters Wilde wrote after his imprisonment, that Wilde and Douglas did eventually reunite, although their attempt at reconciliation did not last long.

What can De Profundis tell us about the experience of addiction? The letter, which was written between January and March 1897, after Wilde had been in prison for almost two years, documents Wilde’s “fatal friendship” with Douglas, the trials, Wilde’s experiences in prison, and the author’s attempts to find meaning in his suffering. It is, in other words, a recovery narrative, sharing significant parallels with more recent recovery literature, especially Wilde’s focus on the necessity of forgiveness, humility and admission of sins (or in less religious terms, harms done to self and others). Furthermore, the letter is full of love: Wilde describes his love for Douglas; he acknowledges that Douglas, despite all evidence to the contrary, did love him; and he writes at length about the importance of love in making life meaningful. Although I have referred to queer theory a number of times in “The Desire to Fill,” in this particular discussion Wilde’s and Douglas’s sexualities are utterly irrelevant. Same-sex desire is in no way more prone to addictive qualities than heterosexual desire. If this letter had been written by a woman to a man, I would still make the same argument regarding the parallels between addiction to a person and addiction to a substance.

Early in De Profundis Wilde writes, “Our ill-fated and most lamentable friendship has ended in ruin and public infamy for me, yet the memory of our ancient affection is often with me, and the thought that loathing, bitterness and contempt should for ever take that place in my

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685 See Alcoholics Anonymous, especially chapter 5.
heart once held by love is very sad to me….” Wilde recounts over many pages a series of incidents that led him to believe that his relationship with Douglas was detrimental to his creative production: “You admired my work when it was finished: you enjoyed the brilliant successes of my first nights, and the brilliant banquets that followed them… but you could not understand the conditions requisite for the production of artistic work.” And shortly thereafter: “I am not speaking in phrases of rhetorical exaggeration but in terms of absolute truth to actual fact when I remind you that during the whole time we were together I never wrote one single line. Whether at Torquay, Goring, London, Florence or elsewhere, my life, as long as you were by my side, was entirely sterile and uncreative. And with but few intervals you were, I regret to say, by my side always” (DP 154). Although, of course, the entire letter must be read as being informed by hindsight, in addition to the fact that Wilde was literally writing it in his cell at Reading Prison, which he himself notes contributes to the bitterness of its tone, the above citation indicates an awareness that Douglas’s presence negatively impacted Wilde’s artistic productivity, which was not only his claim to fame, but also his primary source of financial remuneration.

Like with any other addiction or addictive behavior, Douglas’s absence resulted in a return to a relative state of stability and normalcy for Wilde. As he remarks, “When you were away I was alright” (DP 155). Yet despite his own awareness that Douglas’s constant presence interfered with his work, Wilde continually allowed Douglas to interrupt him, wishing to be fed, entertained, and taken out to the theatre, which was usually followed by a late meal: “I should have forbidden you my house and my chambers except when I specially invited you. I blame

myself without reserve for my weakness. It was merely weakness” (DP 156). Significantly, Wilde’s language mirrors the way that addictive substances have been portrayed as in control of the addicted subject. He writes, for instance, “your persistent grasp on my life grew stronger and stronger” (DP 156), “my fatal yielding to you” (DP 158), “You wore me out” (DP 158), “one had either to give up to you or to give you up” (DP 158), and “I gave up to you always” (DP 158).

With knowledge of his powerlessness in relation to Douglas, and the accompanying psychological pain, decreased artistic output and monetary worries, came Wilde’s desire to cease ties with Douglas. Yet with every decision to quit, as with many addicts, came relapse after relapse, and with relapse came shame and remorse: “As far as I can make out I ended my friendship with you every three months regularly, and each time that I did so you managed by means of entreaties, telegrams, letters, the interposition of your friends, the interposition of mine, and the like to induce me to allow you back” (DP 160). The primary difference between love addiction (in Wilde’s case an addiction to a specific person rather than relationships in general) and addiction to a substance such as alcohol, is that while the mental obsession may be present in both contexts, the latter, being inanimate, cannot re-insinuate itself through manipulation, constant contact, and communication with persons close to the addicted individual. Douglas engaged in all of these tactics, and not surprisingly, despite numerous attempts to cut ties irrevocably, Wilde eventually invited Douglas back into his life again and again. Wilde often decided that they must part after one of Douglas’s distressing “scenes,” during which he would sling vulgar insults at Wilde. Such an incident apparently occurred in Goring in June 1893, when Douglas “made a scene so dreadful, so distressing that I told you that we must part.” But “before three days had elapsed you were telegraphing from London to beg to be forgiven and allowed to return” (DP 160). He also writes of his “incessant attempts to break off a friendship
that was so ruinous to me as an artist, as a man of position, as a member of society even” (DP 184), and of “my desire, nay, my determination to end a friendship so fatal to me in every way” (DP 185).

According to Wilde, he continued to forgive Douglas and take him back because he was “fond” of him, but this seems too weak a reason for welcoming him back into his life considering the financial and emotional toll their relationship was already taking on Wilde. Indeed, as time passed it appears that, not only did Douglas’s behavior towards Wilde become increasingly worse, but Wilde’s attempts to extricate himself from Douglas also became progressively desperate, including his decision to leave England following a series of “revolting scenes” in order to escape from Douglas. Considering the increased violence of Douglas’s alleged behavior (in a later incident, Douglas apparently became physically menacing while Wilde was ill), in combination with Wilde’s gradually more extreme attempts to dissolve their relationship (even traveling to Paris and ignoring the younger man’s telegrams), it would seem that Wilde’s addiction to Douglas only strengthened over time.

This pattern appears to have continued up to the point in 1895 when Queensberry began leaving accusatory cards at Wilde’s club, one identifying him as a “posing Somdomite [sic].”687 It was Douglas who encouraged Wilde to take legal action against Queensberry, and that trial eventually led to Wilde’s trials for sodomy, which ultimately resulted in his imprisonment.688 In the second half of the letter Wilde attempts to reconcile this tragic turn in his life by proposing that “the secret of life is suffering” (DP 202), and certainly it seems clear that Wilde needed to come to this conclusion in order not to go mad. For, as he writes, “while there were times when

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687 See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 412.
I rejoiced in the idea that my sufferings were to be endless, I could not bear them to be without meaning. Now I find hidden away in my nature something that tells me that nothing in the whole world is meaningless, and suffering least of all. That something hidden away in my nature, like a treasure in a field, is Humility” (DP 195). By the end of the letter the reader feels bombarded by how tragic, how ruinous, how completely destructive Wilde’s relationship with Douglas had been (according to Wilde). Once more he writes, as he had written so many times already: “As if it had been possible for me to gradually drop you! I had tried to end our friendship in every possible way, going so far as actually to leave England and give a false address abroad in the hopes of breaking at one blow a bond that had become irksome, hateful, and ruinous to me” (DP 225). And so readers past and present could be forgiven for assuming, at the end of this repetitive, sad, beautiful and brilliant epistle, that when Wilde was released from Reading Prison on 18 May 1897, he stayed as far away from Douglas as possible. After all, he had not seen Douglas for two years. He had been “abstinent” from his drug of choice – if you will allow me to use these terms in relation to a person – for two long years, so surely the habit, the addiction, must have been eliminated? Surely Wilde would choose to never see Douglas again for the rest of his life? Yet Wilde did see Douglas again. Their reconciliation began with letters, such as one from Wilde to Douglas on 4 June 1897 that said he loved Douglas more than anyone else, but that their lives “are irreparably severed, as far as meeting goes.”689 But in a letter to Robert Ross on or around 2 March 1898, Wilde wrote:

Bosie [Douglas], for four months, by endless letters, offered me a ‘home.’ He offered me love, affection, and care, and promised that I should never want for anything. After four months I accepted his offer, but when we met in Aix on our way to Naples I found he had no money, no plans, and had forgotten all his promises. His one idea was that I should raise money for us both. I did so, to the extent of £120. On this Bosie lived, quite happy.

When it came to his having, of course, to repay his own share, he became terrible, unkind, mean, and penurious, except where his own pleasures were concerned, and when my allowance ceased, he left…. It is, of course, the most bitter experience of a bitter life; it is a blow quite awful and paralyzing, but it had to come, and I know it is better that I should never see him again. I don’t want to. He fills me with horror.

Despite this vehement assertion, Wilde appears to have continued to be in contact with Douglas until the former’s death in 1900. Between his release from prison and his death, Wilde only published one more text (The Ballad of Reading Gaol, 1898), and he was constantly in dire straits regarding money. Despite his financial worries, he chose to see Douglas again, thus forfeiting his share of his wife Constance’s income, for she had forbade him to see Douglas again in a letter written on 29 September 1897.

Wilde died on 30 November 1900. According to Terence Cawthorne, writing in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1959, Wilde died of an intercranal complication, or middle-ear disease, of which an illness he experienced in prison was a apparently a symptom. More recently, however, Doris Lanier has proposed that Wilde’s death may have been partially caused by an addiction to absinthe. Lanier has an investment in linking Wilde with absinthe because she is concerned with the relationship between absinthe and artistic creativity, a popular theme in literary scholarship. Wilde certainly spoke and wrote about absinthe, for instance his observation that “After the first glass, you see things as you wish they are. After the second, you see things as they are not. Finally you see things as they really, are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world.”

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692 See Letters, 369, fn. 1.
694 Quoted in Lanier, Absinthe, 70. This was according to Wilde’s dear friend Ada Leverson, who Wilde called Sphinx.
Aubrey Beardsley’s drawings to the infamous green liqueur. But the fact remains that we cannot determine with certainty whether Wilde was an addict or merely a fan of absinthe, any more than we can affirm, with complete confidence, that he was a love addict, or codependent, when it came to Alfred Douglas. I have merely offered my own reading of *De Profundis* (as well as certain decisions that Wilde made in relation to Douglas) as representing what I understand to be an addictive love relationship.

Perhaps I should pause here in order to acknowledge Oscar Wilde’s reoccurring presence in “The Desire to Fill.” Indeed, I refer to two works by Wilde in Chapter 2: his play *Salome* (1891) and his essay “The Truth of Masks” (1891). In Chapter 5 I discuss Wilde’s home at Tite Street as examined by Michael Hatt, and I allude to his imprisonment in terms of the closeting of homosexuality in the nineteenth century. In Chapter 6 I refer to Wilde’s penchant for cigarettes, as well as to the appearance of opium-tainted cigarettes in Wilde’s novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Furthermore, the thought of Wilde is never far away in my discussion of languor, decadence and degeneration as I unpack the implications of Alfred Priest’s *Cocaine* (Fig. 6.1). I also see a parallel between Wilde’s addictive experiences and George Cruikshank’s intemperate temperance in terms of both artistic and financial consequences, and I have dedicated much of this Conclusion to a speculative reading of *De Profundis* for evidence of love addiction and the pleasure, pain and relapse that is characteristic of most, if not all, experiences of addiction. Curtis Marez has noted the traces of opium use (or addiction) in caricatures of Wilde that racialize him as Oriental, and if I had discussed nineteenth-century opium dens (a subject that

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695 According to Wilde’s friend Frank Harris, Wilde wrote to Beardsley: “It [absinthe] is stronger than any other spirit and brings out the subconscious self in man. It is like your drawings Aubrey, it gets on one’s nerves and is cruel.” Quoted in Peter Raby, *Aubrey Beardsley and the Nineties* (London: Collins & Brown Limited, 1998), 36.
deserves further analysis in the field of visual culture studies), I certainly would have noted the scene in Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* when the eponymous character goes to an opium den to “buy oblivion,” although he is never actually depicted consuming the drug.697 As Zieger has noted, “The craze for opium den stories, sketches, and images had struck Britain and the United States beginning in the 1870s; at first they appealed to the bourgeois urban tourist’s curiosity about quaint foreign customs, but eventually they conjured the ‘dens’ as spaces of interracial sexual transgression, deviance, and criminality.”698

Why does Wilde appear so frequently in my text on addiction and visual culture? I did not set out with this intention, but as I wrote, Wilde’s life and works consistently suggested themselves to me as useful flashpoints or landmarks upon which to structure my larger discussion. Further to that, however, Wilde – rather than Thomas De Quincey or other more obvious choices699 – strikes me as fitting the mould of the quintessential nineteenth-century addict, not because he ever wrote specifically about addiction, but because the symbols and anxieties that were mapped onto his life and body are the very same symbols and anxieties that have long been associated with addiction. Wilde was racialized and sexualized in both life and


visual culture, as addicts have been. Wilde was identified as a decadent by those who regarded that term in the worst possible light; addiction has been linked with decadence in terms of excess, decay and death. Wilde was identified as degenerate by Max Nordau and others; addiction has been linked with degeneration by Max Nordau and others.\(^{700}\)

I believe that one of the most significant parallels between Wilde and the figure of the addict in the late nineteenth century, however, was the perception that both deliberately chose to not care about what white British citizens of a certain class should care about. This was also the fundamental underlying anxiety about women in general, and mothers in particular, who drank to excess in the eighteenth century. The newspaper article regarding Wilde’s trip to America and his apparent condescension to mere mortals that I quote from in Chapter 6 also revolves around this same anxiety, which very obviously had hardened into hatred and homosexual panic by 1895.\(^{701}\) Certainly, according to both recent and historical literature on addiction, there does appear to be a link between caring, caring too much, and the desire to not care, and the seeking out of substances (or behaviors) that activate a temporary state of caring about absolutely nothing. I discuss the desire to not care further in the final section of this Conclusion. Perhaps not insignificantly, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there are repeated references to characters not caring or wishing not to care. Much has already been written by other scholars about Wilde’s posing; his nonchalance and unconcern were key parts of his persona.\(^{702}\) Drugs and alcohol are seductive because they manifest an artificial unconcern for life’s troubles and worries. I have already noted that Dorian Gray describes opium dens as places that you can “buy oblivion,” and

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\(^{702}\) See, for instance, Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 80. See also Denisoff, “Posing a Threat.”
in the den Dorian encounters an old acquaintance who sighs: “George doesn’t speak to me
either…I don’t care…As long as one has this stuff [opium], one doesn’t want friends” (DG 148).
But it is Lord Henry Wotton whose pose of unconcern most closely mirrors that of Wilde’s. In
response to Dorian’s scrambling to explain his whereabouts the night before, Lord Henry shrugs
and says “My dear fellow, as if I cared!” (DG 144). This is the same character, of course, who
announces early on in the novel: “Being natural is simply a pose, and the most annoying pose I
know” (DG 7). The irony of addiction, as well as the pose of unconcern, is that eventually things
catch up with you, as Wilde experienced with such intensity.

A final word on Wilde. The author was an avid proponent of Aestheticism, art for art’s
sake, and separating morality from art; addiction has (wrongly) been perceived as the selfish
living for pleasure, thus separating morality from life.\(^{703}\) Wilde self-admittedly lived for
pleasure, luxury, and indulgence. In *De Profundis* he writes: “I don’t regret for a single moment
having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does to the
full…. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong because it would have been
limiting. I had to pass on. The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also” (DP 203).
Wilde’s life was one of pleasure and pain. The English opium-eater himself, Thomas De
Quincey, recognized that these two oppositional but closely related states were the corollary
characteristics of addiction.\(^{704}\)

Am I merely re-entrenching the image of Wilde as decadent, pleasure-seeking, and as
possessing an addictive temperament by weaving him throughout my text on addiction and art?

\(^{703}\) Regenia Gagnier describes the dandy as the “human equivalent of aestheticism in art; he is the man removed
from life, a living protest against vulgarity and means-end living.” Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Wilde and the

\(^{704}\) “Opium! dread agent of unimaginable pleasure and pain!” Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English
Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Barry Milligan (London: Penguin, 2003), 42. *Confessions* was originally
published in 1821.
Whatever the effect on my reader, my ultimate intention is to draw on his beautiful prose, and reflect on his beautiful, broken life, in order to illuminate the ways that both his life and his work may be viewed as a tapestry that reveals glimpses of how art and addiction intersected in the nineteenth century and beyond. Certainly a phrase of six short words embedded in *De Profundis* speak urgently and eloquently to what it feels like to be mired in addiction: “I was made for other things.” These words strike me as particularly resonant for a study of the lived experience of addiction.

**Parallels: Past and Present Addictions**

In this section I address one of the parallels that I have observed in both historical and recent accounts of addiction, namely the desire to not care as a motivation for consuming both drugs and alcohol. This and other parallels have provided a foundation for my continuist approach to the history of addiction.

Writing in 1925, Lawrence Kolb attempted to explain relapses, significantly (for my own project) using the word “desire” more than once to describe what occurs in the mind of an alcoholic or addict leading up to relapse. I quote him at length:

> The taking of the drug results in the formation of numerous memory associations which are themselves potent reasons for continuing the drug or bringing about relapse. In this sense, opium addiction is a real habit. It is a common observation that no man lightly gives up anything to which he has accustomed himself. We see this plainly exemplified in the cured tobacco smoker who relapses after a period of abstinence and feels great relief in doing so. A cured smoker who usually does not crave tobacco may feel an intense desire resembling hunger when he gazes upon a box of cigars or sits in the company of friends who are smoking. The genesis of this desire is apparently wholly mental. The craving is due to memory associations and the habit the smoker has acquired of releasing a certain amount of energy by smoking when placed in certain environments. If smoking is indulged in, the aroused but pent-up energy flows smoothly into an accustomed channel, the tension is relieved and the relief is obtained. Habitual indulgence in opium creates memory associations similar to those connected with the use

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of tobacco and adds some of its own. The craving that some cured addicts experience after the state of physical discomfort is over, and the ‘hankering’ for the drug that they speak of, is due largely to these memory associations. The impelling force of habit and the satisfaction derived from gratifying it, is seen in the morphine or heroin addict, who, when deprived of his customary drug, stabs himself with needles or safety pins, so-called ‘needle addiction.’

Although he does not explicitly say it, Kolb’s comparison between opium addiction and tobacco addiction is a strategy that he likely deemed necessary for early twentieth-century readers who were prejudiced against opium addicts, while perhaps they themselves were addicted to tobacco. Indeed, the question of why certain drugs have not only been vilified but made illegal, while others – such as tobacco and alcohol, for example – are not, is an important one.

Because there continues to be a certain degree of intolerance towards drug addicts, and to a lesser extent alcoholics, addiction scholar David Courtwright uses the same strategy as Kolb did in 1925 to explain the physiological, neurological and mental facets of addiction and relapse, discussing caffeine rather than tobacco:

The notion of reversal of effects helps to explain the paradox of why people persist in manifestly unhealthful behavior…. Having begun to use the drug [including caffeine] to feel good, they dare not stop for fear of feeling bad. If addiction is the hijacking of the body’s natural reinforcement mechanisms, withdrawal is the gun held to the head. Even addicts who detoxify completely – a process that can extend over many months for a drug like cocaine – are not the same afterwards. The brain remembers the chemical shortcuts to pleasure. Environmental cues such as a familiar tavern sign can trigger powerful cravings. Addiction is a chronic, relapsing brain disease.

Both Kolb and Courtwright are writing about addiction with the awareness that some of their readers may well feel judgmental towards addicts, an awareness that I share. Perhaps even more

significant for my own project, however, is the fact that both Kolb and Courtwright refer to visual triggers (a box of cigars and a tavern sign) that may initiate craving. This is yet another instance of addiction intersecting with vision and visual culture, and it has important implications for the lived experience of recovery from addiction.

One of my concerns in “The Desire to Fill” has been to make an argument for the presence of addiction in the years prior to the adoption of the term “addiction” to describe the physical and mental state that Kolb and Courtwright describe. Whether in eighteenth-century texts on the gin craze, Victorian novels, early twentieth-century medical articles, or twenty-first-century books concerned with rampant addiction in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, descriptions of the state I have been calling addiction often share significant similarities, even when there are concurrently dramatic differences in the perception of drunkenness and addiction (often related in some way to the author’s degree of sympathy towards those engaged in addictive behaviors).

Again turning to Valerie Traub’s work on homosexuality in Shakespearean drama, which I refer to in my Introduction, she writes: “I would argue…that despite the absence of a specific discourse of sexuality within early modern culture there circulated significations that, however incommensurate, can be usefully brought in tension with modern meanings.” 709 I, in turn, would make a parallel argument that the traces of addiction I have found in past historical moments can also be brought into tension with modern descriptions, ideas and perceptions regarding addiction. I base this argument on two fundamental assumptions. First, that like other physical maladies, addiction existed before the term “addiction” could be applied to what people were witnessing.

and experiencing. Second, that the desire to fill, that is, the desire to change reality in order to either enhance pleasure or decrease pain, appears to be a human characteristic that pre-dated modernity. Richard Davenport-Hines would appear to agree, remarking: “People of every generation have needed chemicals to cope with life: sobriety is not an easy state for human beings.”

I conclude “The Desire to Fill” with a comparison between two texts that exemplify the parallels between the lived experiences of addicts in two disparate historical moments, although admittedly there are less than one hundred years between them. I have chosen the texts primarily because they provide an opportunity to recuperate the voices of actual addicts, rather than just those who have the authority to write about them, in addition to the fact that the voices are uncannily similar in what they have to say. The first text is Lawrence Kolb’s 1925 article “Pleasure and Deterioration from Narcotic Addiction.” The second is In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction (2008) by Dr. Gabor Maté. I quoted Kolb in Chapter 5 regarding his distinction between the “normal” addict and the “abnormal” (or psychopathic) addict. For Kolb, the “normal” addict is one who did not commit violent crimes before becoming addicted to drugs (specifically opium and cocaine), and he suggests that “normal” addicts are those “intelligent people” who are “able to give expression to their feelings” regarding their experiences of addiction. From these addicts, Kolb asserts, he discovered “the secret of how the pleasure that opium induces in psychopaths allures them into addiction in the

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711 Quoted in Terry and Pellens, The Opium Problem, 241.
first place and causes them to relapse time after time.” When Kolb quotes addicts’ own words about the mental and emotional effects of opium use, it is unclear whether he is quoting “normal” addicts or “abnormal” addicts, although he does say that these descriptions “illustrate better than anything else the mental pleasure that opium gives abnormal persons.” “At the same time,” he writes, “they show the neurotic basis of addiction by indicating emotional conflicts or feelings of inadequacy, the relief from which is expressed as pleasure.” The following statements are attributed to unnamed addicts: “It makes my troubles roll off my mind”; “I do not have a care in the world”; “You do not care for anything and you feel happy”; “You have a contented feeling and nothing worries you”; “It stimulates you and makes you forget, so you don’t care about anything.” These statements all share a preoccupation with not caring, which recalls my earlier discussion regarding Wilde’s life and fiction, as well as my discussion in Chapter 2 about alcoholic mothers in the eighteenth century who were perceived as not caring about what they were “supposed” to care about, namely their responsibility to their children and nation. I believe that a lack of care is both one of the apparent “benefits” of intoxication and the reason that addiction is so anxiety-producing for those observing addiction from the outside.

The desire to not care is also poignantly apparent in the personal accounts of the many addicts that Maté quotes in his book on his experiences in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Maté is a doctor at the Portland Clinic, which functions under the auspices of the Portland Hotel Society, a “pioneering social model” that provides living spaces for people who would otherwise

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712 According to Kolb, only fourteen per cent of the addicts in 230 cases (which his paper is based on) were classified as having been normal before they became addicted. He does not specify as to how people were classified as normal or abnormal addicts. Terry and Pellens, The Opium Problem, 241.
713 Quoted in Terry and Pellens, The Opium Problem, 242-43.
be homeless, in addition to other social initiatives including an art gallery for Downtown Eastside artists and North America’s first supervised injection site.\footnote{Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008), 11. I highly recommend Maté’s book to anyone who is interested in a moving and informative examination of the lived experience of addiction from a contemporary medical perspective that is also highly sympathetic and self-reflexive. Maté is quick to allude to his own addictive patterns.}

Although there is much valuable discussion regarding addiction in Maté’s book, I limit myself to quoting some of the addicts who Maté sees at the Portland Clinic, because of the way they echo the addicts quoted in Kolb’s article: “‘Nothing bothers me when I’m high. There’s no stress in my life,’ one person said – a sentiment echoed by many addicted people. ‘Makes me just forget,’ said Dora, an inveterate cocaine user. ‘I forget my problems. Nothing ever seems quite as bad as it really is, until you wake up the next morning, and then it’s worse.’”\footnote{Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, 31-32} Jake, an opiate and cocaine addict in his mid-thirties remarks: “It [cocaine] cuts the edge off everyday life down here [in the Eastside], of dealing with everything…. So long as I’m using, I don’t care about responsibilities.”\footnote{Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, 44.} In response to Maté’s question of why he continues to use drugs, fifty-seven-year-old Richard says: “I don’t know, I’m just trying to fill a void.”\footnote{Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, 37.}

Maté’s thoughts about Richard’s reference to filling a “void” with drugs are similar to my own understanding of addiction:

A sense of deficient emptiness pervades our entire culture. The drug addict is more painfully conscious of this void than most people and has limited means of escaping it. The rest of us find other ways of suppressing our fears of emptiness or of distracting ourselves from it. When we have nothing to occupy our minds, bad memories, troubling anxieties, unease or the nagging mental stupor we call boredom can arise. At all costs, drug addicts want to escape spending ‘alone time’ with their minds. To a lesser degree, behavioural addictions are also responses to this terror of the void.\footnote{Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, 37.}
It seems appropriate to conclude “The Desire to Fill” by drawing on a recent book written about the experiences of addicts living today, because my objective throughout my own text has been to connect images with the lived experiences of alcoholics and addicts. *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* is also significant because, although I have been concerned with British visual culture, and therefore British discourses of addiction and British addicts, Maté’s discussion of addicts in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside resonates with me personally as a Canadian citizen. Finally, Maté’s book intersects with my own project due to the inclusion of photographs by Rod Preston of some of the men and women who Maté discusses and quotes.719 The photographs are not labeled, nor are names attached to them in any other way, but this namelessness does not activate the dehumanizing work of much nineteenth-century ethnographic photography. The photographs are in black and white, and they each fill a whole page, almost always facing the title page of a new section. The photographs are therefore not linked with a specific person’s story by way of location in the book. Although Maté is concerned with giving addicts a “voice,” he is also conscientious about anonymity, putting names in quotation marks in the index in order to indicate when they are pseudonyms. Not surprisingly, Preston’s photographs are not analyzed, or even referred to in Maté’s text, except in the “Author’s Note” when he writes: “Humbling as it is for a writer to accept that a picture is worth a thousand words, there may be no better proof of that dictum than the remarkable photographs contributed to this volume by Rod Preston. Having worked in the Downtown Eastside, Rod knows the people I’ve written about well and his camera has captured their experience with accuracy and feeling.”720 Indeed, these images are portraits, an art form that has a long history of royalty and wealth attached to


720 Maté, “Author’s Note,” in *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, unpaginated.
it. Maté’s objective, I believe, in including the photographs in his book was not to encourage attempts to read addiction from images and/or bodies, but rather to give a human face to addiction. By allowing the images to stand alone, with no captions and no analysis, Maté lets the photographs speak for themselves, a practice anathema to the scholar of art history and visual culture. However, I have suggested more than once that a project concerned with the visual culture of addiction is a necessarily paradoxical project, based on my belief that addiction cannot be reliably read from either the body or an image.

In February 1920, the year after Alfred Priest painted and exhibited *Cocaine*, the New York City Narcotic Clinic, which opened in the spring of 1919 in order to investigate narcotic addiction, released a bulletin stating in effect that, while authorities had assumed that addicts would be easily identifiable by their physical appearance, this turned out not to be the case. According to the author of the bulletin, S.D. Hubbard: “We do not know who the addicts are, nor how many there are of them, either here or elsewhere in this country. Why? From opinions expressed, and from the literature on this subject, we have been led to believe that addiction was allocated with definite physical stigmata; pallor, emaciation, nervousness, apprehension, sniffing, needle puncture markings, and tattoo skin evidences; but in actual experience with hundreds of acknowledged drug addicts, persons actually seeking their drug, we find, like weather indications, all such signs failing.” For this reason, as I have argued throughout “The Desire to Fill,” examining the visual culture of addiction will always be a paradoxical project. That is

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721 See, for instance, Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993). There is a massive literature on portraiture; Pointon’s text is only one example.

722 Quoted in Terry and Pellens, 33.
not to say that a study of contemporary images related to addiction would not be an important and productive one, but that is a task for another dissertation or another book.723

723 At this point in time the only scholarly study of contemporary British artistic representations of intoxication and addiction is David Hopkins, “‘Out of It’: Drunkenness and Ethics in Martha Rosler and Gillian Wearing,” in Difference and Excess in Contemporary Art: The Visibility of Women’s Practice, ed. Gill Perry (Maiden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 22-45. Interestingly, Alfred Priest exhibited a painting entitled Out of It in 1913, but unfortunately I have been unable to locate a reproduction of the painting, and the current location is unknown. An extended study of contemporary representations related to addiction in art and visual culture could include analyses of advertisements warning against drugs and drunk driving, British artists Gilbert and George’s work that alludes to intoxication (Underneath the Arches, 1969), Preston’s portraits of addicts in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, and artworks produced by Vancouver artists concerned with addiction (Paul Wong, for instance), among many other images. Lynda Nead refers briefly to a 1985 advertisement for a British government campaign against heroin use, which implicitly suggests that you can read addiction from the body. See Lynda Nead, Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 172. My thanks to Carla Taunton for bringing Paul Wong’s work to my attention.
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